

Selected Essays

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Preface

The essays in this book were published between the years 2011 and 2023. "Some Brief Notes on Reza Negarestani's Intelligence Spirit" was published in Triple Ampersand Journal in 2023. "HoTT: pseudoproblems, extensional propositions and intensional constructions" was published by Graham Vunderink Gallery in 2023. "Dimes is of the Essence: Gardeners of the creative" was published by Triple Ampersand Journal in 2022 and was collectively written by myself, Connor Tomaka and Laszlo Horvath. "Minor Rationalism" was published in 2021 by Triple Ampersand Journal. "On Messianism: Theodor Adorno vs. Walter Benjamin" was published in 2011 by XYM under a different title in the publication "Home vs. Away". "Ontological Warfare: Subject as Universal Singularity vs. Object as Statist Particularity" was published by Distanz in Yngve Holen's artist monograph *Trypophobia* in 2016.

Contents

Preface	iii
Contents	v
1 Some Brief Notes on Reza Negarestani's Intelligence Spirit (2023)	1
2 HoTT: pseudoproblems, extensional propositions and intensional constructions (2023)	9
3 Dimes is of the Essence: Gardeners of the creative (2022)	17
4 Minor Rationalism (2021)	43
5 On Messianism: Theodor Adorno vs. Walter Benjamin (2011)	53
6 Ontological Warfare: Subject as Universal Singularity vs. Object as Statist Particularity (2016)	65

Chapter 1

Some Brief Notes on Reza Negarestani’s *Intelligence Spirit* (2023)

Synopsis

Reza Negarestani’s “Intelligence and Spirit”¹ stands as an intersectional exploration of philosophy, mathematics, logic, and computer science. The work is an intricate tapestry weaving together threads from various disciplines in order to present a comprehensive understanding of intelligence, in both its human and artificial manifestations.

Negarestani draws from category theory—a branch of mathematics that delves into abstract structures and relationships. He employs this to frame the book’s philosophical arguments, particularly when discussing the structure and function of intelligence. In this fashion, the concept of Chu spaces is used to express Kant’s picture of the mind, allowing for a nuanced interaction between sensing and thinking, empirical computation, and logical computation.

Diving deeper, the book’s exploration of type theory goes beyond academic exegesis. It serves as its foundational pillar, emphasizing the constructivist nature of knowledge and suggesting that intelligence is inherently about constructing knowledge. This ties seamlessly with proof theory and the Curry-Howard

correspondence, further blurring the lines between computation and philosophy. Negarestani posits that programming, in essence, is a philosophical endeavor.

One of the standout features of the book is how Negarestani incorporates the cobordism of René Thom. Cobordism, an equivalence relation between manifolds, is used to illustrate the interconnectedness of ideas and the continuous transformation of knowledge structures. This mathematical concept serves as a metaphor for the fluidity and transformation inherent in the process of thought.

Furthermore, the book hints at the use of functors, drawing inspiration from William Lawvere's interpretation of Hegel. This offers a dynamic and fluid understanding of identity and consciousness, suggesting that the self can be viewed as a mathematical structure that evolves in relation to other structures.

Linear logic and ludics are also explored, emphasizing the non-static nature of reasoning and the playful (ludic) nature of thought processes. Negarestani introduces Jean-Yves Girard's ludics as a paradigm that reflects the logic of dialogue, bridging syntax with semantics.

The concept of learning machines is reached into on the computational front, through critical examination of the idea of a universal learning machine and its implications for artificial general intelligence.

The philosophical underpinnings of the book are further elaborated by Hegel's characterization of Geist or Spirit. Hegel's conception of the community of rational agents as a social model of mind is central to Negarestani's thesis. This "intertwining of semantic structure and deprivatized sociality enables the mind to posit itself as an irreducible 'unifying point or configuring factor.'" ²

At its core, "Intelligence and Spirit" is not only a technical book, but also a detailed exploration of the nature of intelligence. It testifies to the deep connections between computationalism and transcendentalism, offering ground-breaking and thought-provoking insights. In doing so, it challenges traditional notions and pushes the boundaries of interdisciplinary research.

Frameworks for Intelligence

Among the various philosophical and theoretical frameworks in which the book delves, certain of them deserve special attention. Type theory and ludics are among these. Below, we present a paraphrasing of Negarestani's use of such concepts.

Type Theory

1. Context of Mathematical Structures: Negarestani touches upon the generality of category theory and its suitability for studying mathematical structures. He emphasizes the importance of context in appraising and applying mathematical models, suggesting that without proper context, the application of a model can be arbitrary and distortive.³

2. Types and Functions: Types are discussed in a mathematical context, suggesting that these can be understood as functions that compute specific terms. Negarestani introduces concepts like type constructors, term or object constructors, and type destructors, which are essential for understanding the introduction and elimination of types.⁴

3. Universe Types: Negarestani explores the concept of universe types, suggesting that these help differentiate the data under consideration. He aligns this with Plato's thesis that thinking determines differences, and emphasizes the importance of carving at the joints of things.⁵

4. Philosophical Discourse: He touches upon the operators of philosophical discourse as encompassing types of modes of cognition. They are approximated to universe types and the investigation of thought is considered as the type of types (Type0).⁶

Ludics

Negarestani introduces ludics as a pre- or proto-logical framework for analyzing logical and computational phenomena at an elementary level. He emphasizes the continuity between syntax and semantics achieved through an interactive stance toward syntax.⁷

1. Interactive Logic: Ludics are presented as the logic of dialogue, through emphasis in its interactive nature. In ludics, speech acts naturally evolve through interaction, with semantics unfolding through the dynamic impact of syntax.⁸

2. Speech Acts in Ludics: Referencing Samuel Tronçon and Marie-Renée Fleury, Negarestani defines speech in ludics in terms of three elements: the speech acting competence, the test (an interactive situation), and the impact (the effect of the interaction). He suggests that speech acts in ludics are essentially the normal form resulting from the normalization of two interacting designs⁹.

3. Pragmatic Dimension of Language: Highlighting that ludics brings to the foreground the logico-computational phenomena implicit in the pragmatic dimension of language, Negarestani contrasts this with other theories. It is suggested that for ludics, the generation of rules and the capacity to reason are inconceivable without interaction.¹⁰

In essence, Negarestani's exploration of type theory and ludics offers a deep dive into the intricate relationship between syntax, semantics, and interaction, in the context of intelligence and spirit.

Carnap, Sellars and Brandom

Here is a summarised map of the connections between the three thinkers as established within the book.

Carnap's Vision of Language: Rudolf Carnap's perspective on language is presented as a logical-syntactic view, which is not anti-semantic but rather sees syntax as "semantic in disguise."¹¹ It emphasizes the importance of "disenthralling language from established semantic rules or representational concerns."¹² This approach is not about "forgetting"¹³ semantics but adopting an "unprejudiced"¹⁴ way of understanding it.

Carnap and Induction: Carnap's thesis on the possibility of constructing an inductive learning machine is highlighted. Such thesis explores the idea of induction as the degree of confirmation. While Carnap defends the inductivist perspective, Negarestani suggests that this approach faces challenges, especially when considering predictive induction. However, Carnap's sophisticated and nuanced stance on this issue is recognized and defended against criticisms from philosophers like Hilary Putnam.¹⁵

Carnap's Conceptual Engineering: In Carnap's view, as elab-

orated by André W. Carus, “the ascent from ordinary language to an engineered one does not suggest the replacement of the former by the latter.”¹⁶ Instead, it emphasizes the evolution of language and the importance of rational scientific Enlightenment.

Sellars, Carnap, and the Logical Space of Reasons: Carus discusses the connection between Wilfrid Sellars and Carnap, particularly in the context of the logical space of reasons. This suggests a shared philosophical space where both philosophers’ ideas intersect.¹⁷

Brandom’s Engagement with Carnap: Robert Brandom’s approach to language and semantics is contrasted with Carnap’s logical-syntactic view. While Carnap focuses on the structural aspects of language, Brandom emphasizes the rule-governed framework and the interaction of its users. Negarestani suggests a continuity between the two philosophers’ perspectives, with Brandom building upon and extending some of Carnap’s ideas.¹⁸

Sellars and Cosmopolitics: Sellars, following Plato, introduces the idea of cosmopolitics or cosmological politics. This “new paradigm for the politics of the Left”¹⁹ emphasizes not just intersubjectivity but also “a renewed link between the subject and an impersonal objective reality.”²⁰

Sellars and the Craft of Philosophical Living: Here, it is worth quoting Negarestani at length: “In his engagement with Plato, Sellars, identifies action-principles and practices of craft as belonging to *physis* (nature and objective ends), in contrast to *nomos* (law and convention or social norm [...]). In Plato’s account of craftsmanship, purposive actions are neither conventional”²¹ nor purely based on rational norms, but are influenced by both.

Brandom’s Inferentialist Pragmatism: Brandom’s approach to language involves considering it not merely as a symbolic medium—like we mentioned above, language is seen as a rule-governed framework, intertwined with the interaction of its users. This interaction integrates all necessary capacities of agents. Brandom’s pragmatism can begin with a minimal set of rules, and more rules can be established as interlocutors interact.²²

Brandom and Expressive Rationalism: Brandom emphasizes the importance of “understanding how we can adequately describe and explain ourselves and the world.”²³ This can lead to consequential changes in the world, “blur[ring] the boundaries between cognitive engineering of autonomous agents and the construction of advanced sociotechnical systems.”²⁴

Brandom on Sapience and Sentience: Brandom introduces the duality of sapience (wisdom or intelligence) and sentience (the capacity to feel or perceive). This distinction is crucial for understanding the nature of intelligence and its realization.²⁵

Dependent Type Theory

By the end of “Intelligence and Spirit,” dependent type theory is situated in the context of understanding the expressivity and structure of types, particularly in relation to cognition and the nature of intelligence. The following is a distillation of how dependent type theory is presented in the book.

Dependent Types and Expressivity: Dependent types are introduced as “crucial for increasing the expressivity of types.”²⁶ A dependent type is described as a function of elements of some other type. For instance, the dependent type $D(y)$, representing the days of the year, is a function of the element y of the type Y of years. This is because not all years have the same number of days. “In other words, D is a type in the context Y or, alternatively, for each y in Y there is a type $D(y)$.”²⁷ Negarestani provides us with a further example: the “dependent type P : Practice -į Type, which is the property of practical claims. $P(c)$ can be seen as the proof or program that claim c has property P , and not some other property.”²⁸

2. **Universes and Types of Types:** The concept of universe types or the hierarchy of types of types (e.g., $Type_0$: $Type_1$, $Type_1$: $Type_2$) is introduced. These are types whose terms or objects are types. Universes are generally introduced to avoid paradoxes, such as Russell’s paradox. The hierarchy of types of types can be relaxed so that judgments and constructions can be parameterized over all universes rather than specific universe levels.²⁹

3. **Relation to Homotopy Type Theory:** The parameteriza-

tion over universes or levels of types of types, especially in the context of homotopy type theory, is referred to as universe polymorphism. “A universe is polymorphic when a proof, definition, etc., is universally quantified over one or many universes. [...] this universal quantification creates a type ambiguity, [which] should also permit [...] explicit quantification over specific levels or universes” when required.³⁰

4. Types as Forms of Judgement: Types are understood as forms of judgment or Kantian categories. In this framework, a proposition A is a problem whose solution is given by a proof, and A represents the existence of such a proof.³¹

5. Interactive Schema of Meaning-as-Proof: In the universe of automata, the interactive schema of meaning-as-proof can be thought of as a toy meaning-dispensing machine. The machine consists of two agents interacting over a language C. “Inside this interactive machine, there are algorithms that obtain proof either through normalization or search.”³²

Overall, Negarestani situates dependent type theory within a broader philosophical exploration of cognition, intelligence, and the nature of thought. The theory serves as a tool to understand the expressivity and structure of types, especially in the context of interactive systems and the nature of proofs.

End notes:

1Reza Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2018).

2Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, 1. Quoted material inside the citation: Lorenz Puntel, *Structure and Being: A Theoretical Framework for a Systematic Philosophy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 275.

3Ibid., 169-170.

4Ibid., 418-419.

5Ibid., 419.

6Ibid., 432.

7Ibid., 365-366.

8Ibid., 371-372.

9Ibid., 372-373.

10Ibid., 374-376.

11P. Wagner, Carnap's Logical Syntax of Language (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 14.

12Negarestani, Intelligence and Spirit, 335.

13Ibid.

14Ibid.

15Ibid., 523-524.

16Ibid., 395.

17André W. Carus, "Sellars, Carnap and the Logical Space of Reasons," in Carnap Brought Home: The View from Jena, eds. Steve Awodey and C Klein, (Chicago: Open Court, 2003).

18Negarestani, Intelligence and Spirit, 334.

19Ibid., 501-502.

20Ibid.

21Ibid., 457.

22Ibid., 342.

23Ibid., 464.

24Ibid.

25Ibid., 54.

26Ibid., 418.

27Ibid.

28Ibid.

29Ibid., 419.

30Ibid., footnote 419.

31Ibid., 417.

32Ibid., 361-362.

Chapter 2

HoTT: pseudoproblems, extensional propositions and intensional constructions (2023)

Why should one subscribe to the idiocy of the anthropologist René Girard over the logician Jean-Yves Girard? Subscribing to the “mimetic theory of desire” is a base perversion of what is intelligible within philosophy and leads the techno-dystopian Peter Thiel to confess that people only desire something insofar as other people desire it. “Man is the creature who does not know what to desire, and he turns to others in order to make up his mind. We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires.” (Girard) Why naturalize such a faulty theory of humanity? There seems to be a spectrum between those who prefer to subscribe to ideology and participate in society with said ideology (“drink the juice”) versus those who categorically dismiss these statements as “metaphysical pseudo-statements” (Carnap) and recognize the domain of what is intelligible is limited to what is logically provable and then also whatever is empirically verifiable (hence, the school of “logical empiricism”). Carnap and Wittgenstein both began their careers as philosophers in the field of philosophy of mathematics. The logician

Jean-Yves Girard invented System F-omega which would form the basis for type-theoretic languages such as Haskell.

The history of mathematics has grappled with the distinction between analytic constructions and synthetic constructions. Analytic constructions can be expressed in the manner that Descartes formulated algebraic geometry using the Cartesian plane with ordered pairs. Take for example the graph of $y=x$. Synthetic constructions have been introduced as far back as Euclid with the use of triangles-in-themselves for example. Hilbert attempted a school of mathematics founded on the axioms of points, lines, spaces, which proved to be inconsistent per Goedel. Even the attempts at analytic constructions from the anonymous group of mathematicians Bourbaki (directed by the de facto leader André Weil) through the theory of sets ultimately did not account for category theory save for Grothendieck (who did not officially publish as Bourbaki). The attempt to unify mathematics in a universal program of “mother structures” failed precisely because of its excessive pedantry with analytic constructions.

Intuitionistic intensional type theory as per Per Martin-Löf developed a generalization of Russell’s theory of types, but ultimately in the other direction toward synthesis with the invention of the type of all types. Proofs are only relevant in as far as what they construct. ”Types classify constructions.” (Robert Harper) The methods of introduction, elimination and the ‘inversion principle’/’conservation of proof’ form the type-theoretic proofs or in other words, the constructions. ”Type theory is an analysis and codification of Brouwer’s intuitionism drawing on Gentzen’s proof theory” (Robert Harper) Hilbert (with his universalist program of Formalism) famously attacked Brouwer’s school of intuitionism as heretical, but ironically intuitionism today is the only hope for a Mathesis Universalis via the synthetic constructions.

With the development of Homotopy Type Theory there was an inherently synthetic approach to foundations of math which did not affirm the Law of Excluded Middle globally (the Axiomatic Freedom of Constructive Math contra Hilbert) and there-

fore had the generality type-theoretically to instantiate topological paths as types themselves.

Now for a bit of history:

Russell's theory of types was a response to his discovery of what is now called Russell's paradox after writing the monumental *Principia Mathematica* with Whitehead:

Of course, Russell too was concerned about the consequences of the contradiction. Upon learning that Frege agreed with him about the significance of the result, he immediately began writing an appendix for his own soon-to-be-released *Principles of Mathematics*. Entitled "Appendix B: The Doctrine of Types," the appendix represents Russell's first attempt at providing a principled method for avoiding what soon was to become known as "Russell's paradox." (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/russell-paradox/>)

Russell's foundational theory of mathematics is historically descended from a philosophy of logicism due to Frege. Russell attempted to solve the issues of Russell's paradox with predicative statements and adopting the axiom of reducibility where impredicative statements could essentially be reduced to predicative statements. This would later lead Wittgenstein to criticize Russell's error of the axiom of reducibility which would imply implicit meanings behind propositional signs. Many felt the need for adopting such an axiom of reducibility was rather ad hoc and an afterthought. Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* writes:

3.33 In logical syntax the meaning of a sign ought never to play a role; it must admit of being established without mention being thereby made of the meaning of a sign; it ought to presuppose only the description of the expressions.

3.331 From this observation we get a further view – into Russell's Theory of Types. Russell's error is

shown by the fact that in drawing up his symbolic rules he has to speak of the meaning of the signs.

3.332 No proposition can say anything about itself, because the proposition sign cannot be contained in itself (that is the "whole theory of types").

3.333 A function cannot be its own argument, because the functional sign already contains the prototype of its own argument and it cannot contain itself. ... Herewith Russell's paradox vanishes.

[...]

6.123 It is clear that the laws of logic cannot themselves obey further logical laws. (There is not, as Russell supposed, for every "type" a special law of contradiction; but one is sufficient, since it is not applied to itself.)

6.1231 The mark of logical propositions is not their general validity. To be general is only to be accidentally valid for all things. An ungeneralised proposition can be tautologous just as well as a generalised one.

6.1232 Logical general validity, we could call essential as opposed to accidental general validity, e.g., of the proposition "all men are mortal". Propositions like Russell's "axiom of reducibility" are not logical propositions, and this explains our feeling that, if true, they can only be true by a happy chance.

6.1233 We can imagine a world in which the axiom of reducibility is not valid. But it is clear that logic has nothing to do with the question of whether our world is really of this kind or not.

Perhaps what is wrong with the history of the analytic tradition of mathematics is the overreliance on extensionality over intensionality:

Frege gave the outline of a theory of intensionality, but no intensional logic in any formal sense. There have been attempts to fill in his outline. Alonzo Church (1951) went at it quite directly. In this paper there is a formal logic in which terms have both senses and denotations. These are simply taken to be different sorts, and minimal requirements are placed on them. Nonetheless the logic is quite complex. The formal logic that Frege had created for his work on the foundations of mathematics was type free. Russell showed his famous paradox applied to Frege's system, so it was inconsistent. As a way out of this problem, Russell developed the type theory that was embodied in *Principia Mathematica*. Church had given an elegant and precise formulation of the simple theory of types (Church 1940), and that was incorporated into his work on intensionality, which is one of the reasons for its formal complexity. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-intensional/>)

Russell was not satisfied with the second edition [of *Principia Mathematica*], and later he endorsed an extensional view in which logic need not account for intensional phenomena. Although he disagreed with Ramsey on certain points—most notably identity—he accepted Ramsey's criticism that the stratifications of Russell's theory of types were unnecessarily severe and that simple type theory suffices to prevent the paradoxes. By replacing ramified type theory with simple type theory, neither the axiom of reducibility nor an alternative axiom is necessary to allow quantification over functions satisfied by some object. Since this view does not account for intensional functions, it is less general than Russell's initial goal; however, it does give him the desired result of reducing mathematics to a logical system. (<https://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/avigad/Students/berkelhammer.pdf>)

)

Homotopy Type Theory is not conceivable in the extensional framework of type theory. One need only note that the Axiom K and the Univalence Axiom (the main axiom behind HoTT) are incompatible:

In type theory, the axiom K is an axiom that when added to intensional type theory turns it into extensional type theory — or more precisely, what is called here “propositionally extensional type theory”. In the language of homotopy type theory, this means that all types are h-sets, accordingly axiom K is incompatible with the univalence axiom. (<https://ncatlab.org/nlab/show/axiom+K+%28type+theory%29>)

This is all to say that intuitionistic type theory dismisses the use of impredicative statements (like the logicist Russell), but generalizes the theory to include a “type of all types”. “Martin-Löf’s introduction of a type of all types comes from the identification of the concept of propositions and types, suggested by the work of Curry and Howard.” Intuitionistic logic can be summarized by what Robert Harper calls ‘Logic as if people matter’. Through ‘propositions-as-types’ we arrive at the heart of intuitionism, but moreover, constructive mathematics via the invocation of a witness to any proof demonstrated all as a type.

Martin-Löf’s introduction of a type of all types comes from the identification of the concept of propositions and types, suggested by the work of Curry and Howard. It is worth recalling here his three motivating points:

1. Russell’s definition of types as ranges of significance of propositional functions
2. the fact that one needs to quantify over all propositions (impredicativity of simple type theory)
3. identification of proposition and types

Given (1) and (2) we should have a type of propositions (as in simple type theory), and given (3) this should also be the type of all types. Girard's paradox shows that one cannot have (1),(2) and (3) simultaneously. Martin-Löf's choice was to take away (2), restricting type theory to be predicative (and, indeed, the notion of universe appeared first in type theory as a predicative version of the type of all types). The alternative choice of taking away (3) is discussed in Coquand 1986. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/type-theory/>)

Our hopes of a universal foundation for mathematics with inherently synthetic constructions was only conceivable until recently through the work of Martin-Löf (Intuitionistic Type Theory) via its intensional characterization, Voevodsky (the Univalence Axiom), and Steve Awodey via the interpretation of the isomorphism of identity types as topological path space objects, which together can provide the power for the constructions of Homotopy Type Theory (HoTT).

Response by Thorsten Altenkirch:

"I don't think the analytic vs synthetic distinction is so important here. In the end logical principles are a reflection of our natural (evolved) ability to reason. And obviously in this sense Mathematics is constructed by us. The question of extensionality in my view is something different: because mathematical objects are constructions of our they are given by all what we can say about them. This is Leibniz' principle. So by a function I mean a black box where I can put something in and I get something out. I don't know anything about the mechanism (it may involve magic). Hence any two functions which produce the same output for all inputs are the same, they have the same properties hence they are the same mathematical object. The same with types, all what I can observe about two types, let's say the binary and the unary natural numbers is limited by their interface. Since I cannot distinguish binary und unary numbers they are the same, if I want to distinguish them I need to intro-

duce a property that distinguishes them (maybe I can observe the size of their representation, not very natural). This is the source of the univalence principle.” (private email)

Chapter 3

Dimes is of the Essence: Gardeners of the creative (2022)

ERIC SCHMID, LASZLO HORVATH AND CON-
NOR TOMAKA

Editor's Note: This piece, written by several authors, oscillates between plural and singular voices, with the intended effect of collaging three perspectives together in a unified *décollage*.

“I’ll never forget the time I went to Dimes Cafe at 4 am for an after party in 2015. Max Brand was there, and I was trying to speak German with him.” —Eric Schmid

“Châtelet’s scathing polemic opens at the end of the 70s, when the liberatory dreams of ‘68 are beginning to putrefy, providing fertile ground for a new breed of self-deluding ‘nomads’ and vogueish ‘gardeners of the creative’. Gulled by a ‘realism’ that reassures them that political struggle is for anachronistic losers, their allegiances began to slide inexorably toward the ‘revolutionary’ forces of the mar-

ket's invisible hand, and they join the celebrants of a new order governed by boredom, impotence, and envy. Combining the incandescent wrath of the betrayed comrade with the acute discrimination of the mathematician, Châtelet scrutinizes the pseudoscientific alibis employed to naturalize 'market democracy'. As he acerbically recounts, 'chaos', 'emergence', and the veneration of cybernetics and networks merely impart a futuristic sheen to Hobbesian 'political arithmetic' and nineteenth-century 'social physics'—a tradition that places the atomised individual at the center of its apolitical fairy-tales while stringently ignoring the creative political process of individuation." —Robin Mackay, "A Martial Art of Metaphor: Two Interviews with Gilles Châtelet"

Is it necessary to come from a voguish 'self-deluded nomadic overclass' to make contemporary art? Picabia was an aristocrat. Duchamp was bourgeois, but had an inheritance, while working odd jobs, gambling or playing chess. Smithson criticized Duchamp for being the figure of the "priest-aristocrat." Duchamp did not repudiate his wealth in his work though. But what about the recent false repudiation of the bourgeoisie's Law, i.e. the ideas and values, which act as social symbols of decadence and wealth? What about the social decorum which is needed to preserve the values of the voguish 'self-deluded nomadic overclass' (hereafter SDNO)? For example, a curator could be seen as a genius to Italian collectors because they enact the social decorum necessary for the microsociality of the art world, as they were conditioned by those norms and values from the get go. But when artwork becomes a false repudiation of these values in favor of (what has been recently called) hermeticism, is this not a pseudo-hermetic false enclosure reifying SDNO values through the system-conscious social support behind the work's purported non-instrumentality/enclosure? Doesn't the non-instrumentalized or non-instrumentalizable here become instrumental? Does not the false repudiation of these values in

favor of an ostensible freedom of the artist become a Stoic libertarianism based on the mercenary's privileging of his opportunity over ideals? Jean-Luc Nancy criticizes the self-enclosure of Christianity, which provided the Exit of Religion from itself in the form of self-transcendence. Is not this individualistic freedom just isomorphic to the liberal subject founded upon Christian self-transcendence? The right to believe what one wants holds, but as Marx says, does not the alienation from the mystical here jam itself back into the private sphere, after the separation of Church and State, since the secular public sphere separates the two? Should we not be explicit about socio-economic privilege and moreover the present form of this separation between private and public spheres? Or, more complexly, do SDNO insiders co-opt workerist artists into their game because these artists enact bodily/social austerity and legitimize the myth of the American Dream through their Protestant Work Ethic in favor of the insiders' libertarian individualism? Does not the recent trend of self-enclosure enact the division between private and public while dissimulating their covert libertine, libidinal excesses? Instead of working hard (and the "right" to do so) in the public sphere, and playing hard (and the "right" to do so) in the private sphere, should we not dismantle the construct of libertarian professionalism and its right to an artistic self-enclosure in solipsistic artwork, once again founded not upon liberatory values, but SDNO values which bolster the image of the artwork's solipsism? In order to create a true universalism of the local and global – of the private and public, even – should we not be transparent about our experiences within the site/locale of the libidinal subject (the currency of affects) in the ideal/intuitionistic (merely mentally constructed or societally constructed) foreground, which stands as a front for a real mathematical universe and a synthetic navigation of the foreground and background, i.e. by way of a topos above such a site?

Contemporary Art, more broadly, today

The specific context of art in Germany in the 80s and 90s was deliberately anti-commercial and supported by independently

wealthy artists, gallerists and patrons. This context was initiated after the economic boom of predominantly male painters of the previous generation. Painting was a dirty word in the 90s and artists fortified an alternative space that was continually evading its own canonization. In America, at the same time, artists and gallerists contextualized themselves within this European tradition of *kunst*, leading to cross-hybridizations between the continents. (Note: in order to be truly rigorous, this tradition of the alternative art space can be pre-dated to Christopher D’Arcangelo and Peter Nadin decades before, but this was still enmeshed within the Conceptual Art experiments.) (Further note: It goes without saying that American Fine Arts started in 1986. It has been institutionalized by Bard CCS and is common knowledge to any “theory bro art student.”) In the Lower East Side, Alleged Gallery began and years to follow, Reena Spaulings was founded. On Orchard, Orchard Gallery would begin shortly after. Then Miguel Abreu was founded. All of this anti-commercial work was tied to the theoretical advancements of the earlier importation of structuralist and post-structuralist theories (from France) by Ivy League literature departments (but to be precise, we should include Johns Hopkins where Derrida caused an outrage during the seminal structuralism conference). This artistic context specifically embedded the University Discourse within the discursive space of the gallery system. Years later, October would canonize this context back into academia, fortifying the private sector as a space of theoretical practice. Many artists from the 80s and 90s would take prestigious positions at German *kunstakademie*-s. This co-option provided an institutional power structure for the aforementioned previously excluded artists who had had to run experimental project spaces in the past. Undergrads would then flock to Europe for the alternative equivalent of the American MFA, which created a specific context for students who were dis-empowered to mobilize themselves within the network. The unfortunate aftermath was a younger generation of anti-institutional artists within the very institution: these artists learned to simultaneously critique the power structure while covertly assimilating power through

developing new formalisms of painting and sculpture, for example, while mimicking the social praxis of the Meisters. The apparatus for the link between the conceptual structuration of the work AND the market already existed. Artnews reported first about Zombie Formalism and then a decade or more later Zombie Figuration.

We will now list 6 positions today that are due to this nexus between the University Discourse and the market:

1) The creation of work that is intentionally amateur and conventional with extreme specificity in terms of reference points. This work is only legitimated by the assimilation of social power within the alternative project space context. Outsiders making the same work would not have the context for acceptance because of social elitism.

2) Project spaces which deliberately present themselves as anti-institutional, but through a bait and switch disguise their eventual presentation of institutional artists once they have solidified their previously nascent context. Alternative art world consensus informs the direction of such spaces.

3) The exhibition of work that creates a hermeneutic halting problem, i.e. the comprehension of the work is deferred through the specificity of generic signifiers and obfuscation. This work also relies on the consensus of the artist network for its acceptance.

4) The creation of work which fetishizes Otherness as a form of *dérive* and detour to circumvent the art world consensus. Outsiderness as style. Aestheticization of camp/kitsch/neurodivergent alterity.

5) The expanded field of *arte povera*, specifically the use of consumerist excesses and contemporary media as material. There is an optimism in such everydayness of the work for a general audience. But ultimately the purpose of such work is to castigate the SDNO supporting culture, while simultaneously providing a micro-community for liberation and unity of the nomadic artistic elite. Here there is either a Gnostic bent or a deliberately anti-normative provocation involved directly in the

work. This provides a space for communal structures within the alternative art world context. The use of high and low could exemplify an intuitionistic system of art as a topos or art as a category, with varying functors in an a priori fibration specifying varying a posteriori interpretations. The hermeneutics of multivalent perspectives are threaded through a univalent foundation. This position potentially supports worldly Mind or Intellect.

6) The extinction of the world as presupposition. And, the use of contemporary media as an allegory for such extinction, i.e. youth culture as virus. This position also lambasts the SDNO, but it does not present any alternative space or community for liberation in the here-and-now as well as for the future. The only hope is to live with this unfortunate presupposition. Political expediency is the rule. The formalization of the nihilism of individualism is the presupposition and basis for the artwork. This position ostensibly formalizes the overclass as a means of criticizing the SDNO, but ends up only supporting the individual in the end game. All of these positions are not mutually exclusive.

The agony and the ecstasy

“I will never forget my studio visit with Chris Lew from the Whitney where I asked him to buy me a bodega egg sandwich, and he said he didn’t have any money so I asked him to get me a coffee for a dollar, and I had to beg him to give me money, and he handed me 75 cents in change.” —Eric Schmid

“The common thread [in Dimes Square] is the re-territorialization of libidinal flows that results in the Despotic Signifier.” —Guido Gamboa of Pentiments

My friend Lauren Burns-Coady once confided in me that she was worried she was a “substrate.” I think what she meant was that the whole Chinatown/LES hipster subjectivity is a simulacrum. Desire is modulated through the flows of “libidinal economy,” which according to Klossowski/Lyotard have their origin at the source of “voluptuous emotion” or pulsions. These

pulsions become commodified and objectified into empty signifiers which float without referent and become simulacrum of the real. Desire is triangulated through automatons adopting the body-armor of these signifiers, say an Eckhaus Latta/Gauntlett Cheng top or a Telfar bag or casually being able to namedrop “Reena Spaulings” or knowing that the afterparty is at Emma Peel Room tonight. The rollercoaster ride of volatile emotions becomes the fundament of the Real. The agony and the ecstasy. Going out till 4AM and doing bumps at some rooftop party, while your friend hooks up with someone. Being a columnist, so to speak, for everyone’s sex life. The nightlife as “networking job fair” to assimilate clout, cachet or cultural capital, depending if you want a “cheesy payout” now or if you are looking to accrue “annual interest” on your principal. Paul (from bible) did a hilarious deconstruction of the following image (popularized by Sean Monahan), but I just wanted to share the image to give you a sense of the “empty signifiers”.

I think libidinal economy is directly tied to needed validation/recognition from others. The actualization of the machinic unconscious in the form of intersubjective relations wherein which, instead of that of the structuralist approach of say, Lacanian registration within the Symbolic Order, the subject is instead unmoored into a liquid flow which permeates everything: namely, the flows of emotion or pulsion congeal into either pure subjectivism or an objectified materialization of such affects expressed in a fungible commodity (exchange-value). This alienation is inherently tied to the fetishism of the commodity and how the various modalities of communicating are tied to political machinations amounting to nothing but a relativistic subjective rhetoric instrumentalized in a capitalist hyper-present attention economy through the circulation of images and affects, which accumulate into cultural memes and/or locally as subterranean psychic fraternal orders of friends, families and acquaintances. Pierre Klossowski has some of the best writing on this general subject:

In the world of industrial manufacturing, what’s attractive is no longer what appears naturally to be

for free, but the price put on what is naturally for free; a voluptuous emotion (non-communicated or incommunicable) is first of all indifferent, and has no value, in the sense that each person can experience it freely. Now, as soon as someone, while still able to experience it, cannot procure the means of immediately doing so, it becomes less indifferent and begins to gain value. If it is unique in its way—and if only a limited number of individuals will be able to experience it in its uniqueness—then either it is not appraisable at all, or the desire to experience it will ensure it the highest possible price. Such is the commodification of voluptuous emotion (Klossowski, 23).

What distinguishes Europe from America is what Matt Voor dubbed “hypebeastism”, where Americans are thirsty to appear on some LES column (run by say Nate Freeman, Kaitlin Phillips or Spike), the word suggesting the very same etymology as “Supreme hypebeasts”. In Europe you have *Kunstmusik* (e.g. Dieter Roth’s Verlag) and *Kunst Geschichte*, so there is far more respect for elders. In America, if you want to be relevant you need to be some sort of niche internet micro-celebrity. My own relation to the LES scene is very complicated and I prefer to observe and command from afar. My own project is to eventually disengage from any discourse surrounding such a social fabric and pursue a neo-rationalist program, but for the time being the only way to be critical is from “within” as they say. At first I was quite interested in the legacies of Cologne and then of American Fine Arts, Reena Spaulings and then Real Fine Arts and Bed-Stuy Love Affair. But now what’s economized is a deliberately anti-intellectual climate with young cut-throat neo-liberal galleries. Ben Morgan-Cleveland supposedly said that Triest is the new Real Fine Arts. But Triest is directly engaged with showing artists who have more cultural acceptance within European apparatuses (Georgia Gardner Gray, Emanuel Rossetti, Robert Bittenbender, Karin Sander, David Ostrowski) alongside newer American artists with less cultural power (Joe

Speier, Jake Shore, Laszlo Horvath). This European metric for acceptance is directly tied to curators with an education within the traditional European art academy and therefore, with art history and purported taste. Although it is quite flattering to suggest that Triest has now become the dominant alternative art discourse (since I have had 2 shows there), I remain very cautious about and even skeptical of the industry of culture in general after postmodernism. As Tim Pierson has explained, in modernist times, you had the dominant discourse of say, Freud, or Greenberg, but today (after postmodernism) there has been such a splintering and proliferation of varying cultures and sub-cultures that everyone ends up vying for everyone else's attention. There is no one true discourse to rule them all. I would provisionally diagnose the cultural situation in America as one trenchantly dictated by the influence of varying influencers vying for people's attention on Instagram and Twitter, influencers who all the while relish the 'enjoyer' lifestyle of decadent bourgeois living. Yet even to name it this way is to fall into the trap of a "kitsch Marxism" which Reza Negarestani warns us of in his essay "Labor of the Inhuman": such a political program defines itself in reaction to an en masse totality, pigeonholing itself into mere "kneejerk reactionism".

Ostensibly, affect is the primary motor of experience, and the fundamental description of the monadic subject is through pulsion/emotion/affect/libido. Subjectivities are constituted from a priori desires which have already been rendered sterile from their original emotionalist charge, have already become empty floating signifiers from which the LES/Chinatown automaton constitutes their identity (e.g. a Balenciaga jacket or a Gauntlett Cheng dress). There still may be the possibility of queer / transgender / POC liberation through the temporary autonomous zone of the nightclub. But after the criticisms of Gilles Châtelet, is Studio 54 really possible as a space of freedom in our societies of control? In our nihilist current climate, angelicism⁰¹ settles in opportunely to wage its war/criticisms, hypocrisy abounds from the decadent trust fund kids such as Y person behind a local Downtown newspaper, and the egoism of such pundits like

Joshua Citarella or Dean Kissick or talk around NFTs continues to gestate in place. But I would argue that angelicism01 and co. are oblivious to the historical trajectory running in the alternative art world, say of Lomex artists continuing the legacies of Cady Noland or Galerie Buchholz or Neo-Dada or Martin Wong. Moreover, the technical enframement of “legacy” and “alternative worlds” in this genealogy is inherently minor in a Deleuzian sense (think of the work of the artist’s artist Michael Krebber) but also “regulated” (by 2nd order mechanisms of collectors and institutional support), and is directly oppositional to the Landroid accelerationism that can be found lurking in angelicism01 and co., which at worst may veer toward cryptofascism.

The only major criticisms there might be of this “alternative art world” is towards its *modus operandi* of self-reflexive critique, which may be overly nostalgic. The case of refined vigor par excellence of such an alternative art world (depending on an (auto)foundation) would be Reena Spaulings, where they have continued the anonymous “it girl” coming-of-age story, but “always already” self-reflexively critiqued, e.g. aware of today’s mechanisms of microcelebrity. Here, the vibe of Juliana Huxtable or K8 Hardy still harkens back to the universalist utopia of past social experiments (Le Jardin, Studio 54, China Chalet), albeit still entirely within the affect-driven world of “libidinal economy.” But is there a possibility for a collective project of reason outside of “libidinal economy”?

“[...]I tried not to make it the nth refutation of liberal theory. It had to function by using a series of disciplined metaphors which work like an Archimedes’ lever with a very rapid destructive effect, in the tradition of the burlesque attacks of Rabelais and Swift. I wanted to write a book that made the reader irritated, itchy, pissed off. The Turbo-Bécassines and Cyber-Gideons that I describe really exist. You want proof? Someone said to me that they hated the book because when they were reading it, they felt they were a Turbo-Bécassine. So I try to identify all the tics of what I call the average man, a statistical and

cybernetic degradation of the Anglo-Saxons' 'ordinary man'. Because in the name of the average man, all disinterested activity is caricatured, and commanded to be pragmatic. It's a total perversion of the notion of democracy. To struggle against that is to participate in Félix Guattari's 'mental ecology'." —Gilles Châtelet, *To Live and Think Like Pigs*

To follow libidinal economy to its terminus is to concede to Land's libidinal materialism, parametrized by micro-states according to IQ scores, which Châtelet foresaw in the statistical "average man." We think libidinal materialism is evil. The Downtown New York playground is comprised of a self-deluded nomadic overclass elite (SDNO) which must be regulated and marionetted by technocrats and the intelligentsia. Historical mechanisms of sorting and judging the merit of one's work are assigned to the rote privilege of having and inhabiting insider knowledge. The recent infiltration of the art world by the alt-right showcases an attempt by disaffected liberals to seize the means of contextualization by already having an alternative means of production, namely crypto and NFTs. The online mobilization by the 'crypto-alt-right' (Angelicism01, Milady, crypto-christians, trad alt-lit writers) wages an oblique cybernetic war on historically revolutionary practices – the temporary autonomous zone of visionaries within Disco, House, Techno, Acid, Jungle, Conceptual Art, Juke, Le Jardin, Paradise Garage, The Warehouse, Studio 54. The attempt to infiltrate a previously regulated SDNO by the 'crypto-alt-right' is the attempt to weaponize libidinal economy and to create a stratified hegemony on libido by basement dwellers and their acolytes. To groom the youth and stratify social space with the aim of delighting themselves in un-kosher meats. Some cultic prayer sounding like "there is no future because of extinction; memorialize youthful angels for time immemorial; young angels are dead idols; canceled people are angels; Dasha, Dasha, Dasha." It is the attempt to short-circuit and bypass any hopes of a meritocracy for pure hedonism and brutalist NRx realism. Yarvin, the neoreactionary blogger, proselytizes about Dark Elves and hobbits. Identitar-

ian workerists are ostensibly attempting to infiltrate the SDNO with Dark Elf spies such as the Red Scare entertainers. The nexus between traditionalism and hedonism. Tribalist sex castes of Salò. The political expediency of such a nexus between ‘trad christian’ and libidinal nihilism stages a consequentialist ethics on absolute moral grounds, as opposed to inertial frames of references contingent upon possibilities or possible worlds, the latter agenda being rule-governed and admitting world-dependent norms. Essentially, consequentialist versus deontological ethics. “Absolute relativization” versus “relative absolutization(s)”, as Will Fraser writes in his foreword to my *Prolegomenon*:

In such a hyperliberal, hyper-relativist world as negatively constrains us now, it seems to me that Eric Schmid’s *Prolegomenon to a Treatise* offers an attempt to think a kind of sublation of complex relativism into a philosophy of the Absolute via a synthetic amalgam of mathematical and geometrical theories, ultimately advocating for what I see as a kind of mathematical aesthesis. His purported system would, as I see it, against ongoing theoretical production of absolute relativization dressed anew in the cultural fashion of the moment, try to thematize and conceive of relative absolutization(s) in the manner of Zalamean or Châteletian transits and akin to Fernando Zalamea’s and Rodriguez Magda’s notions of transmodernism. De-ontologized idealities side-stepping overt dogmatic idealism, and rationalist realism avoiding libidinal nihilism or what Alain Badiou terms democratic materialism, Schmid’s method seeks to decant philosophy of its baggage on both sides in order to nimbly walk the crooked tightrope which contemporary truth so complexly renders (Schmid, 15).

On the SDNO as third-order sociocybernetic system, and the need to “build new houses”

“After the concept of social equilibrium was strongly criticized, social equilibrium theorists searched for acceptable alternatives to equilibrium that might be less vulnerable to criticism. They turned to concepts such as moving equilibrium, homeostasis, and “steady state.” Moving equilibrium is the term for a series of successive equilibrium states within a given system. The theory is that even though the system may not return to its original equilibrium state, it may still achieve a new, or moving equilibrium. Homeostasis is a term denoting balance or health in an open system. The concept was originally developed for biological systems (organisms), but was applied in sociology by Talcott Parsons and others. The notion here is that the system maintains a set of interrelated variables (such as blood pressure and body temperature) within given parameters. An external change that upsets this balance in one variable (for example, body temperature) would make changes in the other variables in order to restore this balance (and thus the health) of the system.” —Kenneth D. Bailey, “General Systems Theory” (2005)

“In any study of evolutionary ecology, food relations appear as one of the most important aspects of the system of animate nature. There is quite obviously much more to living communities than the raw dictum “eat or be eaten,” but in order to understand the higher intricacies of any ecological system, it is most easy to start from this crudely simple point of view.” —G.E. Hutchinson (1959)

“It is not by means of a metaphor that a banking or stock market transaction, a claim, a coupon, a credit, is able to arouse people who are not necessarily bankers . . . There are socioeconomic ‘complexes’ that are also veritable complexes of the unconscious, and that communicate a voluptuous wave from the

top to the bottom of their hierarchy . . . For it is a matter of flows, stock, of breaks in and fluctuations of flows; desire is present wherever something flows and runs, carrying along with it interested subjects – but also drunken or slumbering subjects – toward lethal destinations. Hence the goal of schizoanalysis: to analyze the specific nature of the libidinal investments in the economic and political spheres, and thereby to show how, in the subject that desires, desire can be made to desire its own repression.” —Deleuze and Guattari (1977: 105)

“[I]n a sense, it is the bank that controls the whole system and the investment of Desire.” —Deleuze and Guattari (1977: 230)

“Living systems are units of interactions; they exist in an ambience. From a purely biological point of view they cannot be understood independently of that part of the ambience with which they interact: the niche; nor can the niche be defined independently of the living system that specifies it.” —Humberto Maturana (1970: 9)

The Bank previously termed the SDNO controls the system of desire. The broad system of desire is an economy which attempts to control itself. To understand the flows of desire, we must understand the individual agents which compose the system, and on this level we are referring to ecology. These actors within this system are taxonomized for convenience into discrete clades or classes; our study then becomes one of taking stock of the flows of these taxonomized actors in competition for resources, and the nature of their libidinal investments. What can be seen in the management of these types within our frame is the goal towards control, or economization: of making discrete entities out of a continuous ecology (oikos, house; oikonomia, household management). The Price equation and Fisher equation have been used in ecology to partition change in diversity indices into direct and indirect processes, to neatly separate change caused

by directly acting forces from change that arises indirectly from an altered frame of reference. The direct forces and the frame of reference are abstractions of the biologists' components of natural selection and transmission.

Niklas Luhmann, the systems theorist, refers to the creation of new states within a 'marked' (i.e. demarcated) system by the system itself as 'autopoiesis.' This sort of analogy is closer to the possible conditions of such a social system which ultimately aims for self-control. Autopoiesis is concerned with this idea of negative feedback loops, specifically: how does something maintain itself in less than favorable conditions. But rather than stabilize itself at a steady state, positive feedback is relevant to an autopoietic system by virtue not of its proclivity to market capitalism but closer to a debt-based economy: the constant pulsions of observing oneself being observed, and of observing the dawning of a cultural stasis fueled by observance. Capitalism, the bank, these flows: rather than adjusting itself to stay the same, the system takes in energy and transforms into something else in a positive feedback loop, consuming energy and producing transformation which is stochastic and uncontrollable. Culture is a type of production: the cybernetic theory of culture is required because cybernetics is observing this production of culture. But we are not here to drag out a limp evolutionary framework and map it onto these cultural dynamics.

If we are to ostensibly understand this as a system of desire, our analysis of its fundamental operation will have to take on some form of second-order sociocybernetics, which Bailey defines as the "practice of an external observer who observes the system observing itself." This second-order analysis was taken on by sociologists, but it has its origins in dynamical systems theory in ecological and economic systems, accounting for increasingly shifting, unsteady equilibria. However, this order of analysis falls flat of the observed system of the SDNO. In actuality, we are here dealing with a third-order socio-cybernetics: the group observes itself, we observe this group observing itself, and the group observes us observing it observing itself. Our object, then, requires an understanding of our particular perspective on the

object via a guiding, framing theory.

Grothendieck pursued “building new houses,” that is, framing theories and methods for others to use; in this way, we here are seeking to frame theories and methods of analysis for others to use in order to imagine something better – to build new houses.

Confession:

People have to exist as social beings and therefore, by way of society, feel compelled to address issues in terms of the social/political/cultural significance. I have a problem with people regurgitating French theory at a party in order to gain clout with an art world society of aesthetes. What I am possibly suggesting is that there is another world divorced from this topicality where people can rigorously consider issues of cognitive science, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science and philosophy of mathematics in a systematic way honoring the history of philosophy, i.e. the philosophical tradition. I don't think it is wrong to be elitist in terms of calling out certain popular names as mere social signifiers to demonstrate initiation within the art world caste system. I think that it is more honest and transparent to pursue ideas related to the architectonics of being and technics and to seriously consider the limits of formalizable language. People who wish to remain within the constraints of social and political theory and, moreover, judge the merit of a philosophical tradition or figure in terms of their political affiliation or biography, demonstrate a shallow interpretation of the project of philosophy. I really believe that philosophy should be the project of engaging with ideas at the highest level of abstraction. I feel compelled to distinguish myself from a class of aesthetes because I feel contempt for libidinal economy, specifically the high-falutin exchange-value (of libidinal pulsion/emotion) within existing social systems such as the culture industry/art world which orchestrates a social fabric rapidly while being completely complicit in the SDNO economy (like eating your cake and having it too, i.e. in the extreme case, performatively articulating the ideals of political and social philosophy while remaining untrustworthy as a person or dubious in terms of moral character.)

Inner monologue from the POV of an insecure aesthete who has to copy other people's work:

I'm so small. They are better than me. I hate myself. I better steal their ideas before they get it out to the public. I think girls like me for my good looks. But man, do I hate myself. I could never really make a substantial work. All my work amounts to mere aestheticizations. I don't know how to be rigorous. I don't even know how to read a Heidegger book. That sounds awfully hard. Maybe I should look at this art blog. Yeah that looks pretty cool. I can just copy that in my work!

Case Study: techno musician

"So, that's why, in particular, jungle became important and at that point it was almost as if techno became the enemy because of its 4/4 rigidity and its lack of syncopation and polyrhythm. You know, there's a certain amount of caricature in that: you could say that those two factions who were fighting over Virtual Futures were also fighting over a model of music: druidic trance techno on the one hand, as a kind of representative of the great monorhythmic priesthood of metric regularity for the purposes of transcendence, and jungle on the other hand as this kind of weird multitemporal hybrid entity dedicated to picking apart the body and disrupting it with polyrhythm and with bass. So, there was that kind of ideological level to it, as well. As in all these things, you can't overstate the importance of Mark [Fisher]'s polemical character in this—that played a big role—when Mark became an advocate of something, true to the spirit of musical tribalism, he was inevitably fiercely against something else. And I think Nick [Land] also had and still has this belief if you can produce a schism, then you should. So there were perhaps a lot of cartoonish ideological divides being drawn with this hardline partisanship for jungle, it became emblematic beyond just the music.

But I think what's interesting is that this kind of idea of the experiential, the idea of blackness and hybridity, the idea of virtualisation, this whole complex around the experience of music that is on what Steve [Goodman] calls the 'hyperdub continuum', i.e. polyrhythmic bass-heavy music which is, in a sense, a part of the evolution of an engineered system, a collective evolution of effective technologies for mobilising the body.

That's all part of the discourse today, right? There's a lot of writing and thinking about that now. As I said, CCRU were doing Afrofuturism back in '96!"
—Robin Mackay, "Towards a Transcendental Deduction of Jungle (Interview) (Part 1)"

The capitalist virus possesses the node of white techno musician/automaton and institutes a fraternal order of the image-object. The white techno musician automaton is activated by its desire for psychic domination, existing within the cybernetic-PR-blogosphere system, the flesh-cum-image. This system has an attractor around the teleology of success/limelight, i.e. the opportunity of playing Boiler Room. Edgy ugly men constitute the cabal of tastemakers as they ascend the airspace for tours in Europe and as their networked flesh attains gratification in the delight of un-kosher meats/sex. The destination of fame nourishes the automaton with ungodly power. The libidinal currency of the fashionable image within the attention economy engenders the second-order desiring-production of the ugly man's flesh. The nomadic techno elite institute a collectivized fraternal order (local gatekeepers) upon social space (e.g. the DIY techno show in random city). The ethics of the automaton is rooted in an ontological warfare of identity. Identity politics is transformed into advertising sales and branding (insert Fact Magazine techno label). The co-option of Black techno in the post-industrial soundscapes (white underground techno) becomes a simulation of the real. The ostensibly novel soundscapes of dance music are transmuted into the veneer of a fashionable

(albeit rasterized) image upon the ugly man's flesh. This ungodly power of the fashionable image welds a body-armor to the automaton and engenders desire (and fear) within his audience. Psychic domination. But this image is ultimately finite and contrived. After Cambridge Analytica, big data scientists have weaponized identity politics into a State-controlled biopolitics. The novelty of the "new" is no different than right-wing policing or control of middle-class dupes by way of these very advancements of aestheticized cultural production (fashionable techno). The "new" can be statistically correlated to the Facebook accounts of a liberal-socialist-elite-hive-mind (Facebook likes), which become fodder for alt-right strategists (e.g. Steve Bannon) and in the final analysis, become the very bread-and-butter of feedbacked State control. Matrices of data become weaponized to win elections. Amazon targets the obsolescent bohemia with its portfolio of data from Alexa/Echo/Amazon Music.

We have demarcated 7 positions, which are not mutually exclusive, in today's libidinal climate:

1. The Rat – a terminally online basement dweller who ideologically outsmarts sociality through indoctrinating a following into believing they are the emperor (but with new clothes).

2. The Rat-Man – a chimera between the neoliberal performativity of pre-determined social reflexes and their disposition of ratness. Imports cachet between the social realms of neoliberal social decorum and terminally online indoctrinated acolytes.

3. The Peacock – the social elitist who does not like to show their talent and associates with the Raven, the puppet-master. Terminally unconcerned except under exceptional circumstances.

4. The Leech – the scenester who is a user, a parasite, completely pre-determined by social machination.

5. The Raven – the cunning puppet-master. Typically a legend in their own right.

6. The Bald Eagle – the intellectual elitist who has a rational program in the spirit of Spinoza, Leibniz and Descartes.

7. The Rooster – the fool who escapes such a matrix of

positions/camps.

The period of repair

“In the Kabbalah they speak of the Ein Sof—meaning the “infinite” or “without end”—when the limitless Divine Being created the universe by withdrawing from it. Rabbi Isaac Luria believed that in God’s absence there was also presence; the vacuum that God had left was also lined with God, in the way that water clings to the edges of a bowl. Inside this vacuum, there came the first emanations of divine light, the sephirot that make up the material world. These divine emanations took on many forms, including letters and words and language. Flowing outwards, the sephirot began to overwhelm the great vessel of the universe, to the point that it exploded, showering fragments everywhere, white-hot fragments that were now coated with both God and the language the sephirot had imparted. What followed was a period of repair, a period that Luria called tikkun. Tikkun is never-ending, you see, we are living through it now. Only after all of the glinting splinters of sephirot have been archived and rearranged—only after we have put language back together, piece by piece—will the tarrying messiah come and only then will tikkun end. Only then will we say goodbye to Dimes Square.” —Will Harrison, “Escape from Dimes Square”

Sure. A period of repair.

In the summer of 2020 we drank at the edges of Manhattan Island. The city was opening up but metaphysically it was closed to us. We would go to the construction sites by the East River where they were hacking up greenspace to lay the groundwork for residential developments. People set up speakers at night and there were a hundred semi-lit faces that otherwise wouldn’t mingle. Or we would be by the dumpsters behind the

Whitney Museum, where New Jerseyites pulled up in their muscle cars and the cheap plastic encasings of the speakers rattled at the hand of party mixes. There were bridge and tunnel 40-somethings sharing blunts with girls in high school. Something had sort of snapped. People were beefing and fucking. People were Tindering insanelly. The libidinal cup raneth over. But this was all good. Prejudices were melting. My Friends were linking with Your Friends in a way that maybe before they wouldn't. The pre-COVID social iceage had thawed and things were dumb and viscous.

All the while, police cars would creep on the periphery, not totally sure when to bust; it was the George Floyd summer. COVID had just ended (or had just begun in a way) and this was the Treat: a summer of incessant social hacking, of all sorts of nonsensical group configurations. It's arguable the vibe really shifted back then, but people would like to have you think it shifted during June of 2021. It doesn't really matter. The vibe is always shifting now, probably because we have an unprecedented taxonomy of vibes to work with after a 2017-2019 period of vibepoverty, save for rudimentary good and bad ones, vis-à-vis Peli Grietzer.

Summer 2021 there was the instantiation of a center, so we drank at the center. People were ready to partake in familiar hedonist goals. This was fun and also dark. More happened every night. Friend groups narrowed; more money was spent; people were doing readings. This did seem closer to a New York cultural reboot in an official sense. The one that prompted mainstream media interest. The infrastructure was taken out of the box and slowly assembled. There were center narratives and then off-center narratives but everything congealed. There was a period of time, say from June to late July, when a lot of people from LA were flying to the city, mostly for readings. They came with eyes ready to screenshot everything. They came to all the readings, they got into all the photographs, and then they left with a gift bag of clout. Thus was the designation of the LA and New York City scenes respectively: one being the kind of registrar of the other. LA became the alibi for the

libidinal denaturing of the other; travelers found themselves in the protein folds of Dimes Square's crannies and became, at once, bound and loosened.

And now we're here. The date of this publication marks months of people writing about what it's like and what it means for there to be an extant Dimes Square as if reporting an alien settlement whose dome reflects what culture we thought we had properly jagged and askew. For us, that's just more of the same shit. As a concept, though, what the Square serves to do is provide the axis for personality types, like what Eric Schmid has mapped out. The Square goes beyond Dimes: it extends through geographies. We could go as far as to say through time, through theory and philosophy. Perhaps the concern is not so much the Square but the Center from which the Square reverberates outwards. Every time a new article is published about Downtown, it reinforces the Center. Weirdly enough, what's needed to explode and polarize the Center is something like the coming hulu show *The Come Up*, which offers typologies of Downtown youths that parallel Eric's.

Considering this background, one can begin to gather how a certain creative frustration has sublimated into a currency exchange of endless criticism. What we have with the recent work of ideological critic personality / discourse aggregators like the Ion Pack, Angelicism, Mike Crumplar, and Dean Kissick too, is a kind of concentrated paradigm of shared ideas, biases, and aesthetic quandaries registered through differentiated affects upon which one can project oneself. The dispersal of substacks has imbued a universalism on the cast of characters and locations pertinent to these New York scene conversations, making the local seem vaguely global and even allegorical. Yet, despite the ostensible multiplicity of positions, there is something that feels anti-dialectical about whatever discourse that springs from the circulation of commentary. Perhaps it is a problem with the kind of custodial end result that these entities, even Angelicism's scatological authorship, have proffered over the past year or so despite an anarchic performativity that has attracted readership. In lieu of what could be labeled a vacuum in the production of

the arts, or otherwise a tectonic shift in where that production is located and how its products manifest, there is undeniably the wrangling of the means of criticism. Critics on the loose. A mangled Spy vs. Spy. Where is the Artist during all of this? It's dubious.

Perhaps the 'mid-ness' of culture pre-pandemic and the conditions of libidinal scarcity has helped sharpen a surplus of attitudes in the present, skirting a more familiar, pre-pandemic production of intellectual goods. The warped romanticism of our era implores us to desire again, to yearn for a quite classical notion of capital 'B' Beauty, but perhaps we don't want to do that anymore, or at least not on the terms a reading of the poetics of the past may ask us to. We don't need to look to the past for shards of the divine; we don't need the divine. We need not say goodbye to the axis of Dimes Square but rather for our own representations manifested on its terms to say farewell to us. Wave to the shore.

Induction vs. Deduction: Axiomatic Method

"It would be decidedly more worthwhile to advise people to read Desanti, Badiou, Pètrella, Vatin or Rancière" —Gilles Châtelet, "A Martial Art of Metaphor: Two Interviews with Gilles Châtelet"

"Every day, to earn my daily bread I go to the market where lies are bought. Hopefully I take up my place among the sellers."—Bertolt Brecht, *Poems* 1913-1956

Is there still an Outside? Should we pursue a complete abandonment of the art world power structure or is such a position undecidable with regards to navigation and commitments? Can anything be decided without some compromise and political pragmatism? Is it necessary or is it contingent to assume a position within the alternative art world when confronted with radicality? Is radicality only tenable as a position from the inside and moreover, is it an authentic praxis based on committed necessity or an expedient praxis based on haphazard contin-

gency? Can radicality only be situated outside of a given normative power structure or is that a myopic mysticism of the Real? Should political pragmatism and outsider art be reconciled? Can one only enact radicality from within the art world power structure through a trojan horse? Is the market economy governed by what Robin Mackay terms “the ‘triple alliance’ between politics, economics, and cybernetics”? How rampant and trenchant is the global nomadic overclass elite? And does the decadent bourgeois overclass ideology trickle down into the masses? Does such a top-down dissemination cause the provinces to become resentful and therefore tend towards a conservative reactionary coup? Should we not enact reform from above the elite rather than from below the elite? Don’t post-hoc observations confirm a hypothesis through statistical correlation? Rather, shouldn’t we pursue a pre-hoc pure mathematical axiomatic method which subsumes physics, economics, biology, etc? In other words, Induction vs Deduction. “Consumer Electronics – Co-opted.” Does not pure mathematics provide a methodology and toolkit by which the elite can be enlightened to enact a universalist program of the transcendental subject? Should we not act as double agents within this elite, not to enact violence to the Other – after all, Levinas tells us about ethics as first philosophy – but rather to found a universalist cognitive subject upon mathematics as first philosophy? The libidinal subject is based upon affect and leads to decadent frivolous excessiveness, which, once again, was once liberatory in the temporary autonomous zones of Studio 54, but Châtelet criticizes such a utopia and diagnoses its demise. Doesn’t “obstinate subjectivity” – as Jason Loeb calls it – rely upon an auto-foundation on hyper-subjective vulgar base materialism? Is the ‘affective’ only a front to enact the hyper-rationalist program of neo-pragmatism, transcendental computationalism and structural realism? Is it necessary to preserve the hyper-emotional in a duality with the hyper-rational? An Apollonian and Dionysian duality? To at once recognize that the empirico-libidinal actual presupposes the rationalist virtual and that it is necessary to maintain their bind in accessing the Real, instead of splitting them, which Laruelle condemns in ‘the

Decision'? Doesn't the split of the empirical (libidinal economy, libidinal materialism, libidinal nihilism) from the rational result in an insufficiency of its access to the Real? Is the unilateral duality (the conjoinment of the actual and virtual, the ontic and ontological, etc.) our only hope of saving us from ourselves, from the world and society through the heretical project of true Gnosis? Libmat AND its alibis – \neg Kantian/Hegelian synthetic universalism. "Tom Jerry – Say Goodbye 'Broke My Heart'" AND "Drexcia – Anti Vapour Waves" – \neg "Hecker – Inspection II" (Still, perhaps the ineffability of the Real is a metaphysical construct, which we should instead navigate on the epistemic grounds of functionalism.) Or instead, to reprise what we say earlier, "should we not be transparent about our experiences within the site/locale of the libidinal subject (the currency of affects) in the ideal/intuitionistic (merely mentally constructed or societally constructed) foreground, which stands as a front for a real mathematical universe and a synthetic navigation of the foreground and background, i.e. by way of a topos above such a site?" Perhaps this would be the true rationalist methodological effectivity of the futural "gardeners of the creative."

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Chapter 4

Minor Rationalism (2021)

“The difference between minorities and majorities isn’t their size. A minority may be bigger than a majority. What defines the majority is a model you have to conform to: the average European adult male city-dweller, for example . . . A minority, on the other hand, has no model, it’s a becoming, a process. One might say the majority is nobody. Everybody’s caught, one way or another, in a minority becoming that would lead them into unknown paths if they opted to follow it through. When a ‘minority creates models for itself, it’s because it wants to become a majority, and probably has to, to survive or prosper (to have a state, be recognized, establish its rights, for example). But its power comes from what it’s managed to create, which to some extent goes into the model, but doesn’t depend on it. A people is always a creative minority, and remains one even when it acquires a majority. It can be both at once because the two things aren’t lived out on the same plane. It’s the greatest artists (rather than populist artists) who invoke a people, and find they “lack a people”: Mallarme, Rimbaud, Klee, Berg. The Straubs in cinema. Artists can only invoke a people, their need for one goes to the very heart of what they’re doing, it’s not their job to create one, and they can’t. Art is resistance: it resists death, slavery, infamy, shame. But a people can’t worry about art. How is a people created, through what terrible suffering? When a people’s created, it’s through its own resources, but in

away that links up with something in art (Garrel says there's a mass of terrible suffering in the Louvre, too) or links up art to what it lacked. Utopia isn't the right concept: it's more a question of a "fabulation" in which a people and art both share. We ought to take up Bergson's notion of fabulation and give it a political meaning." – Gilles Deleuze (1)

This exhibition (2) is linked together by a loose thread, which connects artists in what would have been called "subcultural" or "counter-cultural" in a previous time. Today, I will be calling this loose thread "minor." The Deleuzian minor is best explained by his expression "becoming-minor". The minority lacks a people. Kafka had no home: he was a German-speaking Czech Jew. The artists in this exhibition are what Liam Gillick has called in *Erasmus is Late* as "not at the center of power, but central to power". (3) Secondary characters, which are willfully obscure or willfully supplemental to a traditional career or whatever narratives one crafts with traditional artist biography. The "minor" is related to the Deleuzian "middle ground".

In Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's first plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus*, "Introduction: Rhizome", they introduce a non-identitarian "image of thought," that does not fall victim to the binaries of the arborescent (tree-like) structures, which begin from roots or origins outward in a dualistic hierarchical fashion to a predetermined end. The conception of knowledge of the qualitative multiplicity or rhizome is "ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles... rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo." (4) "The line of flight" or becoming is the rhizomatic connection between one multiplicity and another, and the connection itself between multiplicities define the multiplicities that connect to one another, for a change in the number of connections (or determinations or dimensions) of these multiplicities fundamentally retransforms these multiplicities' determinations or dimensions. Becoming or drawing, (affirming or creating) lines of flight is contrasted to the arborescent structure's connective strategy of being or trac-

ing, (reacting to) pre-existing lines or structures. So while being is predicated on identity, invoking no temporality, becoming is movement through pure difference invoking temporality. Furthermore, “the middle ground” is introduced by Deleuze first in *The Logic of Sense* as “the event” to describe the productive interactions of pure forces. The dynamism of the event actualizes in many, many ways, rendered distinguishable in bodies or states, but the event itself is a confluence of pure intensities; the event has no beginning or end point, only a “middle ground” for which “becoming” moves through. For example, becoming-clandestine, becoming-minor, or becoming-animal move through “middle grounds” of rhizomatic space.

This manifesto is a call-to-arms for a new artistic movement, which I have dubbed “minor rationalism”. What unifies the artists in this exhibition, is that they operate on a decentralized network as opposed to a centralized hierarchy. They exhibit or don’t exhibit. They have run legendary project spaces that were at the vanguard of Context / neo-Conceptual art. They were the brother of a famous painter, but they were committed to being a Genius Dilettante. They exhibited at a Bed-Stuy project space for grit-minded artists. They ran a tape label anonymously, fortifying a certain rhythmic non-techno aesthetic. They were the background figure of an irreverent art collective and post-ironic trend forecasting group. They made work for years that was the outré to the Downtown scene. They recorded for years anonymously under a pseudonym and performed cold wave nights. They had an internet practice that transformed into being jack-of-all-trades. They made irreverent work that was guest curated at a former-project-space-turned-LES-gallery. They were obsessed with Odilon Redon and made a body of work that attempted new topologies of Redon’s space. They went to Städelsschule and found a home for being a total weirdo/freak. They ran a project space that exhibited every artist that was “off the beaten path” at that time. They were in an outsider rock band and became an avant-garde composer. They ran an LES gallery that was a home for conceptually-visionary artists. They made sound poetry/sound compositions

that were simultaneously elegiac and lowest fidelity. They were America's Greatest Noise besides Emil Beaulieu himself. They curated a non-exhibition in Milan. They were in an industrial band. They are a "record head" and made paintings about post-digital abstraction. They ran a seminal art blog that was formative for many artists 10 years ago. They started a gallery as a student. They frequently exhibited besides/alongside other austere conceptual artists. They theorized about noise and capitalism. They institutionally critiqued a gallery. They knocked off Kippenberger. They released on a legendary Detroit label. They ran an apartment gallery focusing on the intersection between the art world and music world.

"Minor rationalism" entails creating what Deleuze has called "circuit breakers". Deleuze writes, "We've got to hijack speech. Creating has always been something different from communicating. The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control." (5) "Minor rationalism" is "becoming-minor". It is creating a minor-literature, a minor-music, a minor-art. It is purposely "non-communicative," a form of speech that hasn't been co-opted, that hasn't become meme-ified. "It's true that, even before control societies are fully in place, forms of delinquency or resistance (two different things) are also appearing. Computer piracy and viruses, for example, will replace strikes and what the nineteenth century called "sabotage" ("clogging" the machinery). You ask whether control or communication societies will lead to forms of resistance that might reopen the way for communism understood as the "transversal organization of free individuals." Maybe, I don't know. But it would be nothing to do with minorities speaking out. Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They're thoroughly permeated by money—and not by accident but by their very nature." (6) A minor art is at the vanguard, epistemologically un-controlled by "societies of control".

In a text of mine called *Prolegomenon to a Treatise on Mathematical Structuralism*, (7) I discuss some of the precursors to what I now call "minor rationalism". I write:

"If one were to follow Diedrich Diederichsen in Kai Kein Re-

spekt, an artist could hypothesize a homofuturism/homosociality that is an anti-systematic transcendental without the ‘given’ or ‘thesis’ based on a domestic phenomenology of friendship or ‘twin speak’. A non-communication based on intimacy (‘soul-mates’?). Deleuze had said about control societies... Deleuze resounds Klossowski’s *Living Currency*, which is a psychic individuation (pulsion) or Bataille’s *Story of the Eye*, which lays out a currency of the sexual. For Klossowski, in his *Sade, My Neighbor*, there is no Godhead (‘headless’) in Republican society. Therefore these questions about the sacred or divine beauty are meaningless. But what is the real material correlate before money and commoditization of the thing, before currency? The best solution to this question of the ineffable Real is to be found in the aesthetic work of Gerald Donald, Dieter Roth, Theo Parrish, Robert Filliou, Hermann Nitsch, Dominik Steiger, Dorothy Iannone, Andre Thomkins, Isa Genzken and Jutta Koether. For example, listen to Parrish’s ‘Soul Control’ or ‘Command Your Soul’ or Donald’s *Dopplereffekt* or *ARPANET*.” (8)

But what of this “rationalism” in “minor rationalism”? In the current zeitgeist, there is a new force online, specifically that of neo-rationalism, which is a revitalisation of the pragmatist philosophies of Sellars, Peirce, Brandom in the works of Brassier, Negarestani and Wolfendale. Negarestani writes in his essay *Labor of the Inhuman*:

“The description of the content of human is impossible without elaborating it in the context of use and practices, while elaboration itself is impossible without following minimally prescriptive laws of commitment-making, inference, and judgment. Describing human without turning to an account of foundational descriptions or an a priori access to descriptive resources is already a minimally but functionally hegemonic prescriptive project that adheres to oughts of specification and elaboration of the meaning of being human through features and requirements of its use. ‘Fraught with oughts’ (Wilfrid Sellars), humanism cannot be regarded as a claim about human that can only be professed once and subsequently turned into a foundation or axiom and considered concluded. Inhumanism is a nomenclature

for the infeasibility of this one-time profession. It is a figure for the impossibility of ever putting the matter to rest once and for all.” (9)

“Minor rationalism” is the multi-modal conceptual navigation of the epistemological landscape, unmooring the classical relationship between “subject” and “object” (and the tethering between the two) and deracinating/uprooting mind from an “a priori” axiomatic foundationalism (of say atomistic first-order predicate logic) that is set-ahead of itself and defined totally as the ideological program of a movement beforehand (say of the avant-garde or neo-avantgarde).

This exhibition is interested in the development of subcultures, whether that music-world or art-world for example. We are particularly interested in the notion of “homosociality” and “homofuturism” advocated by Diedrich Diederichsen in his essay *Intimacy and Gesamtkunstwerk*. The personal “du” as it communicates and exemplifies the aesthetics of subcultural familiarity, as well as an esoteric vocabulary—whether that Kraftwerk’s music or Berliner Neue Deutsche Welle or even Fassbinder’s *Beware of a Holy Whore* commune. This thesis could be aligned with the Gnostic-Futurism of Francois Laruelle, which defines an anti-systematic vision of the visionary, which is non-identical to Being/Thought (or any authorizations of theologico-political remainders of pre-modernity) and therefore, non-thematic. Rather than ontologize language with an “a priori faktum” (e.g. as opposed to Heidegger’s *Dasein* as a mode of accessing Being), Gnostic-Futurism presents a heretical, non-Christian eschatology in the immediacy of the here-and-now through the science of the “human qua human”. For example, the highly stylized experiences within Samuel Delany’s/Drexciya’s mythopoeia de-sublimate the aura of traditional artistic narratives, while simultaneously exemplifying an underground vision.

What interests me most is how these aesthetic experiences come from subculture. The show is “about” subcultural intimacy and the creation of niche communities for (A) psycho-social integration of the individual, but also (B) to create esoteric artistic visions through the shared vocabulary of an un-

derground community and (C) to de-sublimate the aura of the artwork in the sense of “mechanical reproduction”. Through de-sublimating rarified notions of aura, bands like Die Todliche Doris presented the possibility for alternative visions through the anti-systematic poetry of very concrete, deconstructed actions.

Minor rationalism has two meanings. First, a political meaning of “minor”, and second, an epistemological meaning of some basic intelligibility to the world predicated on some transcendental computationalist intelligence. A mind which is unmoored from temporality and properly universal in scope because of its transhistorical meaning of a sociality which re-attempts the failures of the Enlightenment project (i.e. Reason). Reason is anchored not in the capitalist engine of exchange-value (i.e. communication), but rather the most essential contours of a structure through a universal construction which finds a geometric invariant above varying ideologies, philosophies, programs, perspectives.

Alex Boland, in his afterword to my treatise, writes:

“This method is at the heart of Eric’s treatise, where the genetic epistemology of Piaget, the individuation of Simondon, the theories of difference of Deleuze, and the ‘non-philosophy’ of Laruelle dovetail with the synthetic approaches of emerging areas of mathematics such as category and type theory to sketch out a kind of idealism by which one can play out new tactics for addressing the Real through a rigorous construction of the universal where the active craft of epistemology replaces the endless regress of fundamentally constipated questions that refuse to further develop and differentiate their affordances. Or, to put it another way, rather than naively positing a static a-priori backdrop as either a set of building blocks or a stage upon which everything else fundamentally acts, one effectively converges on an ideal through the construction of universalities rather than merely uncovering a passive a-priori.” (10)

The method of discovering this universality follows after the mathematician and philosopher Rene Thom, when he writes:

“Modern science has made the mistake of foregoing all ontol-

ogy by reducing the criteria of truth to pragmatic success. True, pragmatic success is a source of pregnancy and so of signification. But this is an immediate, purely local meaning. Pragmatism, in a way, is hardly more than the conceptualized form of a certain return to animal nature. Positivism batted on the fear of ontological involvement. But as soon as we recognize the existence of others and accept a dialogue with them, we are in fact ontologically involved. Why, then, should we not accept the entities suggested to us by language? Even though we would have to keep a check on abusive hypostasis, this seems the only way to bring a certain intelligibility to our environment. Only some realist metaphysics can give back meaning to this world of ours.” (11)

Only some “realist metaphysics” can save us from this philosophical quagmire. Thom goes on to argue for, in Semiophysics, “the necessity of restoring by appropriate minimal metaphysics some kind of intelligibility to our world.” (12)

Minor rationalism is without “a people” and completely esoteric, subcultural, countercultural, but it is also a philosophical agenda, one that is free from the pitfalls of modernist utopia and ideology.

Alex Boland writes in his afterword to my *Prolegomenon*:

“In category theory, all such universal constructions therefore exist ‘up to isomorphism’, where any two things that are isomorphic are things that are different in name only; by finding such isomorphisms, one further deflates excess ontological gestures in favor of the only operationally relevant thing: the pattern; a set, at least in category theory, no longer represents a collection of anything in the usual sense, but simply plays a role in a system defined by other sets. . . . This leap from contingency to unequivocal syntactic entailment is one in which the universal is not a given, either as a detached set of rules or an inscrutable oneness by which any idea of free will is rendered moot, but a fundamentally uncertain journey from bricolage to empiricism to reason by which tinkering within one’s local neighborhood is contextualized by its burgeoning interactions with an unavoidable outside and ultimately subsumed into a universalism of our

own making, thus avoiding the idle mysticism that Reza Negarestani mercilessly (and correctly) pans in his aforementioned essay on the ‘localization of the concept’.” (13)

“Minor rationalism” is an esoteric universalism, a construction of the global, piecewise, from the local.

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End notes:

Deleuze, G. Negri, A. Gilles Deleuze in conversation with Antonio Negri. *Futur Antérieur*, 1990;1.

This was written by Eric Schmid as curatorial text for an exhibition scheduled to be staged on Baader-Meinhof, June 2021. Contributors include: Eric Schmid, Mattin, Stephan Dilleuth, Markus Oehlen, Robert Bittenbender, Ser Serpas, Connor Camburn, Ramsey Alderson, Lauren Burns-Coady, Emma McMillan, Matthew Langan-Peck, Asha Sheshadri, Moritz Smid, Chris Fratesi, Eirik Sæther, Rachelle Rahmé, Ben Schumacher, Dustin Hodges, Zoe Barcza, Adam Revington, Benjamin Scott, Eli Ping, Zoë Mpeletzikas, Kiera Mulhern, Ben Horns, Israel Lund, Emma Sims, Joshua Boulos Joshua Abelow, and Jason Hirata.

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Chapter 5

On Messianism: Theodor Adorno vs. Walter Benjamin (2011)

He who upholds himself in the messianic vocation no longer knows the as if; he no longer has similitudes at his disposal. He knows that in messianic time the saved world coincides with the world that is irretrievably lost, and that, to use Bonhoeffer's words, he must now really live in a world without God. This means that he may not disguise this world's being-without-God in any way. The saving God is the God who abandons him, and the fact of representations (the fact of the as if) cannot pretend to save the appearance of salvation. The messianic subject does not contemplate the world as though it were saved. In Benjamin's words, he contemplates salvation only to the extent that he loses himself in what cannot be saved; this is how difficult it is to dwell in the calling.

Giorgio Agamben identifies a structural homology between "as if" and the condition that can be neither attributed as, on the one side, neuroses, and, on the other, psychoses, but resides on the borderline. These borderline personalities act as if they were normal, as if there wasn't a problem through the pathology

of repeated self-assurance, yet ultimately this forms the basis of their fundamental discomfort, their emptiness. Splitting between the poles - black and white, thesis and antithesis, etc. - instead of synthesizing a resolution, fuels a vicious cycle where personal boundaries become highly subjective (subject to objects) and extremely hard to demarcate in gradients. Waves of grandiose delusional obsession crash as amalgamations of broken expectations inflame insecurities toward an existential being-toward-death. Objects of affection are conflated with their own self-hate, transmuted into an 'impossible love,' a dualism between the intensities of hyper-idealization and hypo-devaluation.

Giorgio Agamben has read Jacob Taubes remark on Messianism - Theodor A would never believe in Walter B's full-blown Messianism (A regarded it as an "unmediated unity" between theory and praxis). A doesn't go full-blown, but instead borderline with something Taubes calls "as if Messianism" (an "aestheticization of Messianism"), which is "wonderful," but "finally empty," unlike B's Messianism, which Taubes calls "substantial" - with the first sentence of A's Aesthetic Theory, which defines beauty as "der Bann über den Bann" which translates as "the spells over spells." To be limited to the realm of aesthetic beauty, traumatized and doomed to a depersonalized modality of being without any substantive core or essence, is the enchantment that the philosopher has self-defeatingly placed upon himself. In *Negative Dialectics*, A writes, "philosophy lives on because the moment to realize it was missed." Through a self-casted enchantment of a world without positivity, the philosopher has missed his chance to reason, therefore he can only speculate the appearance of redemption. In *Subject and Object*, A writes, "man is a result, not an *eidos*." The subject is empty without the object, but still, even with the object at hand, A acts as if in the face of "disasters," or in other words, absolute is the asymmetrical immediacy between the blind subject and objects, forsaking the possibility of Hegelian positive reconciliation. A is too stubborn to give up what he regards the most highly: negativity.

*Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 42.

*Ibid, p. 36-37

*Ibid, p. 35

*Theodor A, Subject and Object, 511

*For Hegel, Christ's material death insofar as to sublimate [Aufhebung] the negation of the negation - positive resurrection, Infinite externalizing itself in finitude only as to reach a higher self-consciousness.

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Redemption is the charging of the unrealized moment, as St. Paul had said only through weakness is strength. Walter B writes in Thesis XV of Theses on the Philosophy of History, "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [Jetztzeit]. Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome incarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past." The coincidence of a Now and another Now is the charging of Now times. These are moments without any narration of how these Nows are coincident (empty history puts them in a linear progression), but rather the Messianic charge to allow further possibilities. This repetition of one Now with another is not the mimetic replication of one for another—a means of identically coding one time in the language of another—but rather the repetition blasts that which is repeated—the repetition differentiates and shows another vantage point of the multiplicity, another rhetorical representation of the singularity. It is the opening of one time to another, a leap or vehicle for a truly new dimension of interrelation and time.

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. . . . This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front

of his feet. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Thesis IX underlines a description of history where there is not a need for teleos. The angel looking backward cannot see into the future. The storm, progress, is an empirical time, based upon a myth that propels empty time forward. For the angel, ruins upon ruins of debris appear to be the result of a single catastrophe. The problem of describing history in terms of a teleology, all that really has occurred is the barbaric act of universalizing history. That is to say, even to hold history as all the great things which humanity has produced, with these massive heaps of ruinous disaster staring the angel straight in the face, cultures cannot be extracted from barbarism. In Thesis VII, he writes, “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.” B’s historical materialist’s role then is to go against the grain as an angel. He opts out for persisting the generic Churchillian “history by the victors” and acknowledges not the liberated grandchildren—like the populist—but rather the enslaved ancestors.

Redemption is the return to the structure of Origin, which is not to be confused with Genesis, an “empirical” conception, but an Origin, which is never complete and constantly re-established or the real birth of history. There is no difference between the Origin and the End. Origin subsumes history, while genesis can manipulate history (Agamben furthers this claim in reading it as a kind of non-instrumental rationality, “Means without Ends”). The term origin is intended to describe the process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. “In history or the origin, repetition is necessitated: so long as there

is unfulfilled possibility, the repetition has not fulfilled total redemption: becoming and disappearance of the permutations of the singularity proceeds. This dialectic [of Origin] shows singularity and repetition to be conditioned by one another in all essentials.”

*Walter B, *Illuminations*, p. 261

**Ibid*, p. 257-8

**Ibid*, p. 256-257

*Walter B, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 45

**Ibid*, p. 46

B's epistemo-critical prologue featured in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* is crucial to describe redemption: "Ideas are timeless constellations, and by virtue of the elements being seen as points in such constellations, phenomena are subdivided and at the same time redeemed." In B's epistemology, concepts bring knowledge and ideas bring truth. It is the place of concepts, which we encounter in positivist approximations of the world, to come to understand ideas. Here, B posits that these truths are timeless. In Kantian terms, here the concept seeks to represent noumenal constellations of phenomena. Ideas are not knowledge of phenomena, but rather the representation of the redeemed phenomena. Concepts have a notorious reputation for enslaving phenomena. As the subject tries to understand the object, these concepts can empower the subject when the subject disregards the asymmetry of immediacy: that the object cannot be understood, even if the subject intends to. The object's non-identity—the thing-in-itself—always eludes identity. In this matter, B elaborates upon the dominance of intention, "Truth is an intentionless state of being. The proper approach to it is not therefore one of intention and knowledge but rather a total immersion and absorption in it. Truth is the death of intention." Intentional concepts therefore cannot find truth, for that implies the phenomena are not reconstituted into their fundamental elements, for truth can't be found through ritualized steps toward a goal—a teleos—always through escape-processes,

indirect thought processes that can touch upon truth. “Truth itself is not an intent which realizes itself in empirical reality; it is the power which determines the essence of this reality.” In this respect, B describes how in Messianic time, every moment would immanently radiant with light privileging one moment over another, as “this does not imply for the Jews the future redemption will be the fulfillment of time. Every second was. . .” the case through which the Messiah existed. Moreover, the philosophy of the Messiah is permeable to any being-whatsoever, as is found in the standard rendition by Isaiah and later Luke that the Messiah would arrive in an impoverished family.

The power to redeem the past generations is at the heart of Messianic time. B writes in Thesis II, “[the past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that.” The weak Messianic power is endowed upon us, and thus shared with our ancestors, a structure, which exists throughout time. For the Messiah is in each of us (“It is no longer I who live” St. Paul says, “but the Messiah living in me”). The Messianic power is the radical rupture in which empirical time could be revolutionized, in that it would be the end of time as time has come to be, and replace it with a Messianic time—time without time—drawing from the well of *kairos*, not the source of *chronos* as Paul Chan has articulated (St. Paul had called the Messianic event “*ho nyn kairos*” or “the time of the now”). The descriptor “weak” is not presupposing the existence of a “strong” power, but rather referencing a finitude inherent to the messianic structure of all historical possibilities—just as the temporal index of a possibility can be redeemed, it can be missed, forgotten, uncharged simultaneously. For Messianic time, salvation comes just as there is no salvation. In B’s philosophy of history, the Messianic power is the dual moment of possibility to be redeemed and not redeemed.

But the subject that wants to learn about the past, that wants to know it, often times uses the past to justify the present. B wants to avoid this temporal relation between the present and past (where the past is coded into the language of the present) that conditions the past to domination under the armistice of teleos. The teleos must take its appearance arbitrarily because of the structural finitude of B's history. The possibility that the past is realized means that it can also be unrealized. Salvation comes simultaneous with no Salvation. In order for the phenomena to immanently transcend the empirical realm (that is to get sight of the ideas from the tools of concept), the moment must repeat, but not mythically unchanged, rather substantively "New." The holiday was an example B described. Through a fundamental transformation of the calendar and temporal sense, the remembrance of a past moment, would not only allow for arrest, but also punctuate the time into timelessness because through repetition of the event, the characteristic weakness - the weak power to punctuate the moment - is its finite structure.

Messianic time implies a fleetingness of the wanting-to-be-redeemed moment. For example, if this wanting-to-be-redeemed moment were staring the subject right in the face, it would never be redeemed, as time would instead be used to propagate the continuum of history in empirical time. Thesis V: "The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again." The "now of recognizability" is the allotted and defined time during which a dialectical image can be read.

Though there cannot merely be alternative canons of history that through identic manner of the monuments and archives historicizes the unredeemed phenomena; there is always the dual moment of the forgotten and unforgotten. Salvation and no Salvation, the redeemed and unredeemed, etc. B recognizes the problem in history being empirically understood as merely replica. From Thesis XIV, "Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago, it is a tiger's

leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class give the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood the revolution.” Fashion’s jump to the past was non-mediated, as suggested by the distinction drawn between the first kind of jump and the second jump, the latter “the dialectical one.” In order for the few moments of transcendence to not be obscured by the dominance of homogeneous time, which are nothing but “ruins upon ruins,” the Now-time must blast the continuum of history. “That which is ‘always-already-the-same’ is not the event, but the element of newness in it.” Here the same repeats itself as “new” but in the same mythic nature. In the capitalistic society, newer and newer commodities present, in much like fashion does, the same old myth. “The illusion of novelty is reflected, like one mirror in another, in the illusion of infinite sameness.” Therefore, it is the historicist’s sense of time that is mythic, while the historical materialist’s sense of time is dialectic.

It’s not what is past that casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: it is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic).

The dialectical image is the frozen image. It is situated in the constellation of different Nows. The dialectical image is precisely the coincidence of Now moments, which blasts these moments to merge into an image. The dialectical image does not narrativize, prolonging the historical continuity defined by empirical time, but rather looks in the “rough and jagged places” where history is discontinuous. These places are a “hold for anyone wishing

to get beyond these [continuous] points.” The materialist blasts things out of the historical continuum—but in doing so it brings about a new venture for storing images, a materialist history.

The dialectical images are placed in constellations and neighbored with repetitions of the image that are not, as they often are, the victors of the homogenous history. For example, B writes “Just as Gideon teaches us we can read the basic features of today’s architecture out of buildings of the 1850s, so we read today’s life, today’s forms of art and life [and] the apparently secondary, forgotten forms of that era.” Right at the heart of the dialectical image, the return to unrealized prospects is the “telescoping of the past through the present.” It is not “the eternal image of the past” but rather the image of eternity. “It is the function of concepts to group phenomena together, and the division which is brought about within them thanks to the differentiating power of the understanding is all the more significant in that it brings about two things at a single stroke: the redemption of phenomena and the representation of ideas.” Through the subdivision of concepts, phenomena fundamentally reconstitute to their elements, and with that, redeem. Concepts approximate phenomena, and when phenomena are divided in the right fixed points, into essences by the concept’s virtue, the constellation reveals itself immediately, as it represents the idea. “To the form of the new means of production that in the beginning is still dominated by the old one (Marx), there correspond in the societal superstructure wish images in which the new is intermingles with the old in fantastic ways.” In the dialectical images, the wishfulness points toward a desire, but at the same time, shows the deficiencies in that dream.

Finale. - The only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption: all else is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and es-

trange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light. To gain such perspectives without velleity or violence, entirely from felt contact with its objects - this alone is the task of thought. It is the simplest of all things, because the situation calls imperatively for such knowledge, indeed because consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror image of its opposite. But it is also the utterly impossible thing, because it presupposes a standpoint removed, even though by a hair's breadth, from the scope of existence, whereas we well know that any possible knowledge must not only be first wrested from what is, if it shall hold good, but is also marked, for this very reason, by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape. The more passionately thought denies its conditionality for the sake of the unconditional, the more unconsciously, and so calamitously, it is delivered up to the world. Even its own impossibility it must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible. But beside the demand thus placed on thought, the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters.

Reading A's notes to Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* may serve as a tool for understanding the parts of the *Finale* where he remarks upon "despair" as "the last ideology," "the impossibility of thought, the "violence" and "distortions" of positivity that must be brought out, the naivete of thinking as if knowledge could be "unconditional," and moreover, how it hardly matters whether a philosophy from the standpoint of redemption is a matter "of reality or unreality." For A, after the Second World War or event of the destruction of everything, often times referred to as the proper noun of "Auschwitz," humankind sat in a mode of vegetation beyond any means of conceptually identifying, for a subject to specifically identify a concept was out

of a simplification of the unrealized suffering of countless victims. That is, specificity presupposes the impossibility of describing the apocalypse; hermeneutic skills for the subject are simply gone (i.e., Thinking after Auschwitz). Anything that can be said is not negative for As Beckett, the identical is unmediated and the only immediacy is through the nonidentical: when Inhalt is completely emptied out, all that is left of our minimal existence are the remainders of thought at the level of pure Form. In the beginning of *Endgame*, the first words, which are also the last of Christ, express the problem of identification: it's never finished. Through the equivocation of intentionalist meanings, the mocking of conceptual identifications as in the absurd "forlorn particules," the trash cans, the refrigerators, the disembodied voices, the family structure, the nature outside, the pain killers, etc.—communication proclaims the end of communication. When all that is left is to remark at the level of triviality—the almost pathological repetition of "Ah yesterday" or weather "as usual" without any true reference, pointing to nothing like an empty signifier—time has now stopped, along with the historical epoch, and if the subject were a historical category, then it is completely abdicated for it cannot even consciously conceive of its consciousness in history because it has forgotten it. And because the subject has forgotten its consciousness, we are now presented with the despair; the impossibility, the unconditionality, which must be faced in the last analysis of any philosophy, which A throughout his life attempts to reconcile through the negative dialectic.

In A's epistemology, in the concept, the subject dominates the object, by classifying the object positively, by identification groupings. But what the positive identification concept always misses is the "nonidentity," for all it can do is describe the singularity in terms of universal kinds - which exchange particular elements - and never understand das Nichtidentische that eludes identity. Because of the nonidentity, Adorno believes in a "limit-concept" to which concepts can effectively approximate an object without having created a concept of the singularity. "As soon as we reflect upon the single... individual as an indi-

vidual, in the form of a universal concept - as soon as we cease to mean only the present existence of this particular person (or thing) - we have already turned it into a universal." Therefore A suggests, borrowing the term from B, "setting [concepts] in constellation... illuminates what is specific to the thing, to which the classificatory procedure is indifferent." As constellations then attempt to configure a negative dialectic - a differential between the positive identification categories and, only after having speculated upon thought itself, negatively approximate the non-identical. A writes, "no universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb." There is no universal history without barbarism, as subjects cannot exhaustively understand objects, so much was true for B's epistemology with respect to the polemics of Foucault's time: "the unity of the concept that connects the discontinuous, chaotically splintered moments and phases of history" is "the unity of the control of nature, progressing over men, and finally to that over men's inner nature." At the same time, A says that a discontinuous history would too easily succumb to "pure facticity as the only thing to be known and therefore accepted." He rebukes B's heterogeneous time: "in B's work the concepts have an authoritarian tendency to conceal their own conceptuality." If the concept must leave a remainder, then after the event is metaphysics too ugly to show itself in its absolute terms or is A so emotionally disregarded that what really blinds him are not conceptual rays of positivity but his negativity, blinding him from seeing the light?

*Theodor A, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 53

*Theodor A, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 251

*Theodor A, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 162

*Ibid, p. 320

*Ibid, p. 319-320

*Ibid, p. 62

Chapter 6

Ontological Warfare: Subject as Universal Singularity vs. Object as Statist Particularity (2016)

In the gap [l'écart] between the spaces of thought of Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière exists a topological invariant, preserved under homeomorphic transformations of the Real—the continuous deformation of \mathbb{R} in the terms of object-ifications, the n -tuples of re-presentations, each coordinate counting according to some relative center of gravity respective to it, that is, an implicit Master who distributes the status quo by positive category (inscribing places of the Real with predicates, roles and functions). The topology is collective, as the Real constitutes itself universally by the postulation of a single axiom as True: the equality of everyone and anyone in the universal capacity to contingently declare in a moment the subject-ivization of a singularity (the void that is devoid of all predicates or place [lieu], real-ly infinitely dense with the excess of a positively New category of being).

While both thoughts reject the discourses tied to Mastery,

whether it be the exceptionary belonging of Judaic political theology or the logo-centric wisdom of the political-philosophical project, Badiou remains intensely theologico-political in a Pauline modality of eventual fidelity, a diagonalization of the subjective figures in the situation of “prophet” and its obverse “philosopher” to “the apostle”; on the other side, Rancière’s politics pre- and supersede the conjunction with the “theologico.” For example, Rancière demarcates the historical-epistemological definition of the “theologico-political” offered by Claude Lefort—after the dis-incorporation of the “double body” of the king, mortal and divine, democracy births the epoch of indetermination through the sacrifice of the symbolic body: the empty place left to violent reincorporations, such as totalitarianism and terrorism—as particularist, wherein the doubling of body is not an originary theological sacrifice persisting throughout time (like original sin), but the inherent opposition within which Nature itself is battling for its performative self-constitution. The “double body” is atemporal; its historicity is not an ontological dimension. So Rancière does not constitute the division between “void” and “excess” after a moment like the event, as an ontological division demonstrated through the singular 1-off acts of subjectivity.

The following text is an attempt to outline the structural contours of identification by reading a constellation of texts by Badiou and Rancière—the Police in Rancière’s *Disagreement* and the State of the Situation in bits of Badiou’s *Being and Event* and Saint Paul—as to hopefully graph the torsion of the asymptotal remainders to identification: disidentification in its anti-philosophical intensities.

An attempt to summarize Badiou’s ontology, albeit somewhat simplistically:

In his magnum opus *Being and Event*, Badiou makes an ontological distinction between the positive order of Being and the Event. Being is in identity with Knowledge, which is particularizing and objective, since it names elements of the situation as parts or objects that occupy place within an algebra of discerned particulars, the very language of the situation that

registers elements symbolically as finite totalities through encyclopedic classifications (genuses, species, etc.). Whether or not those classifications are “proper” to an element, or to definitively determine the transformation of an object in the State of the Situation, is completely indifferent since the consistency of the presentation of names is ontologically of the first order of Being, which is immanent to the situation, so the enumerative transformations are in relation to the transformations of the language that names parts/subsets. These are regenerated from the point at the edge of Being, the void forming the site of the Event. The Event ruptures the positive order of Being (beings, what there is), subtracting out from Knowledge something substantively New in the realm of Nonbeing (nonbeings, what is not), deposing the constituted knowledges of the State of the Situation: a Truth that is universalizing and subject-ive, since the Event acts as a supplement to all potential subjects who create the Truth bit by bit in declaring militant fidelity to it, thereby, symmetrically, composing themselves collectively as a New subjectivity.

Badiou insists that mathematics is “the science of being-quabeing.” If “Mathematics = Ontology” and philosophy is “meta-ontology,” then there is somewhat of a return—through a mappable homology—to Platonic Forms: the domain of the constructed set is the realm of appearances in which a consistent multiple presents, with a localizable geometry, an instantiation of the pure multiple, a being that is inconsistent in multiple (the pure Idea). Truths oppose opinions—which he calls representations without any truth. Opinions are the material of everyday communication; opinions need only be communicable and circulate as the “cement of sociality.”¹ An element or multiple from the perspective of Opinion is approached as a constructed set (classified and represented with certain discerned, finite predicates).

Truth is of the realm of noncommunication—“what is not known”—and fundamentally unrepresentable as Totality. What Badiou calls the “void,” which is the site of an Event, is mathematically expressed as the empty set, which is included within

any set. An element or multiple from the perspective of a Truth-process—declaring fidelity to the Event—is approached as a generic set (destitute of all categorical differences and classifications), infinite in the size and scope of its nondiscriminating address to all potential subjects. Badiou then draws a distinction between two types of multiplicity. There is the objectal, particularizing multiplicity—which is statist, as it carries its own limit, marked by a predicate, an object that it names in finite terms in the language of the situation, and the objective then becomes to void out, to annihilate, everything but the abstract, constructed multiple of a single set of predicate totalities. The objective multiplicity is also multiplied by the finite objectification of the Real (as is evidenced in all discourses tied to Mastery, through the Totality of re-presentation) like the consistent multiple or constructed set.² The Power Set of any constructed set (the enumeration of all elements, the counting of all elements “as One”) is mapped to the power of the State of the Situation. Ethically, the living animal that thinks in terms of pre-identified objects (predicates that assign predicates to objects) in the constituted knowledges of the state of things is the Mortal, a being-for-death whose thought dies away just as he does. On the other hand, there is the subjective, universalizing multiplicity—which is always in excess of itself, supernumerary relative to itself and to any distributions by an objective situation (representations or the constructed sets of finite totalities); that is, destitute of all differences and therefore addressed to all subjects, who declare, as militants, conviction to the event.³ The subjective multiplicity is multiplied by the infinity of the Real, its always being in excess of being (as are the post-Cantorian transfinite sets, varying in sizes of infinity, from which Badiou’s ontology is based), and, like the generic set, is inconsistent in its multiple-being. Man is the Immortal who thinks as a subject that takes it upon himself to declare fidelity to a Truth that will last for eternity.

THE DISCOURSES OF MASTERY FOR BADIOU’S ST. PAUL

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach

the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the preaching of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and thwart the cleverness of the clever. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and a folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth, but God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong; God chose what is base and despised in the world, and even things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, so that no one might glorify himself in his presence. (1 Corinthians 1.17–29)

Paul, often referred to as the Apostle of Nations, mentions the entities “Greek” and “Jew” within the lexicon of his letters. Most famously in Letters to Galatians 3.28, Paul writes, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female.” Badiou goes so far as to say these multiples do not refer to discrete ethno-social-religious customs, peoples, or territories, but rather refer to a set of two subjective dispositions represented by the discourses of Greek philosophy and Judaic law—the constituted knowledges of the State of the

Situation of Paul's time. St. Paul was a distant figure from Christ; he did not know him personally and only declared his fidelity to the Christ-event three to four years after the event on the road to Damascus—definitively without any memory or material witnessing of the event. For Badiou's Paul, the event—Christ dying on the Cross and being resurrected—is not a matter of a facticity, verifiable or falsifiable, subjected to mere proof, but of conviction and faith [pistis]. Faith is what subjectifies:

Resurrection summons the subject to identify himself as such according to the name of faith (pistis)... In the guise of the event, the subject is subjectivation. The word pistis (faith, or conviction) designates precisely this point: the absence of any gap between subject and subjectivation. In this absence of a gap, which constantly activates the subject in the service of truth, forbidding him rest, the One-truth proceeds in the direction of all.⁴

When Paul goes to Greece, he gives a big speech to the Athenian philosophers, the usual spiel—Christ died and was resurrected—to which they all burst out laughing and leave. The subjective figure presented by the Greek logos, the wise philosopher, asks questions and finds answers insofar as to Master the finite totality of a thing through the allocation of the real place of that thing within the totality (Whole) of the cosmos. For what else is the exertion of Mastery other than the one who can master the place of each and every thing within the cosmos through the imperative of QA? Similarly, the Judaic commandments inscribe a predicate of finite terms in stone for eternity. What else is the subjective figure of the Jewish discourse, the prophet, other than the one who seeks to be a Master of the scripture—the Judaic law—through re-interpretation of any sign of the Messiah's coming (any signal of the exception to the Whole)?

What is the difference between posing good and bad questions? The bad questions already have answers to them (a "multiple choice" of sorts) and the good ones remain without the presupposed standardized categories. The bad questions that

already have the answers, which assign the real certain objectal descriptions, falsely establishing identitarian categories as the basis and assumption for which the singularity of a thing must be explained as mastered. What he calls a “materialistic” philosophy is not the subject’s radical negation of all being that is in existence, but the subtraction of a New category of Being out from Being through declaring fidelity (a faith) to an Event in order to create a Truth (out from non-being) that becomes the basis of not just his whole life, but a subjectivity-Truth for an eternity of lives to come. St. Paul would combat the mortality, or being-toward- death, in the statist law that organized the state of things (to the commandments of Moses, which allocated the functions and roles of life, Paul would at one point say in Romans 7.11: “the law killed me”).

THE ABSOLUTE DISJUNCTION

The thought of the flesh is death, the thought of the spirit is life. — St. Paul in Romans 8.6 (Badiou’s translation)

Alain Badiou’s antidialectic between death and resurrection presents not negation of the previous term, but instead extraction, subtraction out from the previous term. Jesus Christ subtracted with his Resurrection a New modality of being—that is, Life—out from the finite modality of being, that is Death. The antidialectical method presents an absolute disjunction between death and resurrection. There is no negation of death into resurrection, but rather, a subtraction of death, which could then, potentially but not necessarily, form the basis of a site for the Truth-Event, the void out of which the ontological situation could reinvent itself through an immanent break in the situation with an Excess of New Being, namely the modality of Life. Christ is not the mediation to know God, but a coming, an encounter that interrupts the previous regime of discourse.⁵ St. Paul presents a genuinely New subjective figure that opposes the Master of the two previous discourses (which Badiou compares to Lacan’s “antiphilosophical”): the apostle. Paul had said in 2 Corinthians 12.1–2: “The Lord said to me: ‘My grace is suf-

ficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ I will all the more gladly glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me ... for when I am weak, then I am strong.”). Just as in 1 Corinthians 1.17–29, Paul is militant in pursuing the discourse of folly and weakness, and never glorifying himself in the wisdom and knowledge of the Master. The apostle is not mediated by History (for Paul had no memory or material witnessing) but rather stands only by what can interrelate to an object that is not autonomously located with a determined place (role and function) in the order of things, but the very Real that is forever incomplete and inconsistent in its multiplicity, which the subject becomes through its faith and conviction. The Death of Christ—for Badiou’s Paul—sets the eventual site within the “situation” at its void, which acts as an immanentization of the situation—subtracting a new relation, the becoming-son (God-filiating Son), out from the previous relation to the situation and God—God as transcendent Father figure. After “the sending of son,” all that matters is that Jesus was resurrected and nothing else is particular about him, imbuing a new creature devoid of predicates, the relation of the becoming-son, as in Jesus, so that we all can filiate with God as universal subjectivity.

RANCIÈRE’S POLITICS

The first requirement of universality is that speaking beings universally belong to the linguistic community. It is always dealt with in “abnormal” communication situations... Such polemical situations are those in which one of the partners of the interlocution refuses to recognize one of its features (its place, its object, its subjects).⁶

Whoever has no part—the poor of ancient times, the third estate, the modern proletariat—cannot in fact have any part other than all or nothing.⁷

Politics has no objects or issues of its own.⁸

In *Disagreement*, Rancière's entire political project starts by re-examining "the beginning" of the whole political question by zooming in on the singularity: Book I of Aristotle's *Politics*. The basis of the morphology for Aristotle arises from a performativity of subjectivity, playing on Aristotle's distinction between the human and the animal, and the distribution of sense proper to each: to speak is already to possess a *logos*, to exist as a human being within the body-politic, the "distribution of speaking bodies," that is, to be seen and recognized within the sensible field, "the partition of the perceptible," and so to have the sense to express what is useful and harmful (and thus to place in common what is just and unjust within the community of parts); to moan, to growl, or to emit noise is to possess *phonus*, which simply relates to the possession of the organ of the voice, endowed to all animals, and has a limited purpose, merely to indicate—not to express—what is pleasure and pain, a sense that exists outside the distribution reserved for speaking bodies (which can express the just and unjust) in order to exist within the community of parts.⁹

For Aristotle, there are three *axia* (quality or rank)—*oligio* or wealth, *arête* or virtue, and *demos* or freedom—which mark the three bodies of beings in the community: the oligarchy, the aristocracy, and the democracy. The law of the oligarchy is clearly the governance of the arithmetic of exchange. After the abolition of slavery, which promoted the submission of the balancing act of exchange and reparation, the arithmetic order, to the ideal constructions of proportion, the divine geometric order, Rancière amalgamates the law of the oligarchy with that of the aristocracy for a negative definition of *qualis* of the *demos*: without any positive quality of their own—"no wealth, no virtue"—the people appropriate freedom as their own proper quality, when in fact, the other *axia*—the oligarchy and aristocracy—share an entitlement to this right that defines the *demos*' community.

Rancière begins his political project by re-evaluating Aristotle's opposition between speaking body and organ of the voice, as not the inherent given on which politics must be based, but

rather the very dispute or contention that must institute politics itself: to manifest the wrong [tort] done to those speaking bodies without any qualification or political capacity (as a member of the community of parts), who are mystically deemed animals, incapable of speech, by the underlying symbolic order. To begin to come to terms with politics is to recognize the battleground of the opposition between body and voice: the wrongs done to those speechless beings who can actually speak because of the “double body” of speech. Logos is, in one sense, simply to possess speech, but in another sense, it is the account of speech by the social order. The social order demarcates the domain and power of logos based upon the “partition of perception,” and so those who are visible within the field of perception are assigned a count, namely, the privilege to speak and thus a part to place in common what is just and unjust in the community of parts.¹⁰ Those who are invisible within the field of perception are assigned no count (are unaccounted) and thus have no part in the community but all or nothing: no special privileges, just what is shared with all animals, the emission of sound (rabbling and revolting away, but tamed in perfunctory fashion by the great animal-tamers, the marked logos-bearers).

Politics occurs in the space between the two senses of logos, by the playing out of the relationship between speech and the account of it. This is to set up a series of speech acts emanating from the bodiless beings, to expose the incommensurable at the basis of the distribution of speaking bodies: to have a social order, a community of parts in measured proportion, is to understand logos as that which orders and gives the right to order. Society has order because there are people who command orders (the bodied, counted, logos-bearers) and people who obey orders (the bodiless, uncounted, logos-less); but for one to obey an order is already (1) to understand the order and (2) to understand that one must obey. The first understanding at the level of the content of the order demonstrates an inequalitarian division between the two people—You do this! I do not!—and the second meaning at the level of form of the order of sensible presupposes an egalitarian division—you understand that I have

logos and you do not, yet to understand the mark of speech is to have speech. A famous tale of Livy's, rewritten in the nineteenth century by Pierre-Simon Ballanche, highlights the revolt of those nameless beings, the Plebeians, against the community members, the Patricians, in the Roman era. Instead of staging a violent revolution, the Plebeians decided one day, through a series of speech acts, that they too could speak. They "wrote themselves a name in the sky," conducted meetings with their own oracles, and decided that they too can draw up contracts and baptize representatives. When they meet with the Patricians who were astonished that they were speaking, the Patricians give an apologia that lasts an entire day, explaining to them that there was no way in hell they could speak. The Plebeians, having understood, knew that they too could speak, and simply listened to the apologia, thanking them only insofar as to get onto what they want to do all along: to make a treaty.¹¹ As if to re-evaluate the relationship between speech and its account, which is divided by the perceptual configuration that demarcates the domains of the logos and phonos, the Plebeians, without any measurable count in the community or partition in the perceptual order, constructed their own existence within "partition of the perceptible," in which they could be seen and recognized within a symbolic order, and could thus, as speaking beings—they just like the Patricians—become members of the community and the body-politic by manifesting the incommensurable that escapes the count, that the adding up of the parts of the community, the multiple, never sums up to the whole. The Patricians' domination has no effectiveness other than the sheer contingency of any social order whatsoever (the absence of an *arkhe*, a beginning/ founding, of community).

The police distributes logos to those individuals that appear within the partition of the perceptible and leaves those without logos unaccounted for. The police logic is not to be confused with the petty police, concerned with "law enforcement"; the police logic is the accounting apparatus of identification, which assigns individuals the roles and functions allotted to them by their partition of the perceptible.

The police is, essentially, the law, generally implicit, that defines a party's share or lack of it. But to define this, you first must define the configuration of the perceptible in which one or the other is inscribed. The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise.¹²

To put it simply: the politeia of the philosophers is the exact identity of politics and the police. This identity has two aspects. On the one hand, the politics of the philosophers identifies politics with the police. It places it in the regime of the One distributed as parts and roles. It incorporates the community in the assimilation of its laws to ways of life, to the principle of the breathing of a living body. But this incorporation does not mean that political philosophy comes down to the naturalness of policing. Political philosophy exists because this naturalness is lost, the age of Khronos is behind us, and, anyway, its much-trumpeted blissfulness celebrates only the imbecility of a vegetative existence.¹³

The political philosophy project, which Rancière dismisses as the very identity of police and politics, can be read through the lens of Theodor Adorno's philosophical negativity. For Adorno, after the Second World War, or event of the destruction of everything, often referred to as name "Auschwitz," humankind sat in a mode of vegetation beyond any means of conceptually identifying, for a subject to specifically identify a concept would act as a simplification of the unrealized suffering of countless victims. That is, specificity presupposes the impossibility of describing the apocalypse; hermeneutic skills for the subject are simply

gone. (This may correspond to his readings of “No Thinking after Auschwitz”). Anything that can be said is not negative for Adorno; the identical is unmediated and the only immediacy is through the nonidentical: when *Inhalt* is completely emptied out and all that is left are the remainders of thought at the level of pure Form, our minimal existence. Time as *Khronos* has now stopped, along with the historical epoch, and if the subject were a historical category, then it is completely abdicated, for it cannot even consciously conceive of its consciousness in history because it has forgotten it. Politics, then, arises from the contention between the police logic, which is identificatory, and the egalitarian logic, which is disidentificatory. Or put in other words, there are no rights that articulate self-evident premises on which one is entitled to a certain place (a role and function) in the order of things (e.g., because I am a “worker,” the space of work is demarcated to the private space; because I am a “woman,” the space of life is demarcated to the home, etc.), only wrongs, which manifest the part who has no part in the order of things by demonstrating their (formerly unaccounted for) existence via the presupposition of the equality of everyone and anyone as speaking subjects. Rancière maintains that the egalitarian logic sets up an equality between any speaking body whatsoever, that anyone can potentially speak, even those that the police logic (the Master) identifies as incapable of such.

Any subjectification is a disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted where a connection is made between having a part and having no part.¹⁴

For Rancière, only through disidentification are subjects actually created at a moment when the bodiless can demonstrate their capacity to actually speak by the presupposition that to understand a command is already to possess *logos*. Disidentification is always a one-act performance that can never be set up in advance, occurring through the inscription of a subject

name that is different from any identifiable part of the community. It makes apparent the wrong of identification whose prescriptions are ostensibly to enable a social order to set up a community of parts, for a generality of time (manyacts), but in fact, it is ultimately and utterly contingent. A good example that Rancière reads is when, in 1832, a judge asks the revolutionary Louis Auguste Blanqui to give his profession, to which he answers, “proletariat.” The judge responds by saying “that is not a profession.” To which Blanqui responds, “It is the profession of thirty million Frenchmen who live off their labor and who are deprived of political rights.” His answer bypasses the domain of the symbolically recognized sense of the word “profession,” (a title, job, occupation, place, function) for an absolutely poetic manifestation of a new mode of subjectivity, that of the unaccounted masses. On the one hand, there is the identification that assigns a specific labor a set of properties, and the disidentification that exposes the wrong on which any societal order must base itself: the lack of account of the uncounted through the setting up of a new world in lieu of the old, one in which a new man is free to become in any sphere of activity. A subject does not exist before the subject’s declaration of wrong, for the subject name cannot be relegated to and regulated by the domain of the police logic—the identification of a community of parts. Politics, that is subjectivization, can only exist in its manifesting itself in a one-act performance, as the Plebeians or Blanqui did, for how else would one come to comprehend the singularity of a completely new and revelatory subject whose count is always supernumerary? Already in the attempt to set up politics in advance, the subject is registered in the identitarian logic within the regime of the preestablished categories. The Real is only its very impossibility of communication. It is the disidentificatory rupture that abolishes the state of things, being as it is for a completely New modality out from a universal singularity.

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End notes:

- 1 “Every truth, as we have seen, deposes constituted knowl-

edges, and thus opposes opinions. For what we call opinions are representations without truth, the anarchic debris of circulating knowledge. Now opinions are the cement of sociality [socialité]. They are what sustain all human animals, without exception, and we cannot function otherwise: the weather; the latest film; children's diseases; poor salaries; the government's villainy; the performance of the local football team; television; holidays; atrocities far away or close to home; the setbacks suffered by the Republican school system; the latest album by some hard-rock group; the delicate state of one's soul; whether or not there are too many immigrants; neurotic symptoms; institutional success; good little recipes; what you've been reading; shops in which you find what you need at a 'good price'; cars; sex; sunshine What would become of us, miserable creatures, if all this did not circulate and recur among the animals of the City? To what depressing silence would we condemn ourselves? Opinion is the primary material of all communication." Alain Badiou, *Ethics*, 50–51.

2 Georg Cantor's work in Modern set theory explained that the cardinality (or size) of the set of the Natural Numbers, which is infinite, is countable, while the cardinality (or size) of the Real Numbers is uncountable.

3 In Badiou's *Ethics*, he goes on to say that the One in the first case of the objective, particularizing multiplicity is a communitarian division or the pure substance—for example, in false truth-processes of the Nazis, the objectal limit was the single predicate "Aryan" which named the pure substance. The Multiple is everyone's being-toward-death, just as the Nazis voided everyone but the arbitrary predicate named "Aryan," what becomes addressed to all—the "everyone" dominated by the "few"—is death. On the other hand, in the subjective, universalizing multiplicity, the One is the universality of the structure of address to all potential truth-bearing subjects.

4 Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 81.

5 Alain Badiou agrees with the critique of dialectics that politics cannot be defined by contradiction as Gilles Deleuze has said. For example, the horrific totalitarianism of the Stalinist

state which viewed itself as the negative necessity or mediation to sublate into a new and even better, potentially classless society, as part of the Historical Necessity that is Communism, was a reduction of the Truth- Event of the October Revolution.

6 Rancière, *Disagreement*, 56. 7 *Ibid.*, X. 22

8 *Ibid.*, 31.

9 “Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. Speech is something different from voice, which is also possessed by other animals also and used by them to express pain or pleasure; for their nature does indeed enable them not only to feel pleasure and pain but to communicate these feelings to each other. Speech, on the other hand, serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust. For the real difference between man and other animals is that humans alone have perception of good and evil, the just and the unjust, etc. It is the sharing of a common view in these matters that makes a household and a state.” As quoted in Rancière’s *Disagreement*, from Aristotle, *Politics I*, (1253) a 9–17 (London: Penguin Classics, 1992), 60.

10 For before the debts that place people who are of no account in a relationship of dependence on the oligarchs, there is the symbolic distribution of bodies that divides them into two categories: those that one sees and those that one does not see, those who have a logos—memorial speech, an account to be kept up— and those who have no logos— those who really speak and those whose voice merely mimics the articulate voice to express pleasure and pain. Politics exists because the logos is never simply speech, because it is always indissolubly the account that is made of this speech: the account by which a sonorous emission is understood as speech, capable of enunciating what is just, whereas some other emission is merely perceived as a noise signaling pleasure or pain, consent or revolt. See Rancière, *Disagreement*, 22–23.

11 *Ibid.*, 25.

12 *Ibid.*, 29.

13 *Ibid.*, 64.

14 Ibid., 36.