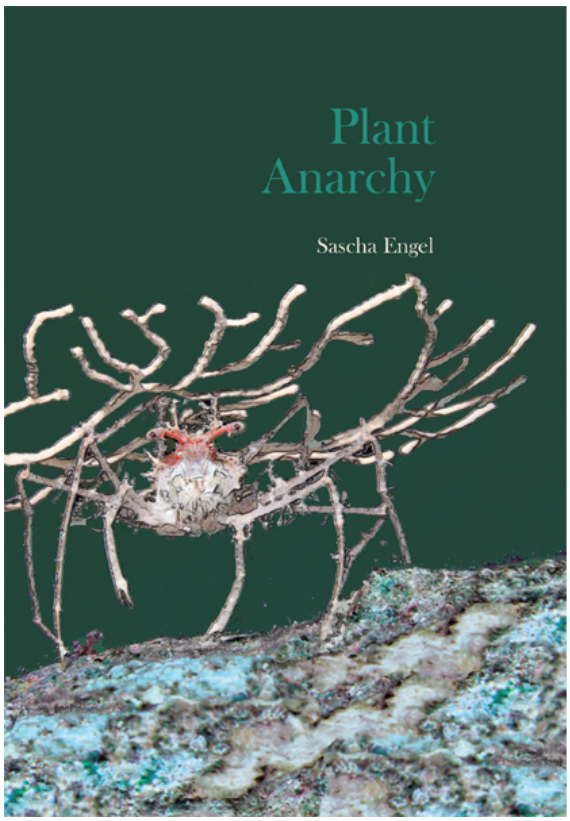
Plant Anarchy

Sascha Engel



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1. Of Salvaging and Blowing Up

Waking up in this world means waking up to a nightmare of endlessly proliferating repetition. Repeatedly I wake up and am already tired again. Repeatedly I open the window and hear the early morning airplane repeating its daily thundering overhead. Repeatedly I perk up for the briefest of moments as I feel the crisp air and hear faint birdsong as I step outside for my daily repeated run. Repeatedly, both are drowned out by the same cars and buses repeating the same journey to the same offices over and over. Repeatedly the entities inside these cars or buses, barely awake, go through the same repeated motions each and every day, eat the same five-a-day food groups, pretend to care about the same lines going up and down on their office screens, and laugh at the same fail videos on their smartphone screens, before they go home to watch the same sports on their TV screens. Repeatedly, everything gets more expensive. Repeatedly, everything gets worse. Repeatedly, identical clowns vie for the same offices with repeated slogans and repeated smiles, interrupted, it seems, by actual fascists whose gestures, however, are likewise repeated, just from a different playbook.

Repeatedly, liberals glibly speak of rescuing human society, as though there was something worth rescuing. Equally repeatedly and equally glibly, Leftists speak of salvaging productive industries, as though there was something worth salvaging. Each day the spectacle of rescuing and salvaging promises new and eco-friendly ways to continue the empire of repetition. Each day, those officially professing to resist this empire, activists of Extinction Rebellion or Climate Strikes, remain a part of it: "Their actions perfect the system of control, smoothing out its internal contradictions. They strive to create the repairman state, to engineer a more perfect death camp."[1]

We are not here to rescue or salvage anything. We are here to blow things up. The empire of repetition is vile and disgusting and there is nothing worth salvaging within it. We follow instead a different path, paved by primitive and egoist anarchy and now ours to develop further. We are here to get anarchic antipolitics out of its rut, ready to detonate the empire of repetition.

This empire spans the entire globe, now reaching out to outer space and the ocean floors, and seeps into every crevice of our bodies too. Everywhere, social norming, political discourse, systems of classification, the state, machines, and computers write the collective pain of repetition into the world. As we explore each of these formations in this book, we will see that each is, in one way or another, part of the empire of repetition. Thus, each of the ideas against them that we develop in this book is a part of our detonation of the empire of repetition. The reason why the empire of repetition is so insidious and so successful is, as we will see, its ability to assimilate all that resists it. Repetition constantly overwrites the renewal that aims to counteract it. Which means that our attacks of the empire of repetition must leave the beaten paths of resistance. To do this, the core concept we introduce here is iteration. This concept comprises both repetition and renewal, and thus allows us to grasp the empire's mode of self-preservation, why attempts at

[1] Jason Rodgers, "Progressive Degradation," in Oak Journal No. 3 (Spring 2021), 52.

resistance are failing, and what we can do about it. We will use it here to draw out some tentative signposts that will guide us along the way, each of which we will return to at greater length in later chapters.

The foremost manifestation of iteration is writing. Exploring writing gives us a first grasp on iteration and how the empire of repetition works through it. When I write the word "tree" by hand or by machine, it remains recognizably the same word, and inasmuch as it does, it is repeated. But it also looks different depending on my handwriting and which font the machine uses, and again differently depending on its position within the sentence. Inasmuch as the word does look differently each time, it is renewed each time. Repetition is not complete, though it is sufficient to establish legibility.

All writing is iteration. Not only is the same word both repeated and renewed when handwriting is transcribed into print or if I change the latter's font on my screen. Even if the word "tree" is printed multiple times in identical fonts, as it is on this page, this print happens in ever-different contexts. The meaning of the word "tree" changes depending on its context. The quotation marks around it, for instance, change its referent: instead of referring to a tree in the real world, "tree" now refers to itself, to the letters making it up. Here too, the word is recognizably repeated with or without the quotation marks, as its reference to a material object is merely suspended when they're there and back in full force when they're not. But the word is also recognizably different each time, as this reference is as it were cited. In other words, the word is iterated: repeated and renewed.

All speech is iteration, too. When we speak, we use the same words we use when writing. The word "tree", when spoken out loud through my mouth or quietly in my head, is again recognizably the same as the word "tree" written by hand or printed, and is again recognizably different, too. Speech iterates writing, and writing iterates speech. We will get back to this—and the classical notion that only the second half of this statement is true—in chapter 2.

Iteration is authoritarian because its manifestations constantly overwrite each other. This can happen in one of two ways. In the first way, one manifestation of iteration outright overwrites another, as when the smartphone's autocorrect feature overrides my spelling idiosyncrasies (or dyslexia). In the second way, one of the forms in which iteration is implemented becomes the norm for the others. By overwriting and norming, the empire of repetition manifests within iteration. Every day is a bit different—the morning flight is delayed, the cars are in a different order, the graphs point down instead of up—but the extent of these differences gets smaller and smaller as ever more repetition takes hold. We will explore this in chapter 3.

Some of the norming by which iteration solidifies into repetition is old, entrenched, and very sophisticated. Thus, canonically in Western philosophy, speech is the norm of writing. In spoken words, we are told, our authentic truth is evident—I am, as it were, personally present in the battlefield of speech—while the same words, when written, are just an inauthentic quotation of my original speech. As we will see in chapter 2, this particular norm goes all the way back to Greek philosophy, but pervades much of our political discourse up to this very day—including classical anarchist politics—to the point where we need to move it out of the way to get to a place of genuine resistance.

At the same time, though, old and entrenched philosophical norming still manifests in the minutiae of office culture— the empire of repetition extends to every nook and cranny of our lives. Thus the very same norm by which speech is more authentic than writing is also the norm requiring Western office culture's insistence that every sales e-mail is preceded by a phone call,

even though the content of both are typically identical (and indeed the e-mail is usually more thorough and useful). Hence, too, the requirement for meetings instead of memos, and for reading conference papers out loud in academia before publishing them in conference proceedings. Writing, to be sure, is more official and formal—but speech is more authentic. I need to sign a written statement by my own hand; the voice is its own authentication.

Iteration solidifies to repetition in the grand gestures of philosophical thought and the petty details of cubicle politics. The movement by which our lives are absorbed into the empire of repetition is the same in each such gesture. Not every such gesture is as sophisticated as the classical philosophical canon either. A lot of them are simply prejudicial; for example, the authoritarianism of legibility requires that a printed word is more legible—and thus the norm—than one that is handwritten, and again that certain types of handwriting are more legible than others. Hence school's double authoritarianism requiring, first, the norm of cursive handwriting, and second, further down the line, the norm of using laptops for everything. Norms can thus pile up within iteration, which solidifies them gradually into purer and purer repetition. Indeed, the entire social universe consists exclusively of iterated norms vying to overwrite each other and crystallize into repetition, as we will see in chapter 3.

Iteration as a whole, however, is also inherently authoritarian, because its repetitive element, through every one of its manifestations, systematically overwrites deixis. Deixis is the term we use for spontaneous directedness of all expressions of life. Just as iteration purifies and crystallizes into repetition if its repetitive norming dominates, so iteration dissolves into deixis when its element of renewal prevails. Just as the empire of repetition manifests within iteration, so iteration manifests within deixis. So our fight does not end with pitting iteration against repetition; we go further to what we will call the deictic frontier.

In humans, deixis is a finger pointing in a certain direction, without any specification as to what it is pointing at. It is the gesture of pointing before constituting a thing which is pointed at. Think of a finger pointing into the distance on a hike or in the fog, and you don't know yet what it is pointing towards as you take in the panorama (or lack thereof) while following its direction. Following the direction of the finger in this situation is nearly pure directedness—there is no thing yet which the finger references, just pure, fleeting deixis itself. As soon as there is a thing—as soon as you realize 'what it is' that the finger points at, or when the person pointing adds a verbal description—deixis gives way to repetition. The finger now points at something which is singled out. The process of identifying the thing can begin—which is to say, the process of overwriting deixis with ever-more repetitive iteration.

Recognition of a thing pointed at, even pre-verbally, sin- gles this thing out, stabilizes it, and thus introduces repetition: now every time you look at it, it is the same thing. It does also renew every time you look at it, to be sure, as the light changes or you've moved around on your path and thus its angle or its con- text change—but it's still the thing you've seen before. That is, it is now integrated into the universe of brittle, singled-out things, which is to say the universe of iteration: repetition and renewal. By recognizing the thing, you have written it into the world: you have allowed the iterative outskirts of the empire of repetition to begin closing in over a part of the continuous unfolding.

Deixis is pure directedness towards an unfixed, unstable, and undifferentiated constellation within the continuous unfold- ing of the world. Getting as close as we can to this continuous unfolding is the aim of the anarchic antipolitics that we pursue in this book. There is nothing worth salvaging within the em- pire of repetition—nor the ugly, loud, smelly totality of iteration

surrounding it. But we contend that anarchy does not unfold within the empire of repetition, it unfolds against it. By burning down its manifestations, we can find and develop here the logical forms of an anarchic antipolitics that can leave the field of iteration. This is what we will do in the fourth part of this book.

For although we iterate gestures all the time, the crystal- lization of repetition is neither destiny nor fate., the crystalliza- tion of repetition is neither destiny nor fate. There are degrees of iteration. Verbal or written identification of the thing intro- duces a greater degree of repetition into the iterative mix, mov- ing it further away from deixis. Now you don't just see a green and brown shape every time you look up—which may be sur- rounded by other such shapes and thus may still have unstable and unfixed boundaries, even if it's no longer undifferentiated from the world's continuous background. Rather, you now see "a tree" whose shapes and colours are defined by the concept of a tree, and are thus fixed in the space of your mental mapping regardless of their angle. Thus the constellation is now defined by the term: the tree before you iterates its concept. Repetition overrides deixis further as iteration solidifies.

There are various forms of iteration, by which repetition writes a tree over an indeterminable and unstable brown and green constellation. Besides the human finger pointing, for ex- ample, there are also so-called sortal predicates: words like "this" and "that" or "you" and "it". These constitute a transition from the finger, which singles out temporarily, to an as-yet undefined, but more stable identifier, which then solidifies further into the verbal or written identification of the constellation as a tree.

Iteration is thus the general process by which deictic directedness is overwritten by iteration, which solidifies and crystallizes into discrete things. These discrete things do not exist prior to the process of crystallization: they are written by it. Repeatedly pointing to a section of the green and brown continuum before me as I sit here, I at first single out from it a "this", a "what I am pointing at", and then associate the "this" with the sound "tree", which ultimately resolves into the letters t-r-e-e. These gestures thus write the thing into the world in the same way that the sound "tree" is written into it, and again the same way the letters t-r-e-e, too. The thing does not precede the sound and the letters.

This is why we are taking such a close look at writing to get started. Writing letters on a piece of paper or a screen only makes explicit a more general process of writing things into the world. The "this" singled out by my pointing finger, the associa- tion of the "this" with the sound "tree", and the association of the sound with the letters t-r-e-e are all manifestations of the same iterative process, moving away from deixis. At each point, repetition layers itself further and further over deixis. We will encounter this layering again within the social field in chapter 3, as biological classification in chapter 4, as linguistic domestication in chapter 6, as machinery in chapter 8, and as computation in chapter 9. At each juncture, we will develop our resistance until, in chapter 10, we create the general logical form of it.

The empire of repetition is the currently prevailing end point of the iterative process. As individuals over our lifetimes and as societies over hundreds of years, we each contribute to this empire all the time. Capitalism feeds on deixis as it estab- lishes itself as part of repetition through the commodity. In its very structure, the commodity is an overwriting of repetitions by other repetitions. It is a third-order repetition: without discrete things previously written into the world, the commodity would have nothing to appropriate. By the authoritarianism of norm- ing, the word "tree" structures the thing tree, which is in turn written into the world by the authoritarianism of iteration itself. The commodity then adds a third layer, iterating the previous two into

the new context of global commerce. It often does this explicitly by introducing new terminology. "Lumber" overwrites "tree" which overwrites the thing tree which overwrites the con- stellation, just as "beef" overwrites "bull" which overwrites the thing bull which overwrites the living exuberance frightened to literal death in the abattoir. Just as often, though, the commodity simply appropriates the original word, transposing it into a dif- ferent context; a TV ad, a phone pop up, a social media listicle.

But again, none of this is fate. The process of iteration is authoritarian in itself, overwriting deixis. But within it, there's also the ever-increasing tendency towards repetition which we've noted above. Why this doubled-up regime? Why does repetition repeat itself? The tree in the world iterates the term "tree" in its verbal and written manifestations just as the spoken or written word "tree" iterate the tree. It goes both ways. But because the tree in the world is a constellation—an unruly quasi-entity renewing deixis rather than repeating repetition—norm- ing has to ensure that the concept rules over the constellation, rather than vice versa. But the constellation always remains. We will develop this further in chapter 4. Thus deixis poses a challenge to repetition—but also gives it an opportunity to reinforce its authoritarianism.

The way this problem is traditionally perceived is the problem of representation. Does the word "tree" stand in for the real tree, or vice versa? This challenge, like the operation of representation itself, stems from the problem that repetition re- mains forever within iteration, and thus always harkens back to some deictic element. The tree repeats the word just as much as the word repeats the tree—in different ways and different con- texts but noticeably the same. Thus if the sign is defined as "everything that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something else,"[2] it is clear that there is no reason intrinsic to either the tree or the word "tree" that determines which is the norm of which. Only by virtue of the previously established social convention does the word come to define the thing, and not vice versa. Theories of signs and representation are ultimately theories of normed iteration. We will return to the logical structure of such normed iteration—and how to counteract it—in chapter 10.

Through the same authoritarianism of norming that de- termines a word's legibility and accurate spelling, therefore, the word is also determined to be the norm of the thing it iterates and which iterates it. There are thus two parts to the empire of repetition: overwriting deixis with iteration, and norming itera- tion to become repetition. In response, we develop two lines of attack here, one against the norming of repetition, bringing us to what we will call the deictic frontier, and one against the imposition of iteration. Our toolkit for both angles of attack is the same, though, as both of these authoritarianisms are intertwined.

Their entanglement is the starting point of my develop- ment of an Anti-Alphabet, which will guide us for large parts of this book. This Anti-Alphabet is described further in the ap- pendix to this book. It combines the Latin alphabet, whose let- ters you are currently reading, with letters and symbols from the ancient Phoenician, Linear B, and Hieroglyph alphabets in a way which is most readily visible in chapter 6 below. By do- ing this, the Anti-Alphabet implements animal letters, such as an owl for O or a bass for E, and renders the other letters as so many plants growing over the page. As a result, "the letters form constellations, each page uniquely, continuously unfolding de- ixis, continuously gesturing to a healed world."[3] With this in our

[2] Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 16.

[3] Sascha Engel, Breaking the Alphabet (Berkeley: Ardent Press 2022), 103.

arsenal, we can develop here a full account of a logic of anarchic antipolitics against the empire of repetition—norming and it- eration. We will revisit their interconnected authoritarianisms again in chapter 3 and will draw out the implications of the Anti-Alphabet's resistance throughout this book, leading up to chapter 10, which develops the logic in question.

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On our way there, the first section looks at the development of anarchic antipolitics as it challenges the empire of repetition on a terrain outside of what we will call the pacified social field. We move from a view within anarchy (chapter 2) to a view of anar- chy within the social field (chapter 3), and find that our anarchic antipolitics consist, first, in a challenge to unwrite this field as a whole. How this might be possible, given the ubiquity of repeti- tion within iteration and again of iteration within the continuous world is a question on which we touch in a first approxi- mation in chapter 4. Following up on this, the second section looks at the state: its historical emergence steeped in writing, and combating deixis in and through writing from the begin- ning (chapter 5), its occupation of a role of violent intelligibility directly overwriting the unique individual (chapter 6), and its general structure as a deictic safeguard of the outer boundaries of the pacified social field of unquestioned iteration (chapter 7).

Our third and fourth sections combine the findings of the first two and develop anarchic antipolitics in direct combat with the state as we have defined it in the second section. This task takes us to an analysis of repetition as machinery and as computation, and ultimately to an encounter with the logic that best describes the ceaseless imperialism of repetition, creating a world of discrete things. Within this crucial last step, we will be able to uncover the general forms—the logical shapes and implementations—of all aspects of repetition as it overwrites iteration, and of all aspects of iteration as it overwrites deixis. On this basis, we can then develop a counter-logic which, in the last chapter of this book, brings us back around to unfolding avenues of resistance against the empire of repetition—avenues that do not iterate previous social iterations, and which are thus ways forward for a truly anarchic antipolitics.

Part I: Out of the rut

Anarchic antipolitics can break out of its rut only when it recog- nizes the empire of repetition for what it is, and constitutes it- self as a movement to blow up this empire in its entirety. At first glance, this seems to be much easier than one would anticipate. One first tentative conclusion we might draw from the concepts introduced above is that repetition never happens outside of contexts, which means it renews each time it occurs. Under- neath the asphalt—monument to the repetitious circulation of wheels battering the tar and lead poisoning the air—the slow movements of roots, rot, and subsidence subvert the dream of boundless repetition. There is only ever iteration; impure rep- etition, contaminated by aberration. No two pieces of plastic, no two mass-produced screws, no two machine-typed letters are ever exactly the same. No two robotic movements ever play out exactly alike.

We might thus conclude that the empire of repetition is constantly surrounded by deixis, and constantly at war to re-es- tablish itself. A thousand cars repeatedly writing the same road into the world is not something that just emerges out of no- where. It is preceded by iterated pathways, trodden perhaps at first by animals and only then by humans, which slowly stamp their mark into the continuous unfolding of the land. Our foot- steps write into the land, repeatedly trampling the plants under- foot until only the soil remains, which becomes a path. The foot writes just as the hand does, each of its steps an iterative gesture which solidifies into repetition. The path emerges through trail markers and wooden planks, then stones, and ultimately asphalt. But along the way, there are always impurities, aberrations, alternative paths. So on the one hand, we might conclude right off the bat that resistance is a relatively straightforward affair: can we not, at any point, simply stop repeating the same gestures, and return to deixis?

On the other hand, though, another preliminary conclusion we can draw from the concept of iteration is that there is never pure deixis, pure indeterminate directedness without the slightest trace of repetitive solidity. The finger points at something in the here and now, in a constella- tion that will never repeat, to be sure. But even this gesture already entails the establishment of physical trajectories, singling out referential focal points and sur- rounding layers of presence and absence: the 'what is pointed at' inevitably solidifies, however fleetingly, out of its surround- ings. As I sit here, writing this among the trees, there is a seemingly purely indeterminate play of light and shadow hovering across the page, as close to pure deixis as one could imagine—but even these light-and-shadow patterns have some form, some bound- ary, some stability; some conceivable relation to leaves and wind.

So we cannot simply desert the empire of repetition after all. Gestures attempting to switch course just end up iterating other gestures. The empire is not surrounded by deixis but by a field of iterations.

We might be tempted to focus exclusively on the first con- clusion. Because iteration is a spectrum, its implementation is cumulative and vulnerable. One element of repetition, once in- troduced, leads to another. Deixis gets overwritten further and further along this slippery slope. But the iterative process can stop at any point, leaving the crystallization of the thing incom- plete. In a sense, therefore, there are as many types of resistance to the empire as there are repetitions, since each of these rep- etitions is actually an iteration and thus preserves, somewhere within it, a tiny sliver of deixis. And indeed we see revolts and resistance everywhere around us, from shirking work to spreading memetic confusion.

But these forms of resistance iterate themselves and each other. Liberal demonstrations are so many iterated gestures, so many repeated marches and chants iterating so many slogans and so many signs. Leftist politics consist in so many iterated communiques and so many reissues of

AK Press anthologies. In the form of classical anarchism, the world of repetition even it- erates its own critique and rejection—and classical anarchism shares this fate with classical Marxism and its many academic iterations. This is the rut we must get out of.

In the following three chapters, we cover some ground to getting out of that rut. Chapter 2 takes us to the origins of classical anarchism, the dominant interpretation of antipolitics in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century—and still alive and well in many memetic iterations today. And this is precisely the problem, as canonical anarchism turns out to be an itera- tion of a much older canon, namely, the Western philosophical obsession with speech over writing. It is thus part of the mecha- nisms of norming by which authoritarian iteration rules. Here we see why primitive and egoist anarchy are much better start- ing points for our own anarchic antipolitics. Not obsessed with norming speech over writing, these two alternatives can give us a head start in our battle against repetition.

The third chapter takes a step back from here and completes the analysis of anarchic iteration with a broader view of how rep- etition plays out within the pacified social field of iteration. Here we see that the social field at large consists of political and so- cial wagers iterating each other as they iterate the old canons of politics. With this in mind, in chapter 4 we take a preliminary peek at a source of resistance against the empire of repetition that falls outside of the iterative field: a plant intuition of techniques to undo iterations of classification, whether moral, political, or biological. This last path is our way out of the rut, and we will take it up in the second, third, and fourth parts of this book.

2. Throwing the stone

One of the cornerstones of the anarchic experience is a sudden, intense opening of a world without the chains that normally bind us. It is a split second of freedom and clarity, in which the world lies before me in perfect transparency. For many of us, this experience is at its most pronounced in the stone thrown against the state. The stone is my stone, it is myself as I hurl my anger and project my hope. As it takes flight towards the forces of repetition, the stone fills the space before me. Throwing it, all of a sudden I feel as though I belong, perhaps truly belong for the first time; as though the lines of combat are suddenly drawn clearly, "as though I surfaced from the muffled, blurred sensations below water into the clear and crisp air, now finally it became clear what all happened, where it belonged, and where I belonged."[1] The stone's invisible parabola in the sky constitutes a purity, an intensity that dissolves physical space and absorbs it into the force field of my body's rhythm, of my anger, my frustration, my dreams and hopes and fears. Everything is immedi- ately present to me, everything is clear and transparent, everything makes sense. Time slows down as the stone flies; the stone is mine, the stone is me, the stone is truth.

In a way, then, one of the central problems of anarchy is the problem of sharing the stone's parabola: of making it visible to others so they may feel the same as I do, inhabit the same space, project the same hopes and fears. But as soon as this is stated, the waters are muddied. For the problem of sharing arises in two different ways, which sound deceptively similar, but are in fact worlds apart. First version: how do I share this truth, my truth; how do I share me, my clarity and transparency? How, that is, do I ensure that the truth of the stone's flight is transmitted as accurately, as authentically as possible? Second version, seemingly very close and yet worlds apart: how do I share the stone's flight itself, not its meaning for me but the urge to throw the stone, to draw a new parabola in the sky each time a new arm throws a new stone? How, that is, do I ensure that everyone makes their own truth out of the stone's flight—even if it doesn't draw the same parabola, even if it doesn't draw one at all, even if it just listlessly falls to the ground?

Two diametrically opposed versions of the same question. Do I share the parabola as accurately as possible, do I draw and re-draw it into the sky, or do I get others to throw their own stones and draw their own parabolas? For the first version, the stone's flight projects the possibility of a future where my meaning can be shared without lies and deceit, without the falsehoods of mediation. Here, the stone is the archetype and vanishing point of sharing its parabola without reserve, of bearing myself to others, of nakedly authentic expression: disappearance of dis- tance, absence of distortion, transparency of collective intensity. In the first version, that is, the stone's parabola is the seed of a permanent sharing of innermost fears and desires, of the very same presence and intimacy that is between my arm and the stone as it departs. In the second version, it is not the sharing of the stone's parabola which is at stake but its renewal. This version doesn't focus on accuracy or authenticity but on arming everyone with a stone. Its trajectory is a com-

[1] Tomas Lecorte, Wir tanzen bis zum Ende. Die Geschichte eines Autonomen (Hamburg: Galgenberg 1992), 78. My translation from the original German.

munity not of bare speech, not of sharing without deceit, but a community unfolding ever-new parabolas—even when those aren't elegant at all.

There are, therefore, not one but two visions that anar- chy opposes to hollow, faceless, omnipresent repetition. Both of them are what capital so ruthlessly exploits and what the state equally ruthlessly represses. In both, the true target of the police baton is not my skin. Does not the police baton "go deeper, for it doesn't hit me but my dreams"?[2] Both versions aim for immediate connections between reality and dream. But only the first version implements this immediate connection through immediate transparency when sharing the dream, sharing my thoughts, sharing my authenticity. Immediate transparency, that is, from my speech to my thoughts, and thus from my thoughts to your thoughts, which is this version's fatal weak- ness. For this gesture, the first version of the anarchic wager is a canon and iterates a canon. This is the canon of classical an- archism, iterating the canon of classical European philosophy.

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Canonically, classical anarchism is a dream of a society based on the perfect immediacy of certain, narrowly-defined types of transparent speech. Its foremost idea is that small-scale communities replacing the world of territorial nation-states would allow face-to-face communication, with an immediate return on any engagement in social interactions. "It is absolutely impossible," says Kropotkin, "to conceive a society, or even a simple agglomeration of men doing the least of things in com- mon, in which the affairs of each would not concern many, if not all, of the others."[3] Community would form on the basis of affinity, with members free to choose their groups and groups free to choose their members: "I believe that equality should be established in the world through the spontaneous organization of labor and through collective property, through the free organization of producer's associations in communes, and the free federation of communes."[4]

Such free organization is not without its dangers, all the more so as the classical anarchist vision also includes free choice of production and distribution in each group. There would be communist groups where goods are distributed on the basis of need, socialist groups where goods are distributed on the basis of labor, mutualist groups where goods are distributed on the basis of perfect competition. Even capitalist groups could be imagined, provided they too were small, would remain incapa- ble of conquering the others, and were under constant pressure. "Probably every possible form of possession and utilization of the means of production and all ways of distribution of produce will be tried out… combine and be modified in various ways until experience will indicate which form, or forms, is or are, the most suitable."[5]

These groups can get dangerous for each other. But in each case, the immediacy of face-to-face communication would guarantee social stability and, dare we say, overall social harmony. It simply wouldn't pay off to be racist and sexist in the long run, and/or if you wanted to remain in one of the non-racist and non-sexist groups. Speech, circulating freely be- tween people who can see, feel, touch each other, would ensure a transparency of needs, wills, and goals. In any given situation, "a society of free men will be able to prevent anti-social acts."[6] Lies, deception, malice,

[2] Ibid, 94.

[3] Petr Kropotkin, Modern Science and Anarchy, ch. XIII, via the Anarchist Library.

[4] Michail Bakunin, "Socialism and Freedom," in G.P.Maximoff (ed.), The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism (Glencoe, 1953), 300.

[5] Vernon Richards (Ed.), Errico Malatesta. His Life and Ideas (London: Freedom Press 1984), 104.

[6] Kropotkin, Modern Science, ch. X.

and generally any type of strategic behavior cannot arise in a society of immediate intimacy, where anyone's behavior will be known to everyone else.

Such perfect transparency requires the perfect immediacy of face-to-face speech. The classical anarchists knew this very well. Only for larger-scale problems would their communities reluctantly delegate members on a basis of bottom-up trust and imperative mandates. "Absolute autonomy of the municipality, including the right to self-governance and even internal legislation… The province should only be the federation of municipalities… The nation should only be the federation of those prov- inces which freely wish to belong to it."[7]

Society as a whole thus forms a network of networks where no decision would be made at a level higher than it re- quired. Classical anarchism will lead to "the independence of all groups which form for a particular purpose and which, through their federation, eventually comprise the entire society."[8] Such federation, such delegation to larger groups, would always remain distrusted. Absent from the face-to-face network, how could the delegate remain transparently true to their intentions, their promises, their roots in their home group? How could their trustworthiness be re-established? How could they be prevented from lying and deception, from sending false signals, from becoming politicians? How could a proto-state be prevented from arising once again, whether through warring security agencies or continental congresses? How, in other words, are we going to stop statism, racism, sexism, capitalism from taking over again?

The canonical answer to this is, ironically, distrust. On the surface, it is crucial to classical anarchists to trust the masses to organize themselves collectively. Equally crucially, though, the right kind of speech must circulate to ensure that they do so in the right way. This in turn can only be achieved by "at- tempting to spread science and the scientific spirit among the people, such that the different groups of human society, after having been convinced by propaganda, aim to organize them- selves and entirely spontaneously form federations."[9] That is, spontaneous organization can be trusted as such only if speech circulates that ensures that organization remains "in tune with the natural tendencies and the true interests" of the people.[10] But the natural tendencies and true interests of the people are not simply given. For classical anarchist society to work with- out lapsing back into strategic behaviors, lies, and politics, ev- eryone's natural tendencies—their innermost core—must be in tune with everyone else's natural tendencies. And everyone must ensure that everyone else's natural tendencies remain in tune with their own, and vice versa.

The dream of anarchist speech is therefore an uninterrupted embrace, a permanent openness to each other, an authentic equality without secrets and lies. Only my speech, the vibrancy of my voice which authenticates my innermost true interests, can guarantee that I'm all in with my group. Social trust within anarchy can only be established and maintained by audible transparency ensuring that I remain in tune with others. As far as my voice reaches, this far you can trust me. Distance removes the guarantee that my speech remains true to my natural tendencies within my group. Ideally, there can be no space in classical anarchist society, no territory, zoning, or delegation, because the members of each group must remain audible to each other at all times.

Likewise, there can be no media, social or otherwise, in classical anarchist society. My voice on the phone is no lon- ger my voice, it lacks the authenticity that comes with hearing me without

[7] Bakunin, "Revolutionary Catechism," 1971 version via Anarchist Library.

[8] Kropotkin, Modern Science, ch. XV.

[9] Bakunin, "Socialism and Freedom," 300.

[10] Ibid.

mediation. Without reinforcement by presence, by touch and smell, the voice you hear through my phone is the voice of a potential liar, a potential deceiver, a potential devia- tion from my affinity group's natural tendencies. Online chats too are notoriously distant and impersonal. How could a method used by customer service outsourcing under capitalism possibly establish true interests in a classical anarchist society? Likewise, how could an online meeting, no matter how much it is based on having one's camera pointed at one's face at all times, establish a basis of transparent trust, when the speech is not accompanied by breath and the face is without warmth? When I could just take a technique from capitalist society, record myself and put myself on as a loop while I myself am in the bathroom on company time? Even a handwritten letter, kooky and individual though my handwriting may be, nonetheless contains the seeds of forg- ery, of fake writing and fake signature, of illegibility, of deviation from natural tendencies and distortion of true interests.

In the canonical version of anarchist politics, then, only immediacy itself can establish and maintain the transparency needed to ensure the right speech circulates to uphold the right values, and only the voice is truly immediate. We must be within earshot of each other, permanently embracing each other to en- sure the alignment of our natural tendencies. Classical anarchism is a society based on norming. Not only is speech the norm of mediation, but it has to be the right kind of speech: only authentic, soul-baring speech can ensure perfect congruity of natural tendencies and true interests. There is authoritarian iteration here. But why is this so? Why is the voice more authentic than handwriting, and why is the voice heard in face-to-face immediacy, more authentic than the voice through the phone, or even the synaesthetic approximation through online video calls? Why is the vanishing point of classical anarchist society the abolition of all that is not immediate, of delegation, expansion, mediation–-even of space itself?

Because classical anarchism as a whole is an iteration. In asserting the primacy of speech—knowingly or not—the can- on of classical anarchism iterates one of the oldest and most fundamental gestures of Western thought, a gesture taken di- rectly from antiquity. True sharing of wisdom is possible only through perfect immediacy in transparent speech because only such speech is truly capable of conveying a person's innermost thoughts, fears and desires. As Aristotle posits, speech has this unique ability due to its proximity to thought: "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words."[11] Only my speech, and not my writing or any writing, can ever convey directly what I think, because writing is only ever a transcript of my speech, whereas speech alone has direct access to my thoughts. Thus it is only by my speech that I can truly authentically convey what my thoughts are—that I can truly be trustworthy. Since this is the case for everybody, this is the only way that social transparency can be established. "Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all."[12] Speech is the only way we can be sure that we are all talk- ing about the same things in the same ways. In this way, our natural tendencies are the same, and anti-social acts never arise, guaranteeing classical anarchist freedom.

The true intimacy of face-to-face speech alone therefore guarantees true transparency and social trust, allowing sponta- neous organization to take the right course. Aristotle learned this from his direct predecessors. Socrates didn't write down his teachings as they relied on the inti-

[11] Aristotle, On Interpretation, Part 1 (tr. Cooke).
[12] Ibid.

macy of face-to-face con- versations between members of the same group. Plato did write books but explicitly kept his core teachings confined to the inner circle of his Academy, where they were discussed orally only, in perfect transparency. For philosophy, the most impor- tant wisdom, "does not admit of exposition like other branches of knowledge; but after much converse about the matter itself and a life lived together, suddenly a light, as it were, is kindled in one soul by a flame that leaps to it from another, and there- after sustains itself."[13]

The written word can certainly accidentally express thought authentically—that is, when it expresses speech authentically, which expresses thought authentically. But because writing is one step removed from thought, this is never more than an acci- dent. Whereas speech is directly derived from thought, bearing the mark of my innermost authenticity, the written word is only ever a quote of my speech. Speech is original because it comes from the original source of thought, written words are derivative because they cite the original source. Thus every written word is identical to every other written word, without a shred of the in- timate authenticity that comes from the unique thought-speech proximity. Every written word iterates every other written word, whereas speech is pure deixis, pointing to my thoughts as their authentic origin. Hence Plato's and Socrates' refusal to convey their innermost secrets in writing, and hence the reduction of writing in canonical anarchy. Writing betrays speech because its ability to authentically quote speech is based on its inability to be speech, to point to its origin in thought directly.

We might intuitively concur. How can I share a lifetime of experiences with someone in writing? How indeed can I share a lifetime of experiences with someone if there is even the slightest possibility of deception, lies, and distortion? Thus, how can I share a lifetime of my innermost secrets with someone through the phone, via email or text, or even through a video call? But we have to consider what consequences there are to making this stance a social norm, as classical anarchist politics do.

Since Aristotle's days, Western political thought never stopped agonizing over ensuring social transparency through the immediacy of face-to-face speech. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the Western political canon asserted that Re- publics of free citizens needed to be small to ensure transparent communication and thus the honesty required for congruent natural tendencies without coercion. The American Anti-Federalists cited Montesquieu to the effect that "it is natural to a republic to have only a small territory, otherwise it cannot long subsist," since only face-to-face transparency can provide for social authenticity. Thus, first, "in a large republic there are… trusts too great to be placed in any single subject; he has inter- est of his own," i.e., he is removed from others and thus capable of lies and deceit, and "he soon begins to think that he may be happy, great and glorious, by oppressing his fellow citizens." Secondly, "the public good is sacrificed to a thousand views" in a large Republic because not everyone can be assured to talk about the same things when they don't use face-to-face speech. Only the latter guarantees Aristotle's immediate proximity to the equality of thought inherent in every human. Thus in a small Republic, "the interest of the public is easier perceived, better understood, and more within the reach of every citizen; abuses are of less extent, and of course are less protected," be- cause everyone is guaranteed to speak of the same things.[14]

Likewise in the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rous- seau stated outright that "every language with which one can- not make oneself understood to the people is a servile language. A

[13] Plato, Seventh letter, 341c-d.

[14] All quotes in this paragraph are from Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws, Book VIII, ch. 16, par. 1–2.

people which speaks such a language can never remain free."[15] Again the reason why freedom can only arise from the authenticity of speech is that only speech can guarantee proximity to thought, and thus commonality of thought—everyone speaks of the same things, without lies and deceit.

Both of these assertions harken back to the Middle Ages, and from there to Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. When justify- ing the rule of a king in the thirteenth century, Aquinas asserted that the distinction between a monarch and a tyrant is that the latter, "paying no heed to the common good, seeks his own private good. Wherefore the further he departs from the common good the more unjust will his government be."[16] And how can the authenticity of the common good be established? Through speech: "the use of speech is a prerogative proper to man. By this means, one man is able fully to express his conceptions to others."[17]

Again, why is it only the voice which allows man to do this? Here the tradition reaches back to Aristotle via the early Middle Ages. In the sixth century, Isidore of Seville explained that harmony, the melodious succession of human sounds, "makes a movement that comes from the mind and body to- gether," that is, a movement directly expressing thoughts, "and the movement produces a sound, and from this is formed the music that in humans is called 'voice'."[18]

Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, through Isidore and Aqui- nas, to Rousseau, Montesquieu, and the so-called Founding Fathers: up until the turn of the nineteenth century, Western thought dreamt of small Republics where people would enjoy their freedom in perfect transparency. Then the age of large- scale nation-states began, which subordinated the dream of social authenticity to territorial imperialism. Immediately, clas- sical anarchism arose as a counter-movement, tak- ing up where the canon left off, and iterating the canonical Republican vision. Thus William Godwin, the first classical anarchist thinker, situated the origin of anarchist society in "Mind" which "will be active and eager" to "see the progressive advancement of virtue and good."[19] Even more obviously, Proudhon put anarchism squarely in the small Republic tradition: "the freest and most moral government is that in which powers are best divided, administrative functions best separated, the independence of groups most respected, provincial, cantonal, and municipal au- thorities best served by the central authority—in a word, federal government."[20] From here, classical anarchism continues the legacy to this very day, norming speech for authenticity, trans- mitting the stone's parabola as accurately as possible to every- one within earshot, to ensure antisocial behavior never arises.

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What does this entail? Apart from perpetuating the canonical Western tradition, there is also an intrinsic structural issue within the dream of classical anarchism—indeed, a threat in its very core.

Authentic transparency, required to accurately share the experience of the stone's parabola, is threatened at all sides. With perfect transparency comes perfect vulnerability to being normed by others. Judgment is perpetual. My thoughts lay open and bare in my transparent speech, open to everyone's scrutiny to what extent they reflect the natural tendencies and true inter-

[15] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Essay on the Origin of Languages, ch. XX.

[16] Thomas Aquines, De Regno, section 24.

[17] Ibid, section 7.

[18] Isidor of Seville, Etymologies, III.XX.1.

[19] William Godwin, An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 458.

[20] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, The Federative Principle, ch. XI, via the Anarchist Library.

est of my group. Moreover, my thoughts lay open to being mimicked, mocked, and betrayed whenever others choose strategic behavior. Maintaining perfect transparency is exhausting. My every thought begs for your approval, my every sound exhorts you to respond, my every word exhausts my openness to you. Fear and anger lie at my surface just as much as hope and joy. The darkness inside me haunts my every gesture. Your darkness haunts yours. Which is to say that your darkness haunts mine, and mine yours. We are inside each other. We are one another. We have to be one another.

The principal threat to classical anarchism is thus not the police baton. To be sure, the baton hurts us because it goes be- yond hitting the flesh: it hits our dreams. But it doesn't hit any particular dreams. It hits the dream that my dream and your dream could be in perfect congruity, that we could be perfectly transparent to one another, that we could be one another. It thus reinforces the bond that it attacks and cannot, ultimately, threaten our anarchic communality. The real threat is within our communality. My speechmust be transparent to ensure it is the right kind of speech. Ev- ery transparent speech is haunted by the possibility of antisocial speech: lying, deceiving, distorting. It cannot be otherwise. If the possibility of lies, deceit, and distortion of speech did not exist, the concept of authentic transparency could not exist ei- ther. It is because speech can contain lies that telling the truth has any value at all. It is because speech carries the possibility of deceit that honesty has any value at all. And it is because speech can be distorted that clarity has any value at all. In a world with- out lies there could be no truth, just as there can be no justice in a world without a concept of injustice, no liberation in a world without oppression, no safety in a world without fear.

The betrayal of trust is the condition of possibility of trust. The betrayal of transparency is the condition of possibility of transparency. Lies, deceit, and distortion are the conditions of possibility of social authenticity.

Thus the classical anarchist dream of transparently congruent thought and naturally self-correcting community can only manifest in a fury of restoration, a fury of exclusion and moral superiority. Traitors multiply at all sides. In the vision of scientific speech ensuring anti-authoritarian organization, the spontaneous action of the masses is both trusted and feared. It needs to go in the right direction, which means it needs to be carried out by the right people in the right spirit. "In a social revolution… the actions of individuals count for nearly noth- ing, while the spontaneous action of the masses counts for everything."[21] Too much individuality disrupts the purity of the uprising. The small-scale group of anarchists is persistently threatened by those who deviate and who have to be presumed, therefore, to lie and deceive and perhaps even to wish for a return to the state, to wish to subjugate the others, to wish to en- gage in the war of all against all.

Thus groups must try to exclude everyone who is poten- tially a traitor. But because transparency cannot exist without lies and deceit, because there is no congruence of natural ten- dencies, everyone is potentially a traitor. And thus everyone must be excluded to restore the immediacy of transparent com- munication. Decentralization in classical anarchism only works if the people carrying it out are the right people: people whose true interests are the same.

How can we be sure that the people handling day-to-day decentralization have identical true interests? By ensuring that their speech is identical, and thus their thought is identical: that they are identical. Identical workers, for example. Questions of local politics will be handled by "vot-

[21] Bakunin, "Socialism and Freedom," 298.

ing for a municipal council which concerns itself with such questions—a council composed of workers." For higher-order issues of cooperation and ex- change, there will be a "central committee of delegates… here, too, the delegates will be workers." And questions of foreign politics and defense are matters "with which delegated workers concern themselves."[22] Anyone who is not a worker, that is, or suspected of not being a worker, is suspect in general. Each worker is thus also under constant pressure to show they're a worker, and such proof remains ever-tenuous. Being a worker becomes a moral category. You can thus be more or less of a worker, and are under constant suspicion not to be a worker at all. Everyone is suspect. Which means that, ultimately, everyone gets excluded.

The authentic dream of classical anarchy, where every pa- rabola is the same, destroys itself in a fury of exclusion because lies are at the heart of transparent speech and thus no-one's interests can ever be assumed to be true. In this destruction, it ceases to be a world of absolute freedom, and instead becomes a world of distrustful social practices. Classical anarchism is social domestication: webs of moral demands, high grounds and high roads, continuous demands of propriety.

Immediacy becomes an iteration of immediacy. That is, immediacy becomes a perennial social practice of iterating the quest for transparent speech, never quite grasping it, never quite achieving it, because the very speech deploying the itera- tion of transparency contains the impossibility of transparency. Speech is the impossibility of, and thus the ever-iterated long- ing for, transparency. Classical anarchism is threatened by this impossibility at its core and therefore constituted by this iter- ated longing, just as the small republics of Montesquieu and the tyranny-monarchy distinction of Aquinas were, and just as Isidore's and Aristotle's speech-thought proximity were.

The impossibility of transparently sharing the experience of the stone throw does not diminish this experience itself, but it does constantly threaten the efforts to accurately share it. This impossibility constitutes canonical anarchism as a longing to implement the transparency necessary for accurately sharing the stone throw: as a norming of speech, a moral primacy of authentic speech over speech that potentially contains lies and deceit. In other words, classical anarchism is only possible as an inauthentic longing for authentically shared natural tendencies. This longing is implemented practically as a norming of speech along criteria of authenticity, honesty, and transparency. And, of course, a preference for speech over writing. Again going back to Aristotle, the Western canon of political thought is not only based on the possibility of transparent speech due to its proximity to thought, from which classical anarchism took the possibility of shared social authenticity based on common thought. Both classicisms also contain the exclusion of writing from authentic transparency, because it is one step further re- moved from thought than speech: "Spoken words are the sym- bols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words."[23] Thus written words merely cite spoken words and have no immediate relation to the truth of thought.

But we have seen that speech is not in fact constituted by transparency to thought. It is constituted by the ever-present possibility of lies and distortion, i.e., of treason against thought. Thus speech betrays thought because its ability to authentically convey it is based on its inability to do so. Which is exactly the situation of writing. Speech is writing, betraying my thoughts as it

[22] Herbert Read, "The Necessity of Anarchism," in Anarchy and Order. Essays in Politics (London 1974), 100.

[23] Aristotle, On Interpretation, Part 1.

utters them, quoting my thoughts in an idiom foreign to them, just as writing quotes my speech. This is one of the key insights of egoism: "If what matters is to come to an under- standing and to communicate, then, of course, I can only make use of human means," that is, of "language, this human institu- tion, this treasury of human thoughts. Language or 'the word' tyrannizes most terribly over us, because it brings up against us a whole army of fixed ideas."[24] Speech as transparent sharing of thoughts without betrayal, is impossible, which is to say that speech is only possible as writing, implementing the iterated longing for transparent thought-sharing. Thus the stone's pa- rabola crystallizes in the sky, comes to be iterated, and becomes yet another empty gesture…

The betrayal of speech by writing, which makes speech possible as a longing to speak, marks the structure of classical anar- chism's relations to mediation in general. Whether you hear my voice on the phone, see my cursor move as I type, decipher my handwriting in a letter, or watch me squirm on a computer screen, you can never be certain what my true authentic thoughts are. Each mediation is an iterated betrayal of my innermost thoughts. But since each of these betrayals is the condition of possibility for authentic sharing, each of them also make sharing my thoughts possible as a practice of longing to share them. Canonical anarchy as a transparent sharing of the stone throw's immediacy, is impos- sible. Which is to say, it is possible as the iterated practice of long-ing to transparently share the stone throw's experience.

And so anarchist politics results in an endless series of iterated normings, hovering continually between writing and speech, speech and authentic speech, true interests and deceit, natural tendencies and their betrayal. Classical anarchism is a self-defeating practice of writing the longing to speak transpar- ently within handwritten or typed letters, within phone calls and online chats, within videos and video calls. It exhausts itself in attempts to establish a type of thought-sharing which is its own self-destruction. Just as classical anarchist society implodes in a fury of self-destruction attempting to prevent antisocial behav- ior, uncommon thought, opaque speech, so classical anarchist politics becomes as series of iterations attempting, and ever fail- ing, to norm socially authentic speech over lies and deceit, and speech in general over writing. All of these are iterations implemented, ultimately, in writing: iterating the Western canon.

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But there is anarchy outside of classical anarchism. Up to now, we have exclusively considered the first of the two versions of sharing the stone's throw, the one focusing on accuracy, commonality, authenticity. But does the stone throw's experience only imply classical anarchist politics? Can there be a way to engage the second version, which renews throwing the stone itself rather than iterating its parabola? Can there be an anar- chic antipolitics, going beyond the implications of canonical an- archism, its furies of self-destructive exclusion and iteration of speech norms?

It seems on the outset that individualist and primitive anarchy share classical anarchism's focus on reducing media- tion towards authenticity of speech and thought. The dream of transparency haunts not only the canonical anarchists but the individualists too. Even the loneliest and most quarrelsome of the American individualists, Laurance Labadie, relied on a mechanism ensuring perfect transparency to guarantee that co- operation between individuals, this necessary evil, would result in equitable outcomes: "In a free society, a man would find his place, for competition

[24] Max Stirner, The Unique and Its Property (tr. Landstreicher), via the Anarchist Library.

would impel him to graduate to where his talents and merits would be recognized."[25] Competition, for Labadie, would ensure that the signals that individuals send about their intentions and abilities would arrive at their com- petitors without delay or distortion, without throwing the stone in new, deviant ways. Individualism is overridden by egoism on this exact point, as Dora Marsden tried to teach Benjamin Tucker, whose individualism not only assumed that "each and every individual can and should take an equal part in deter- mining human affairs" but also that "their self-interest would lead them to accept this particular brand of social salvation."[26] Which is exactly what Bakunin assumed would happen when scientifically authentic speech circulates, and which is exactly not what anarchic antipolitics is all about.

Primitive anarchists, too, seem to accept transparent speech ensuring social immediacy as an unspoken basis of at least some vision of social interaction. They are not ashamed to explore in full the dream of "the visitor" who "walks confidently but respectfully up to the group and they look at her with interest" as they "welcome her closer to the fire" and ask her to "share with us who you are, that we may know you," promising that they, too, "will share with her their stories of how the world came to be, and she will know them as they now know her."[27] Were the absence of antisocial behavior its exclusive focus, primitive anarchy would end up as a practice battling within iteration to remove iteration—iterating norms to restore immediacy—just as classical anarchism. The physical immediacy of the campfire circle would be permanently threatened by absent members of the group: those on the hunt, those in their hut, those facing the other way. Distrustful resentment would be so universal that it would have to be sublimated in incessant gift-giving;[28] which is to say that it has to be absorbed into a social practice restoring immediacy. Everyone would be a potential traitor, which means that everyone would give gifts to restore transparent communi- cation which ensures the integrity of social behavior. But here again, as in individualism, transparency does not ensure con- gruence of natural tendencies and true interests. The speech circulating in this vision of primitive anarchy rather prizes a different kind of sharing, focusing not on the accuracy of the parabola, but the experience of throwing the stone.

The challenge that anarchic antipolitics poses to classical anarchist politics is precisely this: that the stone's throw itself, rather than its accurate transmission, is central; that the point of anarchy is not to ensure the absence of deviant behavior, but rather the destruction of norms which make behavior deviant or compliant, standards that make the parabola an accurate iteration or not. Anarchic antipolitics starts with the knowledge that it is the attempt to erase mediation—to reduce writing to speech and speech to thought—that posits speech and thought as norms and thus results in the fury of exclusion within canonical anarchism, a pile-up of iterated communicative practices to deal with traitors. Neither egoist nor primitive anarchy, in their core intuitions, focus on the faithful transmission of the stone's parabola. They focus on throwing the stone itself.

Thus for egoists, it has always been clear that the society- building in which the American individualists engaged, including even Laurance Labadie for a time, is at best a secondary matter relative to the egoist's enjoyment. Which is to say: the egoist's cause (if indeed it is a cause) is simply the egoist herself throwing the stone. To what extent its parabola is communicated, and

[25] Laurance Labadie, Anarcho-Pessimism. Collected Writings (Berkeley: Ardent Press, 2014), 47.

[26] S. E. Parker, "Archists, Anarchists, and Egoists," in Enemies of Society (Berkeley: Ardent Press, 2011), 327.

[27] Scavenger, "Reclaiming the Myth-Time," in Uncivilized. The best of Green Anarchy (Green Anarchy Press, 2012), 353.

[28] Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, The Old Way (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 219.

whether authentically so, is irrelevant. Egoist behavior is neither deliberately social nor deliberately antisocial. Its point is the destruction of both categories. Whether "the masses submit to governments" or to the requirements of equalizing true interests, "the anarchist individual lives against society" and remains "in a neverending and irreconcilable war with it."[29] Likewise, the entire hierarchy that classical anarchist politics is based on— thought, speech, writing—is simply eradicated by the egoist's challenge. Conversely, this means that the egoist has no issue accepting that anarchist politics ends up being a written practice. The egoist's anarchic antipolitics is outside of the hierarchy altogether and challenges its entire edifice: writing, speech, and thought. It is a total attack aimed at "maximally slackening the encumbrances that society inflicts on the individual…condemned to live within society," whichever form these take exactly.[30] The point is to throw the stone in unprecedented ways.

In this, the egoist meets with the primitivist challenge, which likewise lies outside the thought/speech/writing hierarchy, and which likewise prioritizes, in its core intuition, throwing the stone over the transmission of its parabola to others. Primitivism, too, is an anarchic antipolitics that has no issue with the writtenness of canonical anarchism because it is altogether outside of it. Its revolt against symbolic thought, which is at the heart of its intuition, is not based on finding a way to ensure antisocial behavior does not occur. Primitive anarchy does not rely on notions of true interests or natural tendencies. It rather aims for wildness, a different kind of being human, and being in the world altogether. Primitive anarchy focuses not on the natural world but on the healed world, a continuous unfolding beyond the categories of behavior, tendencies, interests, even time and space. "Ample leisure time, an egalitarian, food- sharing mode of life, relative autonomy or equality of the sexes, and the absence of organized violence" are only the beginning of this.[31] Embedded into the whole of the continuous world, my stone's throw becomes part of that world just as I do—part of "the feral unknown" which stems from "a lucid unreason that is not afraid of chaos."[32] Primitive anarchy can accommodate the death of truth that is inherent in the expanse of space because, like egoist anarchy, it challenges the entire framework of truth and space in which the latter can become a threat to the former. In the intimacy of dancing with the forest, the stone is thrown in totally unprecedented ways.

While it can look, therefore, as though egoism and primitivism iterate the gestures of classical anarchism, this is only so on the surface. They depart from anarchist politics by challenging the entire framework on which it is based. This is how they avoid falling into the trap of iterating European small Republic thought, and provide a way forward for a new kind of anarchy against the very fetters of iteration themselves, throwing the stone in unprecedented ways. It is this new anarchy that we pursue here.

[29] Renzo Novatore, "Anarchist individualism in the Social Revolution", in Egoism (Berkeley: Ardent Press, 2013), 75.

[30] Georges Palante, There is no "Free Society" Individualist Essays (Kirk Watson, Ed., 2019), 115.

[31] John Zerzan, Twilight of the Machines (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2008), 63.

[32] "Dreams with Sharp Teeth: Anarchic Flights of Fancy," in Uncivilized, 369.

3. Solon's watershed

The distinction between the two versions of anarchy, and situating ourselves within the version focusing on throwing the stone rather than transmitting its parabola, now allows us to take a step back. Inspired by egoist and primitive approaches, we can analyze how repetition and iteration structure the social field. Throwing the stone, I "turn my attack on the sacred outward, onto the whole of the social world I experience."[1] What is this social world, and how do I experience it? Throwing the stone, I reject how "so many of the activities, interactions, relationships, conflict, etc. of the social world are ritualistic absurdities." How is the social world ritualistic? Throwing the stone, I assay a "totality that is all encompassing… in order to find points of confrontation that are not so heavily controlled."[2] How does this totality encompass all, and what are the points where it can be confronted? What is "the extensive and profound empire" which the stone's throw attacks, how does it implement the "withdrawal from immediate and intelligible human meaning?"[3]

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So-called society is a complex constellation consisting of myriad individual interactions. In the intuitive view of the riot where I throw my stone, this typically looks different, as it does in many everyday situations. Thus I confront the police and the state when throwing my stone, institutions whose existences seem in some way to go beyond this individual situation. Likewise, in everyday life, I have a job at a company operating within a market, all of which also seem to be intuitively effective beyond the individual situation. It seems like the institution precedes and somehow shapes the situations I find myself in: the legality of my protest, the target of my protest, the uniform worn by the target of my stone gives this situation a meaning that precedes it. This meaning makes the situation a riot, just as the company makes my being in a room with someone else wearing and suit and tie a job interview. Yet a closer look at such situations shows that meanings, and the institutions shaping them, play out in situ. We thus first have to take a look at how individuals and their actions implement meaning in a situation, and then analyse the institutions and how they are involved.

The common denominator of all the interactions that together make up society is a double temporality. Each interaction comes in the shape of a meaningful situation, a series of present moments forming a spatiotemporal unity. That is, at the most basic level, there is a constellation of material bodies—animate and inanimate—that are situated in a specific, coherent spatiotemporal location, such as a room, a street, a landscape, etc. The animate bodies in a situation are its actors—human and nonhuman. Their temporal perspective is oriented to the future, as they must act in the situation. (This is universally true for all living beings; inactivity and passivity are courses of action, too.) While their actions are future-oriented however, actors are informed by the past. All possible courses of action in any situation are determined by some meaning derived from

[1] This quote, and the following, are from Apio Ludd, "An Egoist Method," in Egoism (Ardent Press, 2013), 153.
[2] Jason Rodgers, "Escapism," in Oak Journal no. 4 (Spring 2022), 53.
[3] John Zerzan, Running on Emptiness (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2002), 2.

the past of the actors and the inanimate objects contained in the situation. The meaning of any situation, therefore, stems from the past that is crystallized in it: either in the form of inanimate objects, whose presence physically delineates scopes of action, or in the form of discourse, whose meaning shapes courses of action. There is no situation that is not framed in terms of some crystallized past, which gives each actor a role to play and constraints within which to play it, and which provides an understanding—however implicit, underdeveloped, or stupid—of the situation. Out of this understanding, in turn, each actor projects paths of action and, inasmuch as they are capable, calculates outcomes. It is irrelevant whether these understandings are rational or emotional, whether they are coherent or not—all of us act on their basis regardless. Taking action towards the future, actors implement their interpretation of the present on the basis of their past.

Future and past, actors and actions play out in situations. How do these come about and what gives them their coherence? Within the everyday approach to the world in which I currently live, I seem to constantly encounter constellations of things all around me: animate and inanimate bodies. As I encounter such a constellation of inanimate bodies—buildings, cars, pavement—I encounter them arranged in various ways, but always within a certain spatiotemporal coherence. That is, I never see just a building, just a car, just pavement; I always perceive the building and the car and the pavement. While the building is in focus, the car recedes from attention, but it is still there. As I focus on the pavement, building and car remain with me—peripherally, but nonetheless present. Thus there are multiple present moments, one focusing on the building, one focusing on the car, one focusing on the pavement, but in each, a coherence across space and time remains: the constellation is a situation, a coherent series of present moments. As such, I can interpret it: I see a busy street, not just buildings and cars.

Each situation is open not only to my interpretation, but also to the interpretations of other animate bodies who likewise encounter the buildings, cars, and pavement. As I encounter these other animate bodies in turn—birds, dogs, humans—I encounter them engaged in various activities. Each of these activities is likewise open to interpretation not only by myself, but also by each of the remaining animate bodies—to the extent of their capabilities for interpretation. We will see in later chapters that the vary basic interpretation of my surroundings as a coherent situation of things is already such an interpretative act. But for now, we remain in our everyday approach to a world of things surrounding us.

The world as it presents itself to me within this approach has meaning which emerges through time. That is, the constellations of animate and inanimate bodies I encounter form a series of present moments: a situation, which is interpreted according to its past. In each such series of present moments, animate bodies, and humans in particular, invoke the past by acting on their interpretation of the situation. In doing this, they each write their own interpretation of the situation, and contribute to the emergence of the meaning of the situation. To each of us, the inanimate objects given in the present, as well as the plants, animals, and humans in it, mean something. By acting in the situation, we can attempt to change its meaning, however slightly. What we can do to change the situation, and how we can act in it, depends on the past of the situation, which is to say, the past of each animate and inanimate body within it, as interpreted through the actions of each animate body involved. Each situation is therefore a crystallization of actions taken and interpretations implemented in past situations.

Past situations and their outcomes shape our actions in the series of present moments, though never completely. That is, our actions in any situation can either repeat the actions performed in

situations we interpret as similar in the past (I cross the road at the light because I have always crossed the road at the light), or our actions can partly accept the way they were shaped in the past while attempting to change themselves (I cross the road a few metres down from the light, but I still cross it), or our actions can challenge the past outright without accepting determination by the past (I stop at the road and decide not to cross it today, even though I always have).

If we opt to challenge previous actions taken in previous situations, we still invoke the past to shape the present, but now in a different way. If this is the case, the past shaping the present situation often becomes a constraint on our actions or at least our interpretation of the situation. Because the present is a crystallization of the past, such constraints play out in one of two ways: they can be physical or discursive. As I look onto a constellation of bodies before me—say, a street busy with shoppers—I am constrained, first, by these bodies. The crowd and the buildings on either side of the road, as well as the cars driving on the street, constrain my movement physically. In dealing with these bodies, however, I am secondly constrained by discourse, because I cannot simply follow any conceivable path of action. I might well be able to run into oncoming traffic, but this will simply get me killed. Nor can I simply begin to pick out elderly or vulnerable bodies from the crowd to open a path for myself.

An analysis of these last two points shows that physical constraints are really discursive constraints. Why is it that I cannot pick on the vulnerable parts of the crowd to make my way? Because these bodies have meaning, that is, they have a past constraining my present interpretation of the situation, and thus my possible actions. Partly, this constraint is within myself, as I hold myself to a certain course of action when interacting with crowds—a standard of conduct that I have acquired in previous situations of similar kinds. Here again I can either repeat the gestures I have learned before, and remain respectful of vulnerable bodies, or I can defy them, and rudely plough my way through the crowd. Either way, by acting in a certain way I repeat, modify, or defy gestures that I have previously made in situations I interpret as similar: rudely or respectfully, I move my body in certain ways, I say or don't say certain things, I look certain ways. All of these are gestures accumulated from situations where they worked in the past.

Partly, too, the constraint on my actions in the crowd is outside myself and stems from the other bodies who are in the situation with me. For these are capable of interpreting the situation and acting accordingly. If I start shoving people aside, others will come to their aid, or at least confront me. Typically, neither of these reactions requires much conscious thought on the part of the bystanders; coming to someone's aid is simply 'what one does' in a situation like this. The response is an effect of past situations: people re-enact their own experiences with being helped by strangers, or instances seen through media channels, or situations narrated by family members. There is a standard by which conduct is conducted, and this standard stems from past conduct in past situations.

The physical presence of the crowd around me is thus based on their invoking their past to interpret the present, which means that it is discursive as well. And this extends all the way to their very physicality, the very flesh confronting me. A cisgendered male body is implemented as such on the basis of gender norms, i.e., through gestures that are in turn based on repeating past gestures acquired in past situations, and acquired in yet other pasts, perhaps from role models, parents, or influencers. Likewise, transgendered bodies perform—typically more explicitly—such gestures as indicate their present gender. These, too, are derived from past gestures, repeating them, modifying them, or defying them. I am cisgendered male today because I was cisgendered male yesterday, and I was cisgendered male yesterday because I was cisgendered male the day

before. Each day in each situation, I implement masculinity by repeating, modifying, and even defying the gestures of masculinity.

Finally, the constraint on my interpretations of the situation and thus my actions stems from inanimate bodies. But their physical constraint is also discursive. Why can I not simply run into traffic? Social inhibitions—acquired standards of conduct—typically prevent this. Why, conversely, am I in the crowd to begin with, and thus between the buildings and the road? Socially acceptable conduct stipulates that I have to get Christmas presents.

In any case, we can summarize and characterize a situation as a temporal structure arranging animate actors and inanimate things, allowing the former to act. Each actor interprets their own role in light of their own past, which is amalgamated and accumulated from other pasts, and which shapes and, in the case of defiance, constrains the actors' present actions and projected future outcomes of these actions. By following their interpretations, actors try to implement their course of action. But because all of them act at the same time—the present of the situation—their actions and thus their interpretations interact. Courses of action can clash, complement each other, evade each other, remain unaffected, and so forth. How the situation develops—that is, what future situation arises from the present situation—depends on the specific ways in which actions overlap.

Consider planning for a meeting with someone you don't know. Each of the numerous subtle or not-so-subtle ways in which you prepare is a commitment to your interpretation of the upcoming situation. This begins with the construction of the situation itself—its spatiotemporal location and the inanimate objects within and around it. Is the meeting in a park or a pub, a public or a private place, outside or inside? Do you arrive alone? Further considerations bring in your body and appearance; once again physical presence is really discursive presence. How do you dress? How do you color your hair and face? Do you bring a book, a phone, a weapon? Do you bring or order alcohol or not? Finally and perhaps most importantly, what course of action do you wish to follow in the meeting? Do you come with an agenda or not? Do you bring gifts, and if so, what kind and how expensive? Do you mask up or not? Will you shake hands, bump fists, hug, exchange awkward glances? What language will you speak, and in which sociolect?

Each of these questions presents a choice that ultimately shows how you interpret the situation, and thus which of your past gestures you want to repeat, modify, or defy. Once you meet the person(s) in question, your interpretation interacts with theirs. If the interaction is hostile, it might become a clash which lasts until one of the interpretations prevails. If it is not, there will be negotiation, cooperation, arrangement or alignment, joke or jest—the whole spectrum of human interaction. But no matter what courses of action unfold, they all contribute to the boundaries of the interpretative framework emerging for this situation from the pasts invoked in and through its actors' actions.

The situation where I confront hostile forces of order with my stone in hand is an exceptional situation, placed at what we will come to call the deictic frontier, and explore further in chapter 7. Here I have the choice to open a new path. This is not a choice most of us have in most situations. Rather, in most situations of our everyday lives, we choose between given pasts—given interpretations—to guide our actions: repeating, modifying, defying past actions.

That is, in the vast majority of situations we iterate our past gestures: to some extent, we repeat them, and to some extent, we creatively renew them. Shaking hands, bumping fists, hugging, and exchanging awkward glances are all acceptable social gestures in a situation of meeting someone; which is chosen depends on the specific interpretation of this meeting. Invoking past gestures

from business meetings, I go in for a handshake. This handshake is an iteration: its structure is repeated from previous handshakes (clasping the other's hand, looking into their eyes, the upward and downward motion of my arm) but its context is creatively renewed (how hard I squeeze, how much I lean in, whether I smile as I make eye contact). The more my handshake is repeated, the more standardized and robotic it becomes. By making its iteration more repetitive, I can therefore signal notions of formality and propriety.

The other person, invoking past gestures from friendlier situations, goes in for a hug. This, too, is an iteration: its structure is repeated from previous hugs (wrapping arms around mine, turning the head, angling the torso), but its context is creatively renewed (how hard the wrap is, how long or short the embrace). The more formulaic the hug becomes, the more repeated are its gestures. By doing this, the other person can vary their invocation of notions of warmth and proximity. In this case, though, I went in for a handshake and they for a hug. As a result of the mismatch in interpretations—and thus in actions—a new situation arises and both of us have to make new decisions: is this just awkward, or do we distrust each other? Do we joke to release the tension or coldly proceed with business? Once more the actions we take depend on the pasts we invoke as we silently negotiate what this situation is.

As the negotiation unfolds, the series of present moments that make up the meeting reveal the structure of the interaction, and the actions of the actors in the series of present moments crystallize into patterns. Is it a business meeting? In that case, we will repeat patterns of formality (tone and demeanour, content of discussion, rituals of eye contact, gestures with our extremities) while creatively renewing them with our bodies (an ironic twinkle here, a calculated breach of formality there, intonations and timings, bathroom breaks). Is it a social call? We will iterate other gestures, repeating their structures while modifying their context. Is it a sports game? A funeral? A conference? Each time, a structure of action will be iterated in and through our gestures, and shape their shared outcomes. The specific contexts of our gestures are our own and situational, and typically do not repeat. The structure of our gestures stems from our pasts, and is typically repeated. The repetition of structure and variation of context and modulation is iteration.

This vast majority of everyday situations where the stakes are the interpretation of a given situation on the basis of invoking given pasts make up the pacified social field. Here, iteration reigns unquestioned. The choice of which interpretation to put forward in any situation is yours, but the bouquet of possible interpretations from which you choose is not, nor are the ways in which you modulate their contexts. In each answer to each of the above questions preparing us for a meeting with someone new, and the many more that may arise within the pacified social field, we can only choose from pre-existing interpretations. In the pacified social field, you iterate the result of previous interactions. You make history, but you are not free to make it as you please.

For each of the questions preparing us for a meeting, or for any other situation, there is a range of socially permissible (unpunished) responses, which are based on the responses that structured previous interpretations and actions in previous situations. Likewise, there is a range of socially impermissible (punishable) responses, which are derived from the responses that did not prevail in structuring previous interactions.

The range of responses that are permissible depends on the framing of the situation, as we have seen. A hug is typically more awkward in a business meeting than in a social call, and vice versa for handshakes. Thus power works in the pacified social field by influencing the way situations are framed. The variables here are time and rigidity, which often go hand in hand. In time, a power differential unfolds by defining a situation before it arises. Thus if I attend a

job interview, this framework is set in advance and calls on me to repeat gestures previously performed in such situations by myself and others, while minimizing my creative interpretation of them. Iteration of previous gestures is therefore very close to repetition here. The situation's pre-definition norms it: I have no particular freedom of interpreting the situation, and thus my conduct in it is normed before I even arrive.

Such norming need not be hostile. Other situations allow more creative flexibility, especially when pre-definitions and weak or incomplete, as they often are in social calls. Defining a situation as such is an act of norming as well, but open to further situational negotiation. The host nonetheless exercises a certain power differential, as they first set the parameters of interaction: bring booze, no flirting with the host's partner, no politics.

Nor does power necessarily or always rely on carefully pre-defining situations in time. If a situation arises suddenly, as for example a car accident, power rather relies on an assertion of rigidity that imposes a pre-definition onto the situation as though it had always worked towards this rigidity. A car accident is at first a mess of bodies, twisted, injured, heaped, staggering about. But as soon as authority figures—medical, police, journalistic—arrive on the scene, its sprawling chaos is forced into an established playbook as though this playbook had always been there.

Though not defined in advance, therefore, the situation becomes pre-defined nonetheless, conducted by the imposition of past gestures. For this is the origin of the authority of "authority figures" in the pacified social field: they can impose past authority to structure the present situation much more forcefully than others can. A cop can structure a car accident into a streamlined process with victims, perpetrators, witnesses, a timeline and insurance claims. They can do this because they are a cop, and they are a cop because they were a cop yesterday. And they were a cop yesterday because they had been a cop the day before.

Each day, in each situation, authority figures can overwrite the interpretation of others with binding effect. They can do this because they were able to do so before, and can repeat the same gestures by which they did so before. Of course the cop wasn't always a cop—at some point someone invested them with authority, and gave them a badge and a gun. But that someone in turn did so on that day because they had done so the day before, and so on until they in turn received their authority from someone else, and so forth into the deepest past.

Of course, at some point or another there are claims aiming to stop the endless derivation of authority from previous authority, asserting that we've reached the bottom. Typically, this is done in constitutions or declarations of independence. But even these rely on previously constituted authority. "We the people" are older than the US Constitution, just as "the Course of human events," the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," and the "opinions of mankind"—and therefore the gesture of "a decent respect" for these opinions—are older than the US Declaration of Independence. It's iterations all the way down. (This is why our search for the beginning of all iterated power, in chapter 5, will take us back as far as archaic Egypt to find the beginnings of governance—to its deictic frontier. For now, though, we remain in today's pacified social field.)

By pre-defining a situation in time, or by compressing it into rigidity, the situation and its actors are normed. Enticing, cajoling, forcing us to repeat rather than creatively iterate previously successful responses to situations, power within the pacified social field aims to avoid deviations that are too far from historically accepted gestures. Here, power is situational and differential. In any given situation, I have power if I am able to norm the other actors' interpretation of, and thus their conduct in, the situation: to establish the meaning of inanimate bodies and to assign roles to the animate bodies present with me. But this means that power rests everywhere on iteration. I

can exercise power through pre-defining the situation—but only on the basis of authority derived from iterating previous gestures in previous situations. I must already play a role—interviewer, but also dinner party host—to achieve this. I can also exercise power through overwriting the other participants in situations that arise suddenly, but I must already play a role—police, medic, journalist—to do this. If I do not, the situation remains fluid, and I am negotiating for its meaning through persuasion, charisma, or eloquence.

Because power is situational and differential, nobody ever has power within the pacified social field. Even a totalitarian dictator, master over life and death of their subjects, needs armies, allies, secret cabals. Every sole rulership is really an oligarchy. In everyday life, too, nobody ever has power across the board. A tyrant at home is often meek in the job, or vice versa. It all depends on how much norming can be done in the situation.

Nor are those on the receiving end of the power differential ever without their own choice of drawing on previous actions in previous situations.Their choice among normed responses to normed situational interpretations is thus in turn based on an economy of interpretative bravery: how far are you willing to go beyond previously permissible responses, iterate them rather than repeating them outright, filling them with your creativity, renewing them?

Make no mistake, however: whether you obey or defy the results of previous struggles, you still iterate gestures of obedience or defiance. The field remains pacified. There are situated and specific actions implementing resistance against the predefinition of situations or rigidity introduced into these situations. In fact, the pacified social field is full of such situational resistance. But these all remain pacified: they iterate previous discourses, interpretations, choices, actions, and outcomes. Clothing and hair color options, for example, have expanded their range significantly over the last fifty or so years as a result of struggles against rigidly defined standards. Nonetheless, each choice comes with an implicit (and sometimes explicit) commitment to an interpretation of the situation at hand, which invokes previous delineations of permissible choices and previous interpretations of previous situations.

That a business meeting or job interview mandates a different set of interpretative commitments than a social call does not mean that I cannot wear a tank top that says FUCK CAPITALISM to a business meeting, or to a job interview for that matter. It just means that I've committed to a different—far more antagonistic— set of responses to the situation than I would have if I had worn a shirt and tie, or for that matter if I had worn the tank top to a social occasion. In each case, I commit to iterating struggles from the past; I commit to remaining within the pacified social field of deviant but pre-defined responses. Moreover, it's crucial not to forget that one of the most powerful forces against the empire of repetition is often capitalism itself, which thrives upon assimilating local resistance from within the pacified social field. Not only am I not the first one to throw off a business occasion with an anticapitalist wardrobe, I may even accidentally be on point; some postmodern businesses have been known to be cool with these kinds of countercultural statements, and can have protocols to deal with such (non)disruptions. The range of permissible responses fluctuates, but nothing is ever truly new within the pacified social field.

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Every social wager is an iteration of past social wagers, repeating, modifying, or defying previous paths of action. The great fault lines of our collective social struggles—commonly called institutions and politics—manifest in each situation in the form of implicit commitments to past wagers. The total social field is pacified because iteration reigns unquestioned. It does so, first, as social literacy. Wearing a tank top that says FUCK CAPITALISM to a job interview typically

negates the immediate goal of my attending that job interview. But my challenge presupposes my social literacy: I must know what a job interview is, and that the situation at hand is one, for my tank top to be a deliberate challenge. In a way, I have conceded defeat before I even get there. After all, if the situation at hand turns out to be a social call, the tank top won't be a challenge to anything and its message will typically go unnoticed.

Secondly, iteration reigns unquestioned because it structures both situations and also resistance to situations. Wearing the tank top implicitly affirms that there is such a situation as a job interview and—by the very negativity to which it commits— the ranges of clothing choices that are and are not permissible in such a situation. Thus in wearing my tank top, I iterate the existence of a Job Interview situation , that has a set of predetermined actions and commitments. I challenge it, but only within its own framework. This is where capitalism's malleability comes in again: it works tirelessly to appropriate every possible iteration of every possible discourse, and to sell them to me so I can go ahead and challenge situations while remaining pacified.

Society thus consists of individuals iterating interpretations in struggles to influence the meaning of situations. But these interpretations in turn are not coming out of nowhere. The great collectivities of the pacified social field—institutions like corporations, parties, parliaments, courts, churches, markets, ethnicities, but also worldviews and ideologies—are iterated interpretations brought into situations by individual wagers. When situations are interpreted in these institutions' terms, however, additional thickly-layered norming aims to ensure that interpretations, and thus actions and outcomes, are defined as repetitively and narrowly as possible. The more an institution solidifies—and they all have inevitable ossifying tendencies, as any social organizer knows—the fewer renewals or adaptations are allowed by its interpretative discourse.

Institutions are not buildings or parchments, although their physical presence in these forms is important, too. (We will trace this further in chapter 5.) Institutions are routines: habitualized actions pre-defining situations. A market, a church, a corporation are models for interpreting situations, templates for behavior within them, mental maps for navigating the world. Legal entities or fictions like corporate personhood, are examples of these routines, models, and mental maps. The market institution is implemented by actors seeing themselves as buyers and sellers and acting accordingly. The court institution is implemented by actors behaving as judges, lawyers, and witnesses. In other words, institutions manifest in the normed gestures our bodies perform—raising hands or shaking them, uttering certain words in certain places, banging gavels.

As soon as the gestures dissolve, so does the institution. Legal personhood occasionally claims the opposite, as when the immortality of the Crown or the Flag are stipulated. But these legal fictions, too, are just implemented through gestures repeating other gestures—crowning ceremonies, flag-folding patterns. If everyone walked out, the court would cease to exist. If no one sells, no one can buy, and the market ceases to exist. An empty church is really no church at all. Institutions are sets of rigidly normed gestures, repeated over and over by each participant in them, according to their specific role. Institutions command adherence to such rigidity by empowering themselves to implement enforcement and punishment gestures—but this again is solely on the basis of their own repeated gestures. That is, an institution consists of crystallizations of interpretations whose terms overwrite ever more rigidly the degrees of creative deviance that are still present within iteration. A lot of this is implicit, a pile-up of pasts implemented in the present of a situation.

Of course not all institutions are equally rigid. Nonetheless, deviations within institutions are typically less permissible than outside of them. The punishment for disobeying a judgegesture is

typically harsher than the punishment for disobeying a corporate manager-gesture, and the punishment for the latter is typically more severe than the punishment for disobeying your mates egging you on. A lot of it, too, depends on unquestioned compliance. By iterating the notion of a job, for instance, I implicitly commit to notions of labor and wages, to separate times and places for business and relaxation, to ideas of contracts and capital, to laws and courts. This commitment becomes explicit quickly, however, as each such concept overwrites ever more rigidly the interpretation of the situations that I am in, choking off my residual paths of freedom.

We are now at the end of a very long crystallization period, in an empire of repetition where nearly all situations are predefined in some way by some institution, and where it seems as though institutions deploy all of our actions and outcomes and structure the whole world around us. Consider what happens when the law closes in over a situation. The situation itself will of course have been in the pacified social field and thus repetitious. Yet this repetition will have been within multiple fields of iteration, and thus will contain some degrees of interpretative freedom—it will have had commercial, relational, cultural discourses iterated within its interpretation in various ways and juxtapositions. But when the law closes its repetition over the situation, the situation is overwritten totally by the repetitive categories of jurisprudence.

Legal subsumption—this being the extremely apposite technical term—changes the interpretation of the situation entirely. Where it had previously been an unfortunate collision of cars or wills, a tragic accident, an avoidable dispute, or lapse in judgment, it is now a case within an applicable law. As a result, artefacts become evidence. Strategic constellations—say, a conflict between owners—become special cases of juridical categories, and people become defendants, accusers, and witnesses, as animals and plants become property. Each aspect of the situation now exclusively implements a pre-defined legal category repeating previous implementations of the same category. Even the differences between previous situations and this one are classified in repeated categories. Judgments or settlements seal the deal, separating not this unique individual human from this unique individual animal, but an abstract legal entity—a person—from another abstract legal entity—a piece of property. The law majestically, mercilessly, endlessly repeats itself, its own categories, concepts, terminologies. And where it fails to do so, appellate and supreme courts come in to force the situation back under the repetition of legal categories.

Of course such subsumption never goes unchallenged. In fact, resistance to institutions—to repetition solidifying ever further—is everywhere. But it is a normal and normed function of the pacified social field. This does not mean that institutions are ever completely rigid: they need to remain iterative to some degree to survive. But they are typically able to control both the extent and the type of their flexibility, because the response to repetition is nearly always another iteration within the pacified social field. When the company accepts my FUCK CAPITALISM shirt as a funny challenge, it expands the boundaries of permissible responses to business situations. When it rejects my colored beard, it restricts them. Likewise, from my side, subversion and resistance remain possible—I can always flip the table—but these too draw on iteration. Any given action in any given situation implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) iterates numerous previous interpretative wagers—whether I use them to obey or to resist or to push boundaries of permissible or impermissible responses.

Hence the imperceptible character of iteration: it precedes us—the permutations of our conduct, our interpretations, our gestures—in any situation within the pacified social field. Its authoritarianism is implicit and nearly invisible to those of us who dwell within the pacified social field. Iteration does not oppress outright: it domesticates. It contains its own degrees of resis-

tance. It works through any given wager in any given situation to reaffirm social literacy and delineating permissible and impermissible responses. It remains possible to win in a situation, to resist repetition, to triumph against institutions. But all actors in a given situation write the situation, play their roles and implement their actions, in iterated terms derived from their past and the past of that past: repeating, modifying, defying it, but never escaping from it. The social field remains pacified because iteration is the medium of our liberty and the medium of our subservience. Within its boundaries, subservience means following the pre-definitions of situations provided by institutions, repeating the gestures prescribed by authority figures. Liberty means modifying these gestures, even rebelling against them—by invoking other iterated gestures.

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This is why a direct and explicit attack on iteration itself has so much potential, and why it is so difficult to implement. Repetition is under constant attack within the pacified social field. Different modes and modulations of repetition—different institutions—are constantly at war with one another. The government works against corporations and vice versa, different forms of capital vie for control over different markets, and so forth. Each of these battles is instantiated in the battles between individuals attempting to control the interpretation of a situation. The degrees of iterative creativity pile up here as interpretations are juxtaposed in creative ways to evade institutionalized repetition. Yet it is imperative—for the stability of the empire of repetition and the cohesion of the pacified social field—that such evasion never succeeds totally, that creativity never exceeds the limits of previously successful iterations.

This is why the pacified social field includes both the government and politics, including canonical anarchist politics. It is not just in the officially designated areas of social peace—markets and civil society—but also in our modes of governing that iteration is essentially unchallenged, whether this governance is democratic, electoral, market-based, dictatorial, or otherwise.

Whenever people cooperate, negotiate, or struggle to interpret a situation and act according to their interpretation, the totality of all previously accumulated discourse is at their disposal: history, culture, economics, all the myriad previous interpretations of previous situations—those that prevailed and those that did not. Each time such discourses are invoked, evoked, or deployed, they are renewed, and thus they change ever so slightly, however much institutions attempt to keep their invocation a pure repetition. Whenever I invoke a gesture, such as a handshake, a concept, such as justice, or a previous interpretation, such as a wage negotiation, I make them my own and adapt them to my interpretation of the situation. My handshake will be firm or limp, depending on how combative I intend to behave in the negotiation. My concept of justice will be transactional or absolute, oriented towards grandstanding or consensus, depending on how I conceive of a wage and a negotiation. My idea of negotiating, too, will be strategic or emotional, hard or soft. My opponent will come to the situation with other ideas, other interpretations of wages and negotiations, and thus with other modulations of a handshake and other modifications of justice. In the melee, we not only hammer out wages. We also change, if ever so slightly, the concepts of wages and justice, the situational interpretation of a negotiation, and social expectations about handshakes.

All discourses—the text of society—therefore change all the time in myriad miniscule ways. Sometimes these add up to a larger change, for instance when the definition of justice has changed too much—through its myriad invocations in sundry situations—to still be compatible with the idea of a wage and a negotiation. These larger changes are dealt with by politics: legal changes, definitions of how and why these can be made, labor struggles, changes in the structure of the

market institution, constitutional changes, adjustments to (or the establishment of) the rule of law, and so forth. Politics, therefore, is the way the pacified social field deals with changes that go beyond invoking old language and create new frames of reference, changes that affect the mode of iteration itself as it works through the myriad individual situations that comprise history.

The emergence of politics as a dedicated safety valve for negotiating the future of the pacified social field as a whole, is the result of such a change, one that happened in the sixth century BC. In such watershed moments, old concepts tumble and events are reinterpreted, using new concepts. Their meaning changes as their context changes, and situations interpreted in light of the concepts change alongside them. Such watersheds are never purely conceptual, they always change the practical wagers of the day, reverberating through all situations and affecting all interpretations—the entire pacified social field. But as we will see, even a watershed going beyond day-to-day discursive changes does not threaten iteration: even changes to the mode of iteration itself remain iterative changes.

The Athenian lawgiver Solon (c. 630—c. 560 BC) did not become one of Archaic Greece's Seven Sages only because he mitigated the struggle between the rich and poor citizens of Athens. He was pronounced a sage because he did so by elevating the struggle onto a new conceptual plane, one that we still follow in our current concept of politics. Before Solon, the society of Athens was largely characterized by stasis: continual struggles between nobles and their followers, a sort of permanent civil war. To be sure, Athens in particular, unlike many other archaic Greek cities, had long been on the way to resolving conflicts through sharing power, so these struggles were no longer the all-out battles described in the Iliad. But they were real and violent: "in competition for honor, reputation, and glory the strict rule was reciprocity in doing good and doing harm."[4] Homer's Iliad and Odyssey describe this world of aristocratic excess. Here, gift-giving could and did lead to competitions to enhance public life. But equally, "violence among nobles threatened the existence of the entire community because the dynamic of revenge and counter-revenge might cause ever wider ripples and undermine security in an entire region."[5]

Solon, an aristocrat himself but aware of a need "to strengthen the traditional foundations of Athens' communal life and develop further the political forms based on them,"[6] was appointed mediator in just such a situation of escalating strife. As usual, the pain was unequally shared, as infighting between nobles was not the only problem. Far more urgently, debt kept many farmers in dependence or in outright slavery, leading to widespread fear and resentment among the less well-off, as one would expect. (The landless poor, though they certainly existed, played little role in all this, as far as our sources are concerned.) The nobles, conversely, feared not so much a peasant uprising, but rather that one of their own might seize on this uprising and use it to escalate the ongoing civil war in Athenian society, or ultimately even to become sole ruler of the city.

Solon provided a solution that was acceptable to both sides. Primarily, as he tells us, he "brought back to Athens, to their homeland founded by the gods, many who had been sold, one legally another not, and those who had fled under necessity's constraint… And those who suffered shameful slavery right here, trembling before the whims of their masters, I set free."[7] The

[4] Michael Stahl and Uwe Walter, "Athens," in Kurt Raaflaub and Hans van Wees (Eds.), A Companion to Archaic Greece (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 140.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid, 143.

[7] Solon, Elegiac fr. 36 (tr. Gerber).

farmers were thus once again owners of their land, freed from debt and debt-slavery. The nobles, too, were able to accept this settlement, as Solon prevented a public uprising: "And as for those who had power and were envied for their wealth, I saw to it that they too should suffer no indignity."[8]

Thus Solon came to be known as a just arbiter, which eventually propelled him to the status of a sage. But his true achievement lies not in this personal reputation, nor even in his settlement itself (which, in any case, excluded the landless poor and did nothing for foreign slaves, not to mention women). Rather, Solon invented a set of new terms that created the idea of politics as a struggle for a good society, the safety valve by which this struggle could remain pacified. He not only "wrote laws for the lower and upper classes alike, providing a straight legal process for each person."[9] Beyond the laws themselves, he created "a legal order which manifested itself as a space for the civic community that encompassed society as a whole" and in which "whoever belonged in this space was henceforth a member of the citizen community, with all the rights and obligations arising from it."[10] Of course, once such a space is defined, those outside of it are thereby rejected. Solon's watershed is thus one of the origins of today's politics in both their inclusive and their exclusive structure.

At its core, Solon's achievement was conceptual, re-writing accumulated discourse in its own light. The state of affairs before Solon's settlement, with rampant debt slavery and equally rampant elite warfare, came to be labelled as Lawlessness (dysnomie). By contrast, the order that Solon tasked Athens' civil society to uphold became known as Lawfulness (eunomie). At the heart of Solon's intervention was a new conceptual vision of civic engagement in service of preserving lawfulness against lawlessness. "This is what my heart bids me teach the Athenians, that Lawlessness brings the city countless ills, but Lawfulness reveals all that is orderly and fitting, and places fetters around the unjust. She makes the rough smooth, puts a stop to excess, weakens insolence, dries up the blooming flowers of ruin… Under her all things among men are fitting and rational."[11]

In introducing this new set of concepts, Solon not only set a development in motion that led to the eventual democratization of ancient Athens, he changed the shape of political discourse through the centuries. The idea of a civic community committed more or less openly to the common good has been a staple not only of the rhetoric but also the practice of politics ever since. The enlightened mercantilist king of the 18th century doesn't just claim to recognize that a wealthy society is required for a stable kingdom, he also acts on this belief when he implements "public institutions and public works necessary for the defense of the society, and for the administration of justice," and when he provides "for facilitating the commerce of the society," and "promoting the instruction of the people."[12] In its turn, in the constitutional government of the 19th century, the rule of law not only claims to bind rich and poor alike in shared observance of public order, but does so on the explicit understanding that public order and rule of law are conducive to the well being of the people, and only exist for their sake. Which is why, as the material conditions for this well being changed in the 19th and 20th centuries, constitutional government changed from a purely defensive provision for individual liberty to broader implementations of social wel-

[8] Solon, Elegiac fr. 5.

[9] Solon, Elegiac fr. 36.

[10] Stahl and Walter, "Athens," 146.

[11] Solon, Elegiac fr. 4.

[12] Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations (New York: Bantam Classic, 2003), 971.

fare. After all, where rugged individualism entails that even "the best of men might suffer from a sudden change in consumer tastes or as a result, not of their own inadequacy, but of that of their employer," there "the prospect for finding new forms of social protection… remains the highest hope for social progress."[13]

Solon's watershed has had tremendous effects, and its concepts still structure political discourse today. Constitutions and political parties claim to implement, and in many cases undoubtedly do implement, ways to alleviate burdens and improve conditions for a better society under the law. Judicial politics of the kind currently playing out in the American court system take place within the same framework set by Solon, even where this framework has degenerated to farcical lip service. Litigation as a means of implementing politics retains a notion of a rule of law, the desirability of keeping the social field pacified, as a means to a good society in much the same way Solon defined it.

Marxian communism, too, taps into Solon's vision of the public good negotiated in politics—claims of the "withering away" of politics notwithstanding. To be sure, the state is removed in classless society—eventually—but eunomie can continue to rely on civic mechanisms of other kinds, enforcing notions of the common good. Even "in a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour… has vanished," the distribution of goods "to each according to their needs" may well be "inscribed on the banner" of society, but it still depends on a commitment to labour, which, by then, "has become not only a means of life but life's prime want."[14] The social field remains pacified.

Likewise, the terms of Solon's watershed structure the implementation of canonical anarchist politics, the "longing for a social system which ensures equality… for everyone, and the political apparatus necessary to ensure/enforce their particular notion of what that would mean."[15] Rejecting the idea that laws are a means to ensure the common good is only possible by transposing the concepts of lawfulness and lawlessness to a moral plane. Instead of relying on the state to enforce conduct, classical anarchism posits peer pressure. Transposing those concepts, however, keeps their structure intact. Rejecting the notion of a common good in favor of mutualist cooperation, for example, iterates the very notion of a civic or public sphere, which Solon invented. It is no longer a public sphere in the sense of state politics, to be sure— but it remains a public good, a sphere of morally-proper conduct in service of social harmony. Thus Solon is iterated, dressed in new individualist or mutualist terminology but contrasting eunomie and dysnomie nonetheless.

Other watersheds have since been inscribed into Solon's watershed, re-embedding their iteration into different contexts, overriding socially iterated interpretations, and thus changing social reality. Paul, who turned the teachings of a Jewish apocalyptic prophet into Christianity, marks one such watershed. Muhammad, the founder of Islam, is another. In our own day, Marx and Freud—notwithstanding the prior legwork by Proudhon and Schopenhauer—would commonly be named as examples. In each case, however, the watershed's effects remain within the pacified social field that they restructure. To be sure, each watershed changes how the field operates, it negotiates the field as a whole and influences all of its interpretations in some way. It re-shapes institutions and disrupts the empire of repetition. But they all remain within Solon's framework: within politics as a safety valve ensuring the implementation of unchallenged iteration.

[13] John K. Galbraith, The Affluent Society (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), 84–85.

[14] Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in Tucker (ed), Marx-Engels Reader, 531.

[15] A. Morefus, "Liberation, not Organization," in Uncivilized, 100.

This makes the invention of an explicit antipolitics in primitive or egoist anarchy so much more than meets the eye. Primitive and egoist anarchy misunderstand themselves and their explosive potential when they conceptualize themselves as watersheds analogous to Paul's, Muhammad's, Marx's, or Freud's. If this were so, they too would come to constitute only a re-engagement with an existing discourse, and thus would remain determined by the spaces opened within the terms of prior discourse. But the gestures of primitive and egoist anarchy do not fit into Solon's watershed. They do not coalesce to institutions, and do not repeat the pacified gestures of judicial action, petitions, or throwing oil on paintings. Nor, conversely, do primitive and egoist anarchy iterate other gestures when rebelling against institutions, such as street marches, protest signs, or social media spats.

Anarchic antipolitics does not remain content to re-inscribe the values of political discourse, relying on notions of good societies and civic cooperation that remain determined by their first interpretation within Solon's watershed. Their point is not to re-invent old iterations or re-interpret them. We who take up their inspiration do not attack repetition from an iterative perspective. The point, as Aragorn! pointed out, is to "write the rules that those in power are not prepared for."[16] Rather than overwriting Solon's discourse—changing the flow of its concepts without changing themselves and transposing its values into our own visions, leaving their structure intact—anarchic antipolitics gives us an opening to unwrite Solon's terms. Thus we can liberate ourselves from them and escape the constraints of politics within the pacified social field.

[16] Aragorn!, "Nihilism and Strategy," in Uncivilized, 275.

4. Plant intuition

What then is our wager for anarchic antipolitics? How do we attack the habits, routines, and repetitions that daily force us into their mould—the institutions, the ideologies, the pre-defined situations, the rigidities claiming to be without alternative? How do we liberate ourselves and the creatures around us without falling into the trap of invoking another given discourse, another pre-defined iteration of Solon's watershed? How do we throw the stone without obsessing about the accuracy of its parabola? How do we pick up where primitive anarchy's concept of wildness and egoist anarchy's rejection of social tyranny left off?

The world as it presents itself to us in the everyday pacified social field—the world we aim to detonate—is a world of discrete things in discrete situations. Its animate and inanimate bodies are arranged in specific sceneries in space and time, discrete series of present moments meaningfully following up on one another according to the pasts we actualize by acting within them. The animate and inanimate bodies, too, are discrete: brittle and isolated, they remain independent of one another, their interactions external to them. This is more obvious the more institutional our surroundings are: I am surrounded by "a chair," "a desk," or interact with "a dog" or "a cat" or "a co-worker," and do so within "a room," "a building," or "a street"—that is, in "a situation." As we have seen, each of these singular entities is present in the singular situation due to its singular past. In my case, and to some extent in the case of the dog and the cat, this manifests as action taken on the basis of iterated or repeated past gestures. In the cases of the chair, desk, room, or street, too, the inanimate body is present due to its past, repeating its production and arrangement within the present pattern or by the present gesture.

Yet we have already mentioned in passing that such discreteness, too, is part of the interpretation of the world, rather than a given property of How Things Are. Our wager is that the world of discrete bodies iterating or repeating their discrete gestures in discrete situations is really only the world of the pacified social field.

Even within the everyday view of bodies existing alongside us in situations, an intuitive remainder persists that never quite seems to fit into the template of things isolated from one another and the world. A straightforward reflection on perception—even of the most mundane kind—reveals astonishing complexity. Every thing, animate or not, has hidden sides, depths we cannot immediately see, a smell added to sight, warmth or coolness radiating into the air. Even in everyday synaesthetic perception, "every single aspect of the object in itself points to a continuity, to multifarious continua of possible new perceptions, and precisely to those in which the same object would show itself from ever new sides."[1]

There is an excess to the most mundane things. A building that I encounter always has more sides than I can see; perhaps I only see its back, the bleak tristesse of service entrances, concrete walls, blind and barred windows, and am unaware that its other side presents the splendour of a cafe, a marquee, a red carpet leading to a reception desk. Conversely, not just splendour is

[1] Edmund Husserl, Analyses concerning passive and active synthesis: Collected Works Vol. IX (Dordrecht: Kluiver Academic Publishers, 2001), 41.

hidden but also depths less pleasant. A piece of fruit on my desk only shows its appetizing green color, revealing its foul taste only as the situation develops further. A dog pees on a tree; how many smells, how many claims and delineations, how many gestures remain hidden from me? "In every moment of perceiving, the perceived is what it is in its mode of appearance [as] a system of referential implications with an appearancecore upon which appearances have their hold. And it calls out to us, as it were, in these referential implications. 'There is still more to see here, turn me so you can see all my sides, let your ze run through me, draw closer to me, open me up, divide me up; keep on looking me over again and again, turning me to see all sides. You will get to know me like this, all that I am, all my surface qualities, all my inner sensible qualities,' etc."[2]

Thus each view, each perception of the world shows that there is an excess in the things and situations themselves, unfolding not just through but beyond them and beyond the horizon of the situation. The subdivided world of the pacified social field points beyond itself.

Indeed, we assert that the unfolding of depths beyond situations and horizons, of links and movements beyond discrete things, precedes the world of things and envelops it at all sides. The latter is an interpretation written into the former. Within each of the manifolds presenting themselves to us and hiding themselves from us—the continuous unfolding of the world's lights, shadows, and darknesses, sounds and silences, smells and winds, humidities and earths, movements and stillnesses, things are implemented. They are written into the world by an ongoing labor that is at the foundation of the pacified social field—and that, barely, manages to domesticate the world's unfolding.

Let us take a table, for example. Within this table, that is, in all its excessive overflowing into hidden depths and spatial arrangements, the appearance core persists. It remains identical in and through appearances and hidings, forcing them all together to form the inanimate object. Yet this identity, the very solidity of its brittle existence, is ongoing: it is itself an active gesture, a labor to keep the sprawl of synaesthesic unfolding under control. "But what is identical is a constant x, a constant substrate of actually appearing table-moments, but also of indications of moments not yet appearing. These indications are at the same time tendencies, indicative tendencies that push us toward the appearances not given. They are, however, not single indications, but entire indicative systems, indications functioning as systems of rays that point toward corresponding manifold systems of appearance."[3] Within these systems of indications and systems of systems of indications "the table" is a repeated implementation of thingness, a series of gestures constituting and re-constituting "the table" as an object within the excessive sprawl of continuous unfolding. Only thus can "the table" become an inanimate body within the pacified social field.

Within this field, the excess remains invisible, and I really do encounter just "a table." We can only see the world of continuous unfolding if we ourselves change our perspective. We have to accept guidance from beings whose lives, though seemingly alongside ours, are beyond the pacified social field. Undifferentiated, unfixed, unstable, nothing ever unfolds in isolation for these beings. All are part of the continuum: morphing, becoming, changing. And to a significant extent, even now, even in a world overwritten constantly by discrete iteration, the wild persists in their continuous unfolding. These beings are the plants.

No plant has ever obeyed zoning laws. No tree has ever naturally grown on its own, without connecting its roots to myriad other plants and critters. No animal, however solitary, has ever

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid, 42.

looked exactly alike, or exactly like its zoological prototype. We can ensure that we move onward to the world of continuous unfolding only if we blow up the layers of repetition that bind us to the pacified social field and follow the lead of the plants who resist them everywhere.

With this shift in perspective, and once we have explored it in full and put it into action, we situate ourselves at the deictic frontier. We see then that there is an ongoing war between deixis and iteration itself, beyond the politics within Solon's watershed. At work here is a will to reification, a commitment to gestures writing discrete things and discrete situations into the unfolding of the world. The primary target of this commitment are the beings who reside beyond the pacified social field, the plants. For them, the will to reification manifests in attempts at classification, that is, at iterating through wild deixis, to impose the order and concept of the pacified social field upon it.

Even defining the very concepts of species and variation was difficult for Charles Darwin who, when writing The Origin of Species, had to acknowledge that "no one definition has satisfied all naturalists" for either term, though "every naturalist knows vaguely what he means when he speaks of a species."[4] Indeed, he concluded, definition and delineation must remain vague, as "no one supposes that all the individuals of the same species are cast in the same actual mould."[5] And yet, what efforts are being made and continue being made to write just this mould and to force unfolding sprawl into it!

After all, for beings to be domesticated by ever-more repetitive iteration, into our zoos and arboretums, households and abattoirs, they must first be constituted as beings: as sharply delineated, classified appearance-cores, identical substrates beneath the sprawling systems of systems of indication, keeping them in line. We have seen how even produced things, inanimate bodies, present themselves and hide themselves in vastly richer ways than their being as A Chair, A Table, or A Building allows. The appearance-core implements domestication, which ensures that this table conforms to a table, that it repeats the original substrate of its production in any context. How much richer is the being of animate unfolding bodies!

And yet, domestication here implements the same gestures, ensuring that animate systems of indication conform to a template in given situations. "For humans, as we have seen, there are degrees of creativity, where gestures—including the fundamental ones implementing their humanness—can juxtapose pasts and thus deviate from repetition." But these degrees of freedom remain beset by other pasts, and thus humans remain within the pacified social field. Moreover, they implement their own domestication beyond the norming to which they are subjected in schools, hospitals, barracks, and prisons. Humans carry the cops in their heads and pacify themselves into the field of iteration. Only when we shift our perspective do we cease to be human and become aware of our self domestication: "The ordinary man—the idealist—subordinates his interests to the interests of his ideals, and suffers for it," forcing his unfolding into iterated gestures; only "the egoist is fooled by no ideals" and thus open to learning from the beings outside the pacified social field.[6]

[4] Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2004), 51.

[5] Ibid, 53.

[6] John Beverly Robinson, "Egoism," in Enemies of Society, 17.

Animals occupy a position between humans, who routinely domesticate themselves and each other, and plants, which unfold wild and untameable outside all social iteration.[7] The domestication of animals is outward and direct, inasmuch as it is possible at all—in the so-called lower strata, domestication is often altogether impossible. It is punishment rather than morality. Still, for animals as for humans the end goal of domestication is to conform to repeated gestures in repeated roles. In the case of animals, these roles are their species and phenotype, and thus domestication has them live according to their classification. Hence the never-ending labor of classifying at the deictic frontier.

Naturalists, Darwin continues, put substantial effort into distinguishing "by means of intermediate links any two forms" of life, thus "treating the one as a variety of the other," or "ranking the most common, but sometimes the one first described, as the species, and the other as the variety."[8] They do so against substantial deictic resistance, as everywhere overlaps; wild forms, aberrations, false analogies proliferate, thwarting attempts at keeping species and varieties distinct. The will to reification thus forces naturalists to constantly introduce sub-species, "forms which…come very near to, but do not quite arrive at, the rank of species."[9] It may well seem like the conceptual apparatus of biological science tries in vain to keep species apart where "differences blend into each other by an insensible series."[10] The excess of unfolding goes beyond the pacified social field. Warfare is endless at the deictic frontier, aiming to cut off this excess and bring it back to the appearance-core.

Attempts to close the pacified social field over the unfolding that resists it did not arise only when the 18th and 19th centuries introduced scientific approaches into the world. The confusion thwarting any attempts to force the unfolding of wild continuum into a conceptual mould is—we may add with just a hint of sarcasm, naturally—as old as these attempts at classification themselves. When the ancient Greek philosopher Theophrastos tried to classify the plants of the ancient Greek world, he cautioned right at the start that "one must not make too precise a definition" of them, and rather try to see what makes plants "typical."[11] Even then, though, definitions "must be taken and accepted as applying generally and on the whole" as tiny changes everywhere outgrow the words trying to close in over them.[12] Trees of the same species, for instance, might on the one hand be "taller and finer in appearance" when they grow in the plain as opposed to the hills. On the other hand, they may well "grow fairer and be more vigorous when they have secured a suitable position" regardless of whether this position is on hills or in the valley, not to mention numerous other influences and factors of plant growth and appearance which no classification could ever possibly encompass.[13]

It may well seem that pre-biological classification gestures were just as unsuccessful in their efforts as biological scientific classification. But of course science is not at all the point of these efforts. Even before Theophrastos, too, the Pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus aimed to distinguish animals who, during their emergence, "received the largest share of heat… and became

[7] Note that the approximate description of plant growth by means of the mathematical concept of iteration—in the context of fractal mathematics— is part of the social gestures of iteration; part of classification efforts trying, and failing, to domesticate plant unfolding.

[8] Darwin, The Origin of Species, 57.

[9] Ibid, 64.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Theophrastos, Enquiry Into Plants, I.III.5.

[12] Ibid, I.III.2.

[13] Ibid, III.III.2.

winged" from "those whose aggregate contained earth," who became reptiles, and from "those that had received most of all a share of the moist nature," who became fish.[14] Factors such as the variety of sexes seemed to doom classification even into such relatively loose categories.[15] But here again, scientific accuracy was not, and has never been, the point of classification.

Classification, whether pre-biological or biologically scientific, is not the vain conceptual exercise it seems to be on the surface. It implements a deeper gesture: the constant labor to write identical substrates—discrete things—at the deictic frontier. Classification is one of the gestures used to tame the world of wild unfolding, to differentiate the undifferentiated, stabilize the unstable, fix the unfixed. How else could the empire of repetition impose its order of exploitation on top of iteration? How else, that is, could trees, once defined by iteration, come to be repeated in neat rows in carefully zoned gardens or alleyways unless they are so many types of a token, instances of a concept, varieties of a species? How else, unless they all iterate each other—unless, that is, this tree is always that tree which is already that tree. How could creatures end up in the abattoir—or, for that matter, in the zoned and carefully maintained wilderness area—unless they are iterated? Unless, that is, this sow is that sow is this sow, this polar bear is that polar bear is this polar bear, this tiger is that tiger is this tiger? The will to reification rules over what unfolds wildly by imposing iteration upon it, constantly and ceaselessly. And this is the same rule which produces waves upon waves of identical humans with identical passports and identical smartphones, as we have seen in the previous chapter, and the same rule that implements machinery, as we will see in chapter 8, and computation, as we will see in chapter 9.

Just as we can project a taxonomy of domestication in the pacified social field, ranging from a creative freedom to iterate gestures to rigidly prescribed institutional repetition, so there is a taxonomy of wildness—of deixis—resisting iterative domestication.

As we have seen, human beings domesticate themselves. The ought of repetition structures their gestures, whether outwardly in the form of punishment or inwardly in the form of morality, to varying degrees depending on the situation, but consistently throughout their lives. They are beset by spooks; even when humans resist one set of institutionally-prescribed gestures, they do so by invoking another. There is deixis within them, but it's buried below the social, political, moral imperative to remain within the pacified social field.

Animals are domesticated, that is, they are made to conform to their classification to the extent possible within that classification. Animal adherence to repeated gestures is involuntary, stark and direct; there is no ought here, just repetition of punishment. Conversely, deictic wildness is never far from the surface. Animals revert to wild behaviour quickly. In the so-called lower strata, animals can't be domesticated at all.

In this they match up with plants, who cannot be domesticated and who remain outside of the pacified social field altogether. The gardener who thinks that cutting vines or branches domesticates a plant is sorely mistaken. Regrowth doesn't follow previously established patterns; the deictic frontier is everywhere wild plants are. Every plant is a trickster. Weeds grow everywhere no matter how much chemical warfare is used on them. Unlike humans and many animals, they are all of them perfect; in each moment, they are all they can be, and never need to be more; no defect sticks to them, sin has no meaning. Which is why chemical warfare is used on them to

[14] Atomists D129, at 5, in Andre Laks and Glenn Most (Eds.), Early Greek Philosophy, vol. VII (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 189.

[15] Ibid, D173-D174 (p. 221).

begin with. There is no other way to control them. Our anarchy is an outgrowth of plants. Every plant growing in the cracks of our pavements is a site of resistance. Every thorn, every root, every piece of undergrowth is a breakthrough into the undifferentiated, unfixed, unstable world of lights and shadows. With humans and to a large extent with animals, we are at first within the pacified social field and must work against iteration before we can engage deixis. Only with plants are we directly and immediately at the point of challenging the will to reification outright and in its entirety. Plants, unbowed and unbroken, can lead the way for humans and animals to revolt against iteration, as they rear their wild, untamed continuousness at every juncture.

Moving towards a deictic knowledge of wild plants in particular is at the heart of resistance against iteration. Primitive anarchy knows this and can show us the path here. The earliest humans knew plants long before the threshold where iteration began manifesting in human speech. Their knowledge was deictic: an intuitive familiarity, in the continuous context of their unfixed and unstable surroundings, of the plants around them enveloping them. Though not completely free of iteration— nothing ever is—this knowledge was nonetheless worlds apart from the will to reification as it manifests in prescientific and scientific classification efforts. Deictic intuition can begin to show us how to know the plants ourselves, beyond naming and classifying them.

Back when we lived in the rainforest, we were surrounded by "a profusion of moist leaves and tender buds," providing "a welcome supply of fruits and berries" for us to eat and, in turn, to distribute with our faeces.[16] Here, the knowledge of plants that our most distant ancestors had was only partly an auxiliary one distinguishing edible from inedible plants—though this is of course vital: some iteration can never disappear. But mostly the plants here taught us—and can teach us once again—"the harmony of quietude" that comes with "our sense of being embedded within the forest."[17]

Moving out into the Savannah, our ancestors came to know the plants' ability to resist heat, covering themselves in thorns or receding below the surface. Thus our ancestors learned—and we can learn again—how to dig for roots, how to read a landscape for the presence of grass or edible plants that might show rain or the presence of animals, and how to unfold in tandem with the seasons of plant growth "so that a gathering expedition is not so much a search as a long-term harvest."[18]

The intuition that enabled us to do this—and can enable us to do so again—comes from a place of openness and honesty. This is not, however, an honesty boiled down to the communicative transparency of classical anarchist politics. It is rather an openness akin to the unfolding of a plant, which does know dissimulation, but performs its tricks out in the open: silent and cautious and yet also naked and vulgar. "Pushing the boundaries of our conditioning" as humans, passport holders, property owners, "is an important internal process," with emphasis on internal: "What good is it to be an expert fire crafter or blade maker, hunter or forager if we cannot even communicate with ourselves honestly?"[19] This type of honesty doesn't exclude cunning or self defense, just as plants grow in those ways, too. "Honest rewilding… is a path to learning self sufficiency, living with meaning."[20] Meaning that is derived from and through the plants unfolding around us, rather than the ceaseless quest of the will to reification.

[16] Thomas, Old Way, 10.

[17] Army of the Twelve Monkeys, "Diary of a Female Stone-Age HunterGatherer," in Uncivilized, 376.

[18] Thomas, Old Way, 132.

[19] Scavenger, "Seeds on the Breeze," in Uncivilized, 335.

[20] Ibid.

Honesty thus becomes an intuitive continuum of certainty and self certainty, without singling out either ourselves or any given plant unfolding around us. We unfold through them and they unfold through us. Thus knowledge embraces "a more holistic and instinctual way of living" to let our awareness "shape where we live, who we have affinity with, what we eat, how we spend our time."[21] The plants unfold as parts of our bodies just as we unfold as part of theirs. We feel their presence rather than registering their taxonomy. Roots, stem, leaves, thorns, all become unfixed, unstable, undifferentiated in their mutual affirmation with, within, and through us—and vice versa. We once knew this, which is to say we once felt it—and we can know this, which is to say feel it, again. We will develop the means to achieve this in the last part of this book.

But before we can get there, we have to acknowledge that we are not alone on this battlefield. Far from it: the deictic frontier is also the home and battleground of the state. Machines and computation live—or rather, parasitically iterate—here too. But primarily, we must now confront the coldest of all cold monsters residing at the deictic frontier—a monster that has nothing at all in common with the institutions in the pacified social field.

[21] Faith Stealer, "A Question of Spirit," in Uncivilized, 331.

Part II: The deictic frontier

Placing ourselves in the position of the plants, we now see that the domestication of everyday life operates in two modes: the pacified social field where iteration reigns supreme but contains degrees of creativity, and the empire of repetition, institutions norming gestures into the death march towards everpurer repetition. Institutions never quite succeed in norming society, to be sure, and are at any rate at war with one another in and through our everyday interpretation of situations. In the cracks and fissures between institutions, iterated gestures of resistance and accommodation form and perform pacified politics, including canonical anarchist politics—remaining within Solon's watershed.

Plant anarchy could not be further removed from such politics. It only ever comes to the fore when we leave Solon's watershed and approach the deictic frontier. In the three chapters of this part, we expand our plant intuition of what this means. First, we go back to the historical origin of the deictic frontier in archaic Egypt[22] where we see the emergence of the pacified social field of iteration and, within it, the empire of repetition. Thus we will see the deep history of where all of our iteration began, in the form of deictic artefacts that were overwritten by initial magical investment and then assimilated into repeated social rituals. This allows us to distinguish the state, the monster at the deictic frontier, from the government, the institution within the pacified social field. We also see how the emergence of the pacified social field was and is immediately related to the emergence of proto-Hieroglyphs, whose initial openness to a type of thought not unlike our plant intuition will later guide us as we invoke the Anti-Alphabet in Parts III and IV of this book.

Chapters 6 and 7 take up our findings from archaic Egypt and develop an analysis of the state unfolding in and through the deictic frontier. Chapter 6 looks at this frontier within me and, inspired by egoist anarchy, asks how a resistance to the pacified social field of alphabetic iteration is possible. Chapter 7 takes up the opposite end of the thread and analyzes the state as it is implemented in today's deictic frontier. From here, we can move to Part III of the book, for resistance against the state turns out to be just the kind of deictic resistance that the plants have begun teaching us in chapter 4, and will continue to teach us as we move further along.

[22] This is not, of course, to say that Egypt is the cradle of civilizations (using the term here in its purely technical sense), many of which developed separately and in some cases didn't interact for thousands of years. Egypt does appear to be one of the earliest cradles; second perhaps only to Sumer. But such chronology is less important than the historical importance of Egypt for the currently dominant global culture. Egyptian Hieroglyphs are the earliest predecessor of the Latin alphabet, and Egyptian culture demonstrably, if not always directly, inspired the Greeks—and their role in the formation of the currently dominant global culture is surely beyond question.

5. The Chisel and the Elephants

The distant origins of rule may have developed slowly and gradually, over tens of thousands of years, in the transition from hunting-gathering to agriculture. The origin of the state, however, as we confront it today, lies in a much more specific time frame. When the earliest rock carvings gave way to proto-Hieroglyphs—on a desert stage called Naqada—writing simultaneously emerged as an implementation of state development, i.e., as iteration overwriting plants and animals and humans at the deictic frontier, and as deixis conjuring the very animals and plants that were subjugated by the early state. Only when iteration triumphed over deixis did the third element of the social field—the empire of repetition—emerge in its midst. For a very long time, iteration remained too fragile to crystallize further. It needed the state at every turn.

When the two parts of Egypt—lower Egypt (the Nile delta) and upper Egypt (the Nile river valley)—were unified around 3000 BC, the resulting rule didn't merely consist of outright violence. It had rather already developed "an ideology of power, which had already emerged during the Predynastic period."[1] There had been a period of about 500 years in which the "relatively egalitarian" societies of lower Egypt were integrated into the stratified inequality of upper Egyptian rule.[2] During this period before the Egyptian dynasties (between 3500 and 3000 BC), the Egyptian state emerged, and with it the Hieroglyphic form of writing, first on palettes to mark trade goods, then on serekhs to tag ownership, and finally through "the systematic keeping of annals."[3] Thus agriculture: writing into the land, pastoralism: writing the domesticated bodies of animals, and subjugation: writing the ruled and ruling classes into the population, came to be explicitly linked in proto-Hieroglyphs. Commerce and conspicuous consumption combined to give rise to material culture and art, cementing the ideology of rule over the plants, animals, and humans of Predynastic Egypt. The pacified social field began to emerge, distinct from the deictic frontier.

In other words, the earliest proto-Hieroglyphs mark the threshold where animals and plants came to be explicitly overwritten by their iterated concepts. On the one hand, the new medium made it obvious for the first time that this reed and that reed are constituted as instances of "reed" in agricultural practice and the ideological speech of the new signs alike, just as this cow and that cow are instances of "cow" in pastoral practice, and now again in the new signs. That is, the new signs implemented explicitly that there was a pacified social field.

On the other hand, though, the earliest proto-Hieroglyphs also mark the deictic context that went into the initial establishment of iteration. This is where the techniques and symbols of authoritarian rule were invented. But these symbols were not yet repetitions and still contained degrees of freedom allowing a totally different mode of conversing with the animals and plants, rather than about them—preserving the way people used to be: within, rather than slaving against, continuous unfolding.

[1] Francesco Raffaele, "Dynasty 0," Aegyptiaca Helvetica 17 (2003), 101.

[2] Toby Wilkinson, Early Dynastic Egypt (London: Routledge, 1999), 28.

[3] Ibid, 3.

Thus what emerged among the "authoritative chiefs" of proto-Egypt "who were continuously strengthening their position through warfare, monopoly of long-distance trade, and control of important resources of their territory"[4] was the earliest form of the distinction between the pacified social field (where iteration reigns supreme), and the deictic frontier (where the state battles plants and not-yet-domesticated animals and humans). Proto-Hieroglyphs were initially on both sides of this divide. There is not just an enormous difference between the Hieroglyphs of 19th century BC Egypt, which conjure a whole menagerie of animals (an eagle for an A, a fish for JN, a caterpillar for F, an owl for M, and so forth) and the abstract, lifeless letters of the Latin alphabet that I am now using, alas. There was a momentous change at the very beginning of Hieroglyphs too, distinguishing what came before just as much from what came after as the 19th century BC Hieroglyphs of the Middle Kingdom are from the contemporary Latin script.

This shift occurred some time between 3500 and 3100 BC, archaeologically labelled Naqada IIc to Naqada IIIb after the layers of sediment found in the nearby surroundings of what is now the city of el-Girzeh. (Naqada II is also called Girzeh culture, and Naqada III is also called the Predynastic culture.)

The formation of the Egyptian administrative apparatus began, as it everywhere did, out of the pacified social field by incremental changes that later solidified to the empire of repetition that built the pyramids. At the very beginning, there were alternative pathways, options, and possibilities. Initially, in the relatively egalitarian Naqada I culture, some four thousand years BC, animals came to be carved into rocks. But these were not yet the iterated animals of Middle Kingdom Hieroglyphs, overwriting their living brethren like the term "cattle" does today. They were almost purely deictic. The rock carvings conjured the animals depicted, gestured to their lives and rhythms, and spoke to them rather than of them.

Thus in 2017, researchers discovered rock carvings near the city of Elkad, not too far from Naqada, which are on the one hand clearly precursors to later Hieroglyphs—but are also something else entirely. Rock art from 4000 to 3500 BC, belonging to the Naqada I time frame, shows among other things "a herd of elephants" where "one of the elephants has a little elephant inside of it, which… is an incredibly rare way of representing a pregnant female animal."[5] The people who made this carving did not intend this elephant to be a symbol for anything else: it is just that, a pregnant elephant. They paid enough attention to the biology of their animal brethren to spot the signs or pregnancy, and held the animal in enough friendship or reverence to think it worthwhile to portray it. This is not, as indeed the researchers themselves said on the occasion of discovery, a bureaucratic use of symbols as Hieroglyphic abstractions, but "a much more expansive use of the early writing system."[6] The people who carved this elephant spoke not of it—it was not, to them, just "an elephant"—they spoke to it. It was this elephant, this one pregnant elephant with them, contemporaneous to them, present with them, that is carved into the rock in this time and place. At the dawn of Proto-Hieroglyphs stands a deictic gesture.

But this changed when the rock carvings became serekhs, labels indicating names and ownership, and palettes, pieces of artwork celebrating kings' victories; that is, when the symbols ceased to point to animals and instead began overwriting them—making them values within a bureaucracy. This is what happened towards the end of the Naqada period, some 800 to 900 years

[4] Raffaele, "Dynasty 0," 102.

[5] Bess Connolly, "Yale Archaeologists Discover Earliest Monumental Egyptian Hieroglyphs," YaleNews, June 20, 2017, par. 4.

[6] Ibid, par. 10.

after the pregnant elephant. The evidence from this time thus "reflects the passage from a culture which expresses the manifestations of numina and deities' power in the virtues of animals into one which acknowledges always more space and power to the human figure, embodied by the king."[7] When an animal was carved into rocks during the Naqada I and early Naqada II periods, it was just that—an animal. Perhaps it was endowed with superhuman virtues that it later came to iterate, but it was always implemented by deictic gestures that spoke to the animals who the Egyptians revered, loved, and feared in their daily lives. "In many cases" from this time "the scenes reproduced were actually centered on animals."9[8] Naqada I vessels present "hippopotami, crocodiles, lizards, and flamingoes… scropions, gazelles, giraffes, ichneumons, and bovids," and only within and among this wealth of animals, "human figures" that remain "at this date unobtrusive."[9]

This makes sense not only if one interprets it in the seminomadic context of the earliest strata of the Naqada cultures, where the needs of cattle can be construed to require the timing of herd movements and the prediction of rain, i.e., where one could say that people do, after all, speak about animals rather than to them. On the contrary. Egypt's archaic rock carvings place humans firmly in a context not of their own making, dominated by natural or numenal forces that primarily speak to animals and which are primarily embodied by animals—to whom humans must address their carvings. Thus even in a nomadic context, the sandstone monolith dressed as a cow from the late fifth millennium BC surely goes beyond mere predictions of rain, and rather indicates that animals—not humans—are at the center of the unfolding of the world.[10] The same goes for the "goats, sheep, bovids, and pigs, which have survived… as small statuettes modelled in clay" from the Naqada I economy.[11]

The makers of these statuettes clearly thought of themselves as embedded into an animal world. The oldest human representation in archaic Egypt, created between 4800 and 4600 BC, is a statuette covered in feathers.[12] To be sure, this could be interpreted as a mere makeshift replacement to indicate human hair. But a sense that humans and animals inhabit the world together, and indeed that a grasping of the world was possible only by recourse through the animals who kept its true secret in their rhythmic unfolding, must have played a role here. Mere expediency does not create statuettes laden with symbolism, nor were any of the objects of archaic Egypt ever merely useful in the way our objects are useful to us in the age of universal planned obsolescence. Thus a "panel of four signs, created circa 3250 BC" and discovered near Elkab in 2017 (where the mucholder elephant mother rests carved into her rock as well), might indeed, as the researchers suggest, "express the concept of royal authority over the ordered cosmos."[13] But this, too, needed to be conveyed by means of deictic gestures, and thus this carving is also just "a bull's head on a short pole followed by two back-toback saddlebill storks with a bald ibis bird above

[7] Raffaele, "Dynasty 0," 132.

[8] Francesco Raffaele, "Animal Rows and Ceremonial Processions in Late Predynastic Egypt" (2010), 244.

[9] Beatrix Midant-Reynes, "The Naqada Period," in Ian Shaw (Ed.), The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 46.

[10] See Toby Wilkinson, The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 21, though the interpretation of the cow stone is of course my own.

[11] Midant-Reynes, "Naqada Period," 49.

[12] Stan Hendrickx and Pierre Vermeersch, "Prehistory: From the Paleolithic to the Badarian Culture," in Oxford History of Ancient Egypt, 35–36.

[13] Connolly, "Yale Archaeologists," par. 5.

and between them."[14] A gesture to the animals is just as reasonable an interpretation here as is a representation of an ordered cosmos. During the initial divergence of Hieroglyphs as instruments of rule from Hieroglyphs as means of speaking to the animals, both are equally true.

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The people of Naqada and Predynastic Egypt remained in a deictic world for a long time. All the way to the shift towards human supremacy some 1500 years after the cow stone, carved animals remained deictic, gesturing to the unfolding of the world surrounding the carvers. The earliest attempts of the will to reification, to impose the pacified social field of iteration, had to reflect this. The state's emergence consisted in just this: iteration continuously displacing deixis, and continuously at war with it. We who live in the fully-developed empire of repetition don't really see this any more, but for example, even the satellite system by which our phones navigate need to refer us to a building in the street and cannot remain a purely digital map. The makers of Predynastic art, all the way back at the beginning of making iteration explicit—of writing things into the world explicitly—knew this very well.

Thus the evidence of Predynastic iteration, when Naqada II gave way to Naqada III and the long emergence of the Egyptian institutions began, already stems from artefacts used to "legitimize and maintain their [makers'] privileged positions in the material world (society) and on the supernatural level (relationship with divine entities both during the life-time and in the afterlife)."[15] But their iconography—the means of overwriting deixis in everyday life—had to reflect just the very deixis that it overwrote to a much more explicit extent than our own manifestations of iteration do, because it is much closer to its deictic origin. The people of Predynastic Egypt had not yet forgotten who they were, and who—rather than what—the plants and animals were. We too can learn from this to bring ourselves to the deictic frontier.

Thus the art and writing of the Naqada III and Pre-Dynastic periods was always ambiguous, showing "a progressive allotting of more and more distinctive characters into the representations of chieftains" until, by the turn of the third millennium BC, "the symbolic identifications of the king as bull or lion" were complete.[16] In the course of this appropriation, the bull and lion ceased to be themselves.

The three dimensions of their transformation correspond to our trifurcated social field: the artefact itself—a deictic presence to this very day, its initial pacification by the state at the deictic frontier, and its ceremonial iteration—ever more repetitive as the social field solidifies. Today, a piece of cloth fluttering in the breeze is an artefact, hoisting it up its pole for the first time is its activation—bestowing authoritarian magic through gestures that are themselves iterated, such as bodily positions, uniforms, music—and then the cloth's activation is iterated in various ceremonies: folding it in specific ways, not allowing it to touch the ground, raising or lowering it in significant ways, and so forth. Each of these elements makes "the flag", overwriting the mass-produced piece of cloth. And this includes counter ceremonies that just as surely overwrite the cloth with "the flag"; burning it, after all, also iterates "the flag". Either way we remain within Solon's watershed. Each of these pieces of cloth is different in each deictic circumstance, but they all implement "the flag", an entity from the empire of repetition.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Raffaele, "Animal rows," 246.

[16] Raffaele, "Dynasty 0," 108.

When authoritarian iteration emerged in Predynastic Egypt, the artefacts were of course different to ours. But their mechanics were the same—to a more explicit degree, as this was the first time such rule was implemented. Animals appeared on "handles of ritual weapons (knives and maces), handles of personal care items (combs, hairpins, spoons), and on further articles from temples or tombs (furniture parts, boxes, household implements, wands, seals)."[17] The case of weapons is particularly instructive. The power of the blade to kill required an invocation of animals because this power was originally not that of its human owner. Rather, it was the power of an animal to kill, a power that had to be transferred to the human blade owner by iterating the animal, thus rendering its powers at the blade's—and hence the human's—disposition.[18] Thus the activation of the blade, initially deictically establishing contact to the animal, gives way to the iteration of the animal overwriting it, tethering the animal's symbolic power to the blade without retaining the deictic contact originally engendering it. Blade and animal are now pacified into the social field.

Yet deixis never goes away fully: appeals to animals remained crucial for both purposes for a long time after Naqada II. Before the anthropocentric movement towards symbolically displaced animals, "people would have seen animals as superior to them and would have focused their representations on them."[19] Appealing to animals remained a deictic gesture of a people embedded into the world of immediate deixis for a long time. Down to Dynastic times, well after the iron grip of the Egyptian institutions had rewritten animals and humans as so many units of cattle and labor power in bureaucratic counting and in pyramid practice, animals remained in the people's imagination as vestiges of deixis; they remained wild and unpredictable companions, that is, even when they were overwritten into the pacified social field.

Animal power thus became accessible to kings only because the animals, more powerful than humans, had access to it, requiring elements of speaking to rather than about them even for instruments of rule. Thus on the one hand, kings needed to become animals to appropriate their power. Predynastic kings named themselves Scorpion and Crocodile and Strong Bull, while even a thousand years after them, kings retained names pointing to falcons, vultures, cobras, and bees.[20] On the other hand, it remained necessary for kings to assert their power to overwrite animal deixis by deictic acts of their own. "As well as holding items of regalia taken from the sphere of animal husbandry—to emphasize his rule as shepherd of his people—the king was imbued with the powers of nature, most easily represented in their animal form."[21]

Much like, even today, even purely bureaucratic rule occasionally requires appeals to deictic violence—say, in the form of "officer-involved" executions—so the Egyptian kings had to occasionally overwrite animal deixis by iterating the annual hippopotamus hunt. "The wild hippopotamus is a fierce creature, and must have posed a threat to fishermen and all those travelling the Nile by boat in early times. It was thus cast as an embodiment of the forces of disorder… The ritual spear-

[17] Raffaele, "Animal rows," 247.

[18] Ibid, 253.

[19] John Baines, "Symbolic roles of canine figures on early monuments," in Archeo-Nil 3 (1993), 59.

[20] The Horus name, one of the king's Five Great Names, was written with a falcon perched atop the square that contained the other names. The Two Ladies name, symbolizing the king's rule over both Upper and Lower Egypt, was written with a vulture and a cobra. And the nswt-bity name, likewise symbolizing rule over both parts of Egypt, features a bee.

[21] Wilkinson, Early Dynastic Egypt, 190.

ing of a hippopotamus… represented an attack on chaos and struck a blow for the preservation of created order."[22]

This focus on hunting or the general subjugation of the animal world was at the heart of the king's ideology as it emerged in Naqada III. Previously, humans had inhabited an animal world—an unstable and unfixed world of deixis. With the Predynastic emergence of the king ideology, this world now came to be rendered as the unordered chaos outside of Egypt tameable only by the king.[23] Implementing such taming once more occurred on the three levels of artefact iteration, invoking the previous deixis in order to overwrite it with iteration at the deictic frontier.

Thus at the level of artefacts, "disordered representations of animals" were used to exemplify "impending evil forces" threatening order.[24] By contrast, animals iterated in rows, each within its precisely ascertained place, exemplified the king's ordered hierarchy. This order was then implemented in iterated ritual, such as the hippopotamus hunt, or by various techniques of binding animals. The latter were both deictically practical—materially binding an individual animal, and iteratively symbolic—making the animal a mere stand in for the forces it represents. Once constituted in this way, the animal's power, abstracted and iterated, became an attribute of the king.[25]

Once the origin of all such iteration is left behind, and the initial pacification performed, the pacified social field solidifies to the empire of repetition. In ancient Egypt, this led to the Old Kingdom building its pyramids, and slaughterhouses next to them. Since then, pyramids have become highways and slaughterhouses have developed, but the gestures of rule over deixis repeat. While the iterative overwriting of the bound animal actually required a physical, bound animal at the beginning—conjuring its previously wild and free essence—iteration has by now become so ubiquitous that the mere word "cattle" performs the same magic without conjuring any particular animal at all. Initially, "order" overwrote "chaos" at the deictic frontier—the blade to which the animals proceeded in rows was the very blade activated by their sacrifice. Today, the machinic death of a present-day animal seals the deal of iteration in a distant and pacified way—except, of course, for the animal itself, whose death takes it to the deictic frontier. In both cases the animal disappears long before its physical death. In the second case, though, its pain does not manifest, as the animal has now fully disappeared underneath its iterated incarnation. The factory is the triumph of the animal's complete disappearance, serially implemented in pacified iteration far beyond the hand's deixis. We will return to this in chapter eight.

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When we confront the deictic frontier, therefore, we confront not only the state, but also machinery and writing. And as we have now seen, writing is ambiguous: it preserves deixis as it overwrites it, and it preserves iteration as repetition overwrites it. We can thus not only analyze the state's emergence at the deictic frontier, but also the potential of writing to bring us back to just that frontier, and confront the state in and through it.

For the art and writing of Predynastic Egypt preserved the very deixis it tried to exorcize. The Anti-Alphabet taps into this exact trace—the plant-and-animal world conjured deictically, preserved in the return to the origins of iteration. Thus, in their unordered presence on any given page or screen, the animal letters of the Anti-Alphabet reverse the strict hierarchy of the animal

[22] Ibid, 216–217.

[23] Ibid, 183.

[24] Raffaele, "Animal rows," 254.

[25] Ibid, 258.

rows on archaic Egyptian artefacts, with which state rule began. Rather than marching uniformly in the same direction, each in the same iterated shape and posture, and thus each a mere type of a token, the animal letters of the Anti-Alphabet sprawl playfully over the page. Moreover, each of them is drawn individually, minimizing repetition and emphasizing their individuality, rhythm, motion. Thus each animal letter, while remaining readable as a letter, is also a living deictic gesture to an animal's reality outside of the page. They no longer iterate ordered subjugation but implement the living anarchy of irrepressible bodies.

The letters of the Anti-Alphabet that are not animals are plants growing across the screen. The Anti-Alphabet's plant letters are likewise never separate from one another, but grow roots gesturing towards each other and towards the interconnected beings beyond the screen (or for that matter the printed page). Animal letters play amid the plant letters, reminding us of a joy and a fear we also once felt. More importantly, though, the latter silently and patiently invite the reader to forget about the secondary message that they convey—and to embrace instead their example.

We, whose Latin alphabet doesn't permit even the residual presence of animals on the page that Hieroglyphs allowed even in their most ordered presentation, take two steps at once when engaging the Anti-Alphabet. First, the Anti-Alphabet replaces the words we use for plants and animals with the drawn presence of those animals and plants themselves. Second, this presence is in turn enhanced with the movement from the Hieroglyphs to the play of deictic animals, and growth of deictic plants, across our pages and screens. With the dissolution of ordered representation, the AntiAlphabet also dissolves the movement by which the Predynastic kings appropriated the powers of animals into the kingship ideology. This process had two steps. First, Predynastic ideology separated the attribute from the animal, thereby capturing it in a web of iterated magical gestures that connect the animal's capture, control, and subjugation, to a transfer of its characteristic strength to the human king.

Then, once the attribute was iterated into a discrete object of its own—a brittle thing, ready for appropriation—the king was able to absorb its power. It was thus no longer the animal's, a part of chaos, but that of the king, a guarantee of order. The Anti-Alphabet disrupts the first and more fundamental part of this process, as it renders the animals as present—as themselves, as living, breathing constellations unfolding on our pages and screens—and thus maintains their direct connection to their attributes.The abstraction of such powers, and hence attempts at appropriating them, become tenuous and unsustainable. The letter themselves can no longer be used to perform the magic by which the Latin alphabet turns living bodies into cattle, pork, veal, game.

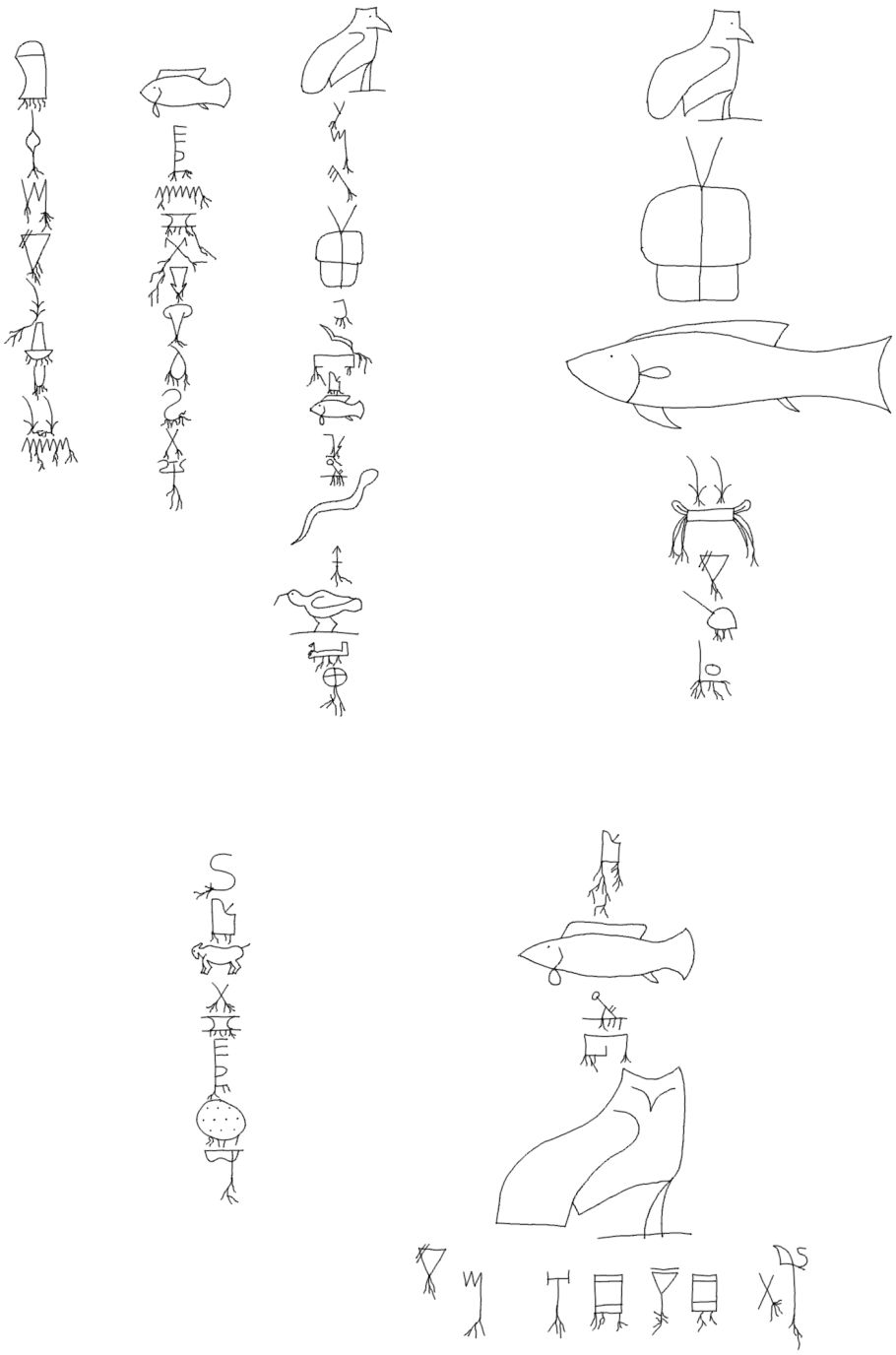
Replacing Latin letters with those of the Anti-Alphabet can thus perform two steps at once. First, it makes the animals and plants directly visible, as wild letters on page and screen. And secondly, it can help us make the jump to ways inspired by the rock carvers of Naqada I, whose deictic invocation of the animals with whom they lived was intimately intertwined with a sense of not just sharing the world with the animals—but of being within their world. The letters of the Anti-Alphabet can thus give immediate rise to the wild presence of the world's living unfolding as a continuous whole. They are immediate resistance to the Latin alphabet's implementation of discrete, lifeless things ready for appropriation, and actively and persistently point us to a world where animals on and off the page are wild beings more powerful than we are—to be approached perhaps with fear and reverence, perhaps with trust and playfulness— constellations that are inexhaustible by the brittle thingness of Latin letters. Thus we can tap into the immediate

certainty of the people of Naqada I that theirs was a continuous world: undifferentiated, unfixed, unstable, and unfolding around them.

As a result, the Anti-Alphabet gives us the means to engage in universal iconoclasm. Archaic Egypt's artefacts work the exact same way ours do, and thus give us an idea of how each artefact from our own time comes to be written by iteration. Like the ceremonial knife of the Predynastic king, our flags and uniforms, contracts and press releases exist simultaneously in three different ways. Each is, first, the material artefact itself (cloth, paper, PDF file), second, an initial activation (first hoisting, initiation ceremony, stamp, account setup), and third, iterated reaffirmation (folding, parade, archive folder, verification text message). The Anti-Alphabet disrupts the third step by injecting into each of its texts the deictic appeal to animals, continually pointing to their individuality, questioning and threatening the iteration of the very elements from which the reaffirmation is made in each case. If this A is not this A which is not this A, why should this flag be this flag be this flag, and why should this uniform overwrite the human individual wearing it? Why should this folder and this text message authenticate anything? Through this challenge, the Anti-Alphabet reduces unquestioned everyday iteration to its authoritarian origin: the flag and uniform, folder and text message do what they do not through magic but through material consequences. The emperor wears no clothes, he merely wears the repeated insistence that he wears clothes—and the weaponry to make us believe it, too.

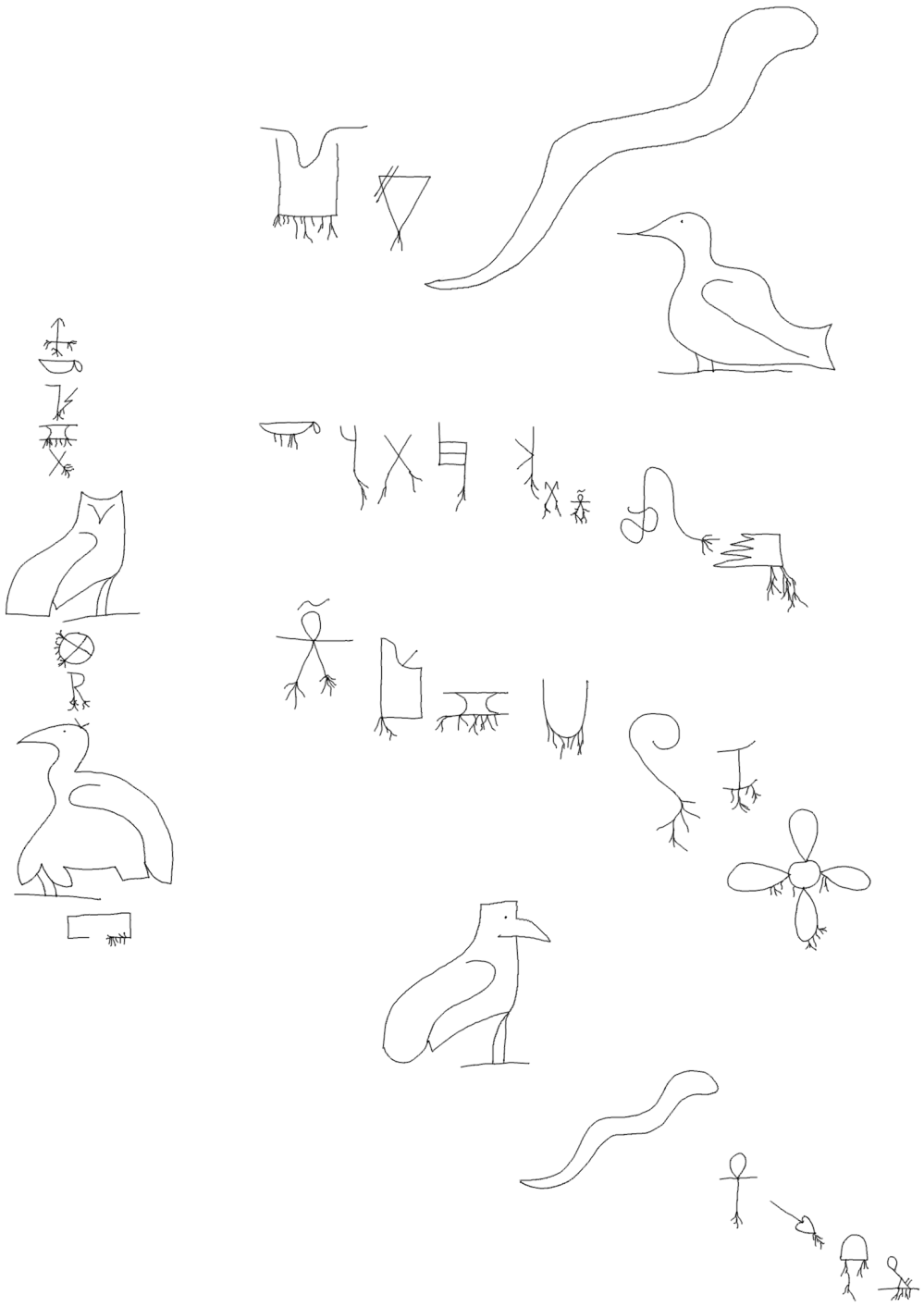
The Anti-Alphabet exposes this weaponry's deictic root— its original imposition—and thus allows us to see the artefact for what it is: a part of the world's continuous unfolding singled out by authoritarian power, and used to single us out and rule us as well. But since the animal letters and plant letters are freely mingling, deictically pointing beyond themselves and this page, why should the page compel me to abandon my own wild unfolding? Power is no longer hiding behind iterated magic, and wild resistance can spring up from the deictic frontier on every page, to burn it down.

6. Stirner's final compromise



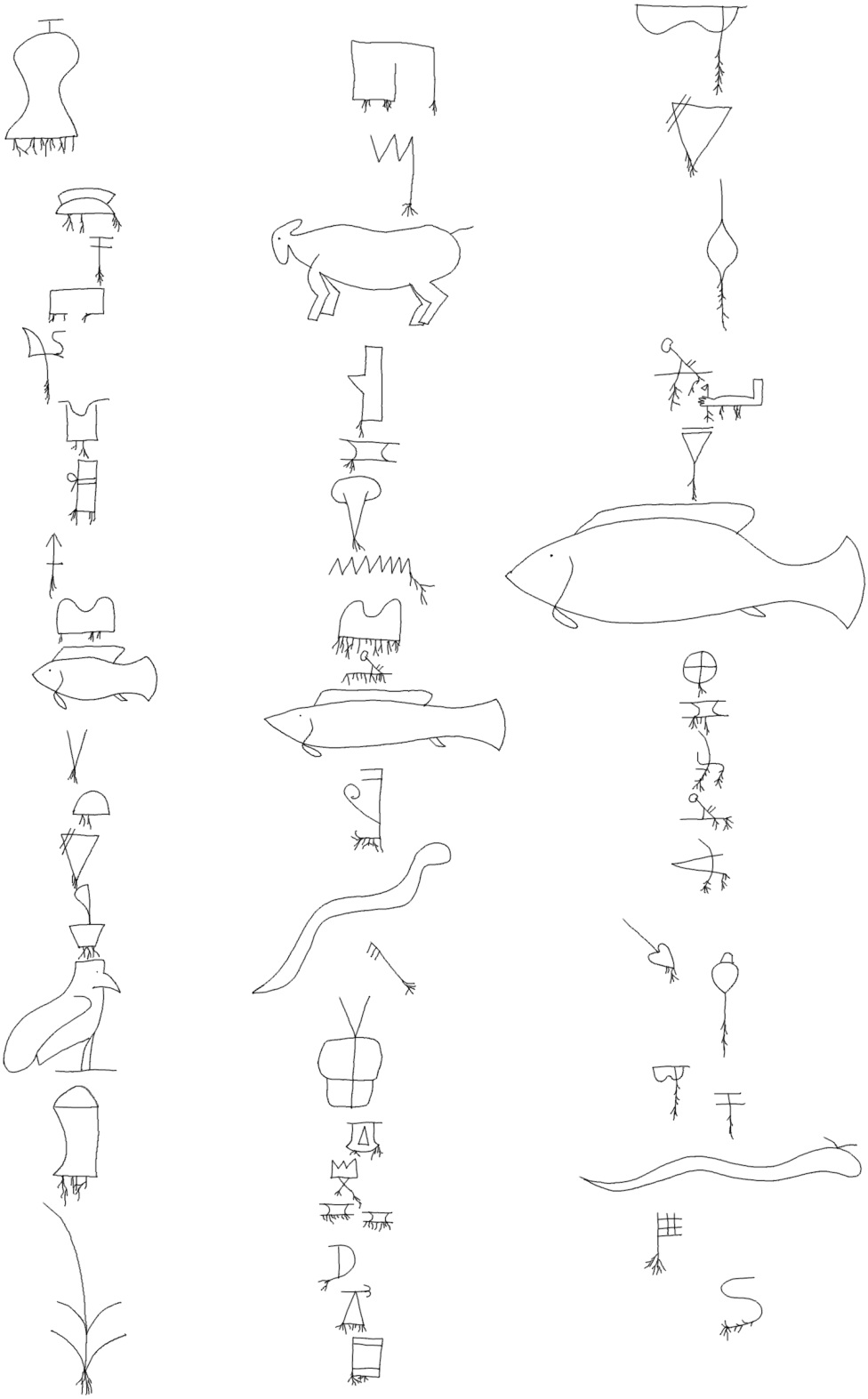
within anarchic thought. Based on the notion that all authority external to me is tyranny, Stirner's attacks against the myriad cops in our heads have time and again served as inspiration for like-minded loners for whom nothing is sacred and only the most thorough expression of their own desires is worthwhile.

Language stands at the heart of such pursuits, both as the medium in which they occur and as the final barrier into which they run. My property, my liberty, my desires, are all concepts by which I articulate my struggle against the cops in my heads. But they are cops in themselves. Where the concept of my property, when invoked by myself in egoist attack, denotes simply the sphere of all to which my might gives me access,



as a legal category, my property denotes only that to which I have a legal right. The palaces of the rich are off limits to the homeless even if the homeless are strong enough to get access. Likewise, the concept of my liberty gives me freedoms of speech, religion, contract, and commerce, and so forth. But when used against me, it becomes a moral obligation to respect my neighbor's liberty and that of some guy down the street. Thus the drugs to which my might gives me access make a moral burden on society.

Language is the linchpin of my egoist struggle against the world. It is Max Stirner's final compromise in his struggle, just as it is mine and yours in our struggle. Thus Stirner acknowledges that his, my, your egoist struggle are happening within language and are going up against language: "language or 'the



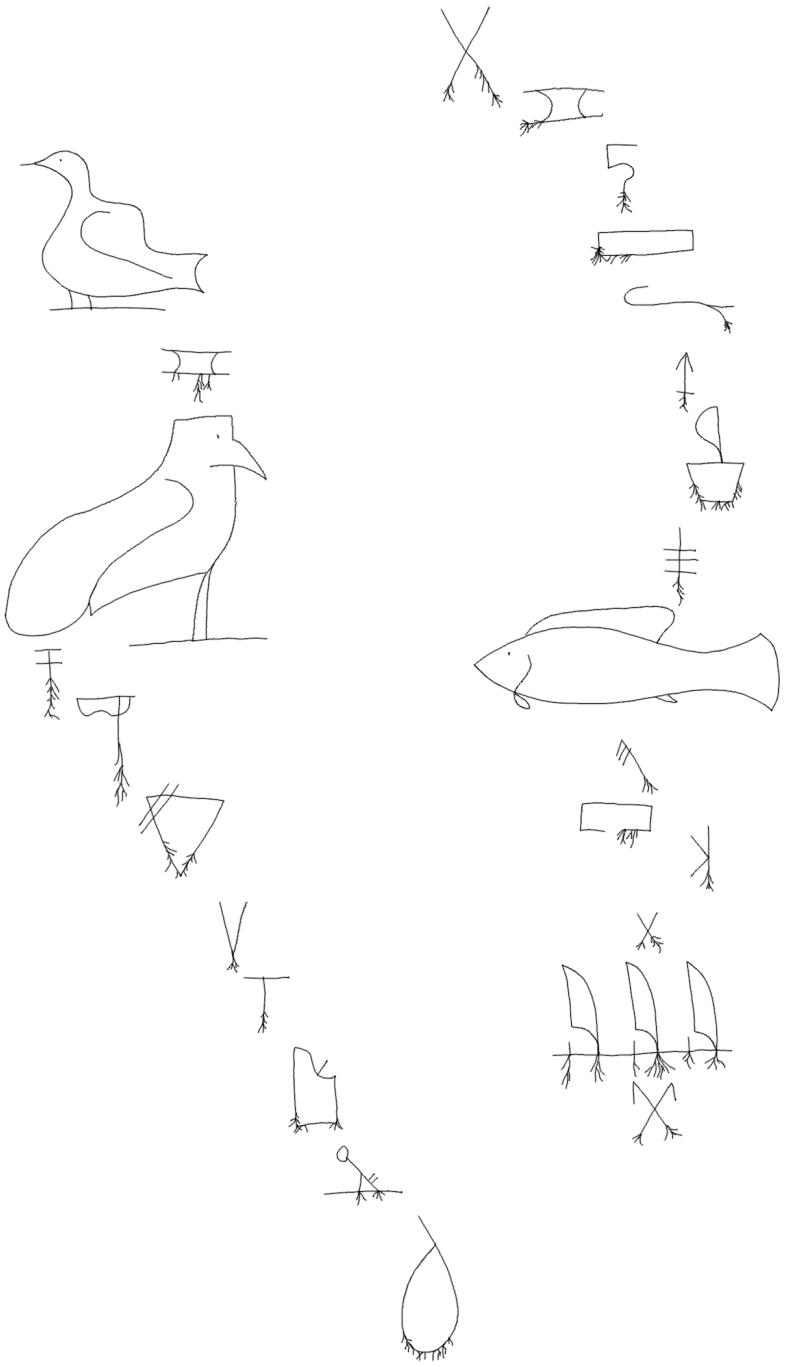
The cops in our heads consist solely of concepts that, though capable of being used by us in our struggle, are equally capable of turning against us: property, liberty, desire, friendship, contract, commerce, product, and so forth. It is by virtue of these concepts that we, unique beings though we are, are incessantly washed back against the shore our being something other than unique beings. 'Humans', for example.

My unique being, inexpressible though it is, remains trapped in a series of concepts because these concepts are not just the means of my alienation under external tyranny, but are also my weapons against external tyranny. Within industrial mass society, it is not possible for me not to converse with others. It is therefore also not possible for me to defend myself against their concepts—except by using these very same concepts against them. Against their propriety, I use my liberty. Against their liberty, I use my property. Against their property, I use my contract. And so forth.

Does Stirner really break with this? Is he really outside of language, as he claims to be?

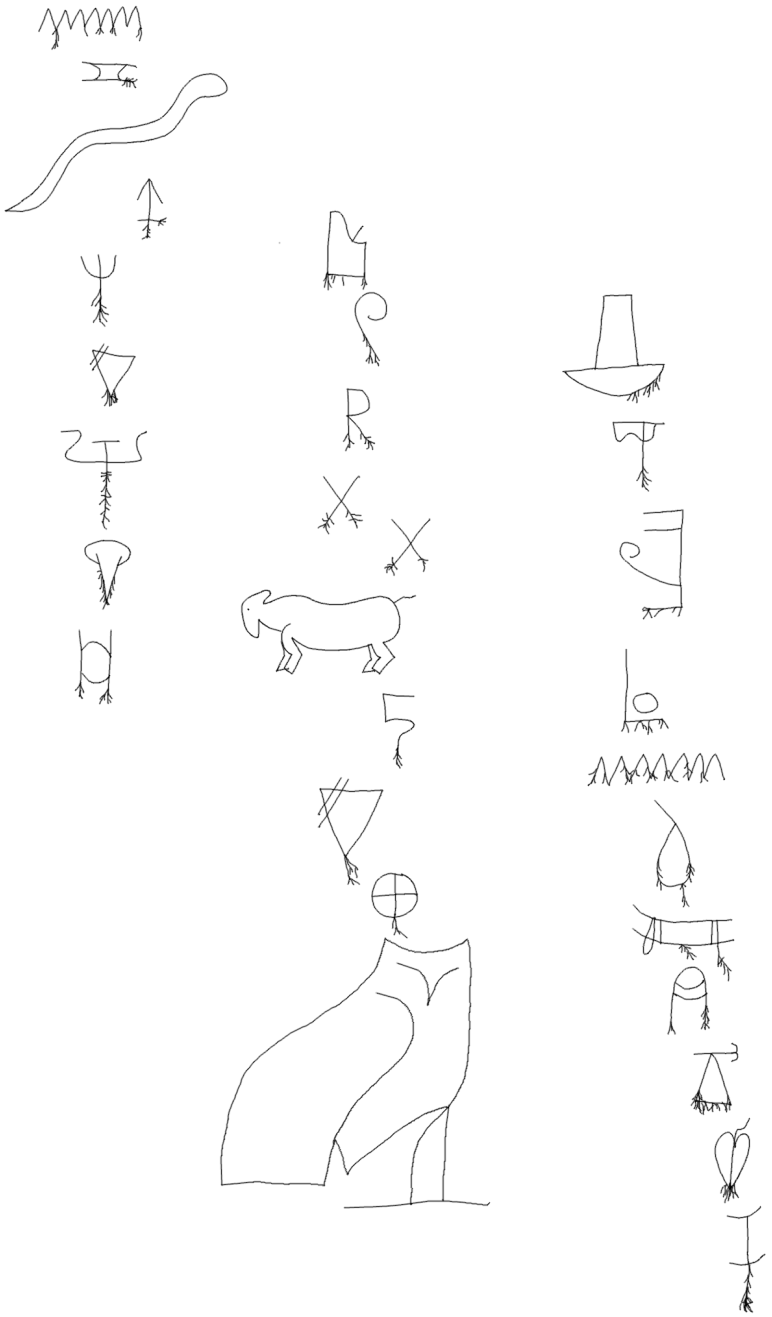
Does not language remain the very means by which he expresses his inexpressibility? Does he not use concepts to name his unnameability? Is this not continuing the very same defensive maneuvers we egoists use in our daily struggles: pitting concepts against concepts, defending ourselves against the cops in our heads with their very own clubs and batons? Am I not using language here in this exact way—indeed, once more removed, because I am merely quoting someone else? Doesn't that make you thrice removed, as you read my invocation of Stirner's concepts?

Does Max Stirner remain within a final compromise? He brings us to the deictic frontier, to be sure, but then



, just as I do, here, now. The deictic frontier remains within me, as it did within writing, and for the same reason. The state is in my head. I am the deictic frontier. Stirner has shown us this.

But he then opted for



The deictic frontier is implemented in my head in the same way it is implemented in the signs I use to write. In both, the state is ceaselessly at work.

Ironically, then, Stirner's final compromise allowed his work to bring us to the deictic frontier, but also came to be overwritten there by the state, which re-inscribed his work into the pacified social field. Further work is needed to escape this fate.

7. Iteration and the state

The state may well be the coldest of all cold monsters, as Nietzsche had it, but that's because it's usually misunderstood, and misunderstands itself, as an abstract institution. Nothing could be further from the truth. One does not encounter the state like one encounters a car or a tree. Many white males born in the European Economic Area go large parts of their lives without ever encountering the state. But this doesn't mean they don't encounter its effects. Conversely, indigenous women in the Amazonian rainforest, poor families in the Philippines, and Black children in the US encounter the state on a daily basis. But this doesn't mean they encounter it by itself, unmixed, directly, or outright.

The state is a dependent function guarding the outer boundaries of a field of social iterations. It is exclusively at the deictic frontier. Where iteration works, the state recedes. That is, if the social interactions within a given field conform, on their own, to iterated social norms, phrases, measurements, expectations, then the state lies dormant. The state is a last resort. It intervenes only when iteration is confronted by a deixis that iteration must, but cannot, overwrite by itself. Thus within a field of social iteration, the state is a dormant threat that gives iteration its authoritarian power. Iteration typically does not need back up: the rigidity of the empire of repetition is normally sufficiently buffered by the safety valve of politics within Solon's watershed. Only at the edges of the pacified field of social iteration—where a frontier between deixis and iterated social interactions washes back and forth—the state is the direct, violent intervention overwriting deixis with iteration.

Where the tyranny of social interaction works, there the state lies dormant. Politics within Solon's watershed easily deals with iterated social deviance. Society, the totality of iterated social expectations, is normally pretty good at maintaining its overwriting of my body, my actions, my gestures: "either by some act of violence or after a succession of experiences, society shows itself to me as a perpetual producer of constraint, humiliation, and misery, a continually renewed creation of human suffering."[1] When the regime of work forces me out of bed and into clothes, buses, and offices, ensuring that my conduct iterates that of myriad others—within minor, iterated tolerances—the state only looms in the distance, at the end of a long chain of violations against iteration. Refusal to work results in performance improvement plans, then in disciplinary action, then in firing. This leads to unemployment, which means testing, bill repayment plans, dealing-with-debt assistance, and at least the threat of homelessness. Only then might a direct encounter with the state be in the cards. This last encounter is ultimately the authoritarian backbone of all the previous ones, giving them their sting. When homeless, I get brutalized with impunity—which makes me afraid of being homeless, leading me to pay my bills, which means I go to work. But this conclusion typically is not drawn explicitly.

The state itself almost never manifests directly in the lives of those fully domesticated into iterated social interactions. But the state maintains the social field where this is the case, reinforcing

[1] Palante, There is no "Free Society": Individualist Essays. 84.

the boundaries of domestication at every turn. One way this materializes is the bureaucracy, the immediate reinforcement of iteration over my life. In its clutches, I become a person: a name and number, a rights bearer, a property owner, a bank account holder. I become a citizen, a resident, or an undocumented alien. In doing this to me, with me, or for me, the bureaucracy implements a frontier of iteration.

Yet this is also where the common idea of the state as an abstract monolith, an institution, fails to account for how the state really works and what it really does. The implementation of iteration on the bureaucratic frontier need not be officially registered or recognized as part of the state. A good deal of the above list is implemented by other entities, such as banks for their accounts, agencies for property, electric and gas companies for address verifications, non-governmental organisations for immigration assistance, and so forth. But all of these are ultimately part of the state because all of them overwrite me. The surveillance state, for example, hardly manifests in the attempts by GCHQ, NSA, or NSO to spy on us outright. On the contrary, their efforts are so clunky, so ineffective, and so little thought out that they are more likely a decoy than anything else. The real surveillance state is a private-public partnership, where Amazon and Apple, Google and Facebook do the spying, and the courts help themselves to whatever they need when they want to convict us.

Likewise, without being a person with a tax number and bank account, I could not work legally. The bureaucracy thus underwrites the legal part of the work regime with the threat of unemployment and homelessness. And this goes the other way, too. Some of the most heinous exploitation within the work regime can, after all, only be upheld because the state underwrites it by categorizing people as undocumented. Thus people encounter the state as the ever-present threat of deportation, which backs up their integration into the nonor semi-legal iterations of wage slavery in conditions none of the legal workforce would ever be caught dead in, or into outright slavery. The state is active on both sides. It enforces a distinction, a separation or classification. But it also thereby serves to break down the very barrier it upholds, as the legal and illegal work forces are never clearly separated. The state is not identical to legality or bureaucracy. It reinforces and upholds both sides of the legality/illegality divide.

My body is a frontier; without the bureaucracy overwriting its deixis, it could disrupt the field of social iterations. For the regime of work, everything that is "diverse, singular, and properly individual" in me is a "source of disorder and evil."[2] After all, my selfish interests may well result in damage to property and productivity, even beyond the usual (and usually factored-in) laziness, slackening, absenteeism, and general passive resistance workers put up at all times and in all places. Better to make sure I am kept in check by the state's presence. Or even better, to make sure I keep myself in check without the state's direct presence. If I internalize the bureaucracy's classifications—if I iterate myself as a rights-bearing person with a bank account—iteration works and the state can remain dormant, content to back up my domestication with ever-more elusive threats. If I get ideas—only if the homeless storm the palaces of the rich—only then does the state spring into action to reinforce the solidity of the social field.

We can draw a few more conclusions about which part of what is generally called the state is actually the state. Thus conversely, my encounter with the bureaucracy need not be an encounter with the state each time. It only becomes one if I don't comply, refuse to domesticate myself, and thus become a deixis that must be overwritten violently. Likewise, the iterated charade of

[2] Ibid, 73.

democracy (whether in a two-party system or a six-party system or in any other number of pseudo choices) has almost nothing to do with the state. Quite the contrary: its implementation is well and firmly within the realm of the iterated social field. On the surface, it's a change of phrases and personnel. Its primary function, though, is to iterate the people living within the pacified social field as citizens—rights bearers with a bank account; people who Have A Stake. It is designed to make them forget about their deictic might and make them iterate instead the domestications of their own bodies. After all, as a citizen, I am a stakeholder in social norms and expectations, in playing by the rules, in the quest for property and propriety. My body is thus not an asocial, amoral frontier where state violence needs to crush my might. It is instead a secure cog in a well-oiled wheel peacefully transferring power, and besides, I get bonuses if I exceed my quarterly expectations, thank you very much!

We thus know that the things we commonly call the state— the bureaucracy, the System of Checks and Balances—is not the state. Conversely, quite a few things that don't call themselves the state, and that are not commonly classified as the state, are in fact manifestations of the state. Where military, business, and government are intertwined, as they almost always are in war zones and/or areas of resource extraction, power is distributed through networks, associations, informal "roles, positions, and alliances."[3] Here more than ever, formal government is far removed from the state.

Indigenous women in the Amazonian rainforest typically encounter companies of loggers—some legal, some illegal, some semi-legal—but nearly always privately-owned and privately-organized. Yet these loggers are the state: they violently replace the world of animal and plant deixis with iterated units of lumber, and the bodies of indigenous women, children, and men, with iterated units of so much docile (or dead) flesh. Their violence is more direct, less domesticating, and more immediately war-like than that of the work regime weighing on my body, because they are operating directly at the frontier at all times, whereas I am mostly integrated into the work machine. Nonetheless, they are only a quantitatively different manifestation of the same phenomenon, not qualitatively distinct. In both cases, the state ultimately enforces a field of social iterations. Once established—that is, once they are integrated to the point where they domesticate themselves—such iterations can be handed over securely to other, less immediately-authoritarian enforcement mechanisms. The boundaries are and remain fluid. Almost all formally illegal activity is tied intricately to legal iterations: traders, mercenaries, loggers all have "families and children they must provide for, from paying mortgages to celebrating birthdays."[4]

My body is nearly fully integrated, so the state recedes. The rainforest is an immediate frontier, so it is present. Whether its presence is privately organized is irrelevant: it remains the state. Some people's war with the state is only ever partial. Yet at war they remain.

Likewise, the bodies of men, women, and children in the Mediterranean are frontiers in a much more immediate way than mine is. However, they do not necessarily encounter the state officially at all times either. Their living, breathing deixis is overwritten by human traffickers—privately and illegally organized but typically entangled with semi-official channels of influence and bribery—long before they reach the Mediterranean. As they make their way through the grey zones of not-quite war towards the North African coast, their bodies continue to be overwritten; be it by mercenaries and terrorists—who, in any case, are always someone else's freedom

[3] Carolyn Nordstrom, Shadows of War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 90.
[4] Ibid, 125.

fighters—be it by security companies or police forces. These in turn have consultants, insurance firms, accountants, allies in customs and tax enforcement, and economic and cultural backup from "the cosmopolitan centers of the world," which "depend in part on 'shadow' economics and politics, and are intricately linked with resource wildcatting in war zones."[5] The human route to Europe is, after all, the route of diamonds and raw materials also.

All of these are the state, violently overwriting deixis with iteration. Long before the cold gaze of European bureaucracy begins to classify refugees' bodies, the state in all its different forms has overwritten these men's, women's, and children's bodies, forcing them to iterate economic exploitation, slave labor, sexual subservience and, if resistant, outright starvation. And when they get to the Mediterranean? Golden Europe's frontier manifestation is itself not a state but an agency—Frontex, the coordinated border patrol agency.

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The state is thus not necessarily the police, nor necessarily the bureaucracy, nor organized constitutional or electoral politics. It manifests typically neither in the flag nor the national anthem. It need not, and frequently does not, operate as a publicly-incorporated entity. Some of us go years without ever encountering it. The state is rather the final enforcement of all iterations at their deictic frontier. This entails that the state is not itself iterative. It is deictic. It only exists at the frontier: wherever iteration is confronted by deixis and cannot itself incorporate deixis, there the state arises, overwriting deixis and preparing it for (self-) domestication within the field of social iterations.

All plants and a lot of animals are frontier sites. Incessantly, the state overwrites them: trees to lumber, cows to cattle, wild patches to lawns, rivers to canals and dams. This need not manifest as an act of physical violence. The state is, after all, not only the issuer of oil and gas drilling permits but also the guarantor of conservancy and wilderness zones. But classification there must be; deixis must be overwritten; there cannot be wilderness outside of the designated area. Again this is not necessarily done by a formal government bureaucracy. But this is scarcely good news: where a bureaucracy can in principle be distinct from the state because humans can self-domesticate, the frontier never ends for plants and animals. Thus "logging roads…shrink and simplify the territory, making it quicker to get from here to there" for humans, while also "expanding landscape emptiness, separating offand on-road sites and creating obstacles between once-connected forest places even as they speed up the trip to town."[6] This way iteration constantly attempts to close in over wild deixis in an endless frontier sustaining whichever form the state happens to take: "The roads are also conduits for migrants, fugitives, and thieves, who expand both danger and wildness for everyone who lives and visits there."[7]

Unlike humans and some animals, a good few animals and all plants, remain deictic frontiers throughout their existence. No plant has ever obeyed zoning laws. Few animals have never tried to jump fences. Plant and animal bodies are frontiers, and thus wherever they are, there the state is. Their bodies are state sites, war zones where iteration constantly fails to take hold, and thus the state arises incessantly. Humans and some animals can and do domesticate themselves; other animals and all plants remain deictic throughout their lives. Thus the state may be dormant for humans on occasion, but can never recede for animals and plants. Where their exploitation is at

[5] Ibid, 115.

[6] Anna Tsing, Friction. An Ethnography of Global Connection (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 38.

[7] Ibid.

stake, their human counterparts come to encounter the state, too: "forest residents, by definition, have no property."[8]

Thus the state is the deictic reinforcement of iteration at its deictic frontier. This is where we confront it as we follow the plants' lead. The state exists because iteration can never be complete. Strictly speaking, 'the state' is a metaphor for a ceaseless movement, constantly arising to abolish itself as it abolishes deixis. Were this movement ever completed, it would create a world of absolute stasis, a total victory over deixis, the end of life itself in the global grey-in-grey of generalized domestication. Here, in the completed empire of repetition, the state itself would vanish. But this would be the most Pyrrhic of all victories, as the price of the universalization of iteration is the universalization of death.

The anarchic battle against the state goes beyond the battle against repetition, which takes place within the politics of Solon's watershed. When anarchy follows the plants' lead, the state arises where iteration is threatened. This also entails that, in each such battle, the state is dependent and derivative. The challenge of deixis—the impossibility to domesticate plants and some animals, the awakening of plant intuition and the Anti-Alphabet against domestication in humans—is always one step ahead, as iteration must fail first before the state's deictic violence arises. Deixis is inexhaustibly new in each battle, while the state never acts but always reacts. The state can only ever reinforce existing social techniques. Thus it appears, here as reinforcement of bureaucracy, there as reinforcement of companies, here as reinforcement of human traffickers, there as reinforcement of wilderness zoning.

Once we realize what the state really is, as opposed to what it is commonly thought to be, we realize that the state is not a liar—it has never told a lie—it just mirrors deixis. We can dispense with the sham battles between parties and politicians who are iterations of one another. We can stop iterating workplaces, zoning areas, company charters, and documentation fights, and attack head-on what the state really is and always has been: the authoritarian iteration of iteration at the deictic frontier.

[8] Ibid, 241.

Part III: Resisting the machine world

At the deictic frontier, the state ceaselessly iterates iteration to overwrite deixis. An amorphous non-entity, the state is nothing but that ceaseless movement. Where iteration works by itself, either because it is unquestioningly solidified to the empire of repetition, or because everyday politics within Solon's watershed offer sufficient degrees of renewal to allow the empire of repetition to absorb challenges, the state lies dormant. It becomes active only where the initial absorption of an artefact into the pacified social field of iteration is threatened. Plants are such a threat, as are animals and humans, if they escape domestication, and so is writing, if it escapes domestication.

"If," however, is the operative term. Today, such initial absorption has ceased to be necessary in many ways. In its stead, our world has come to be everywhere implemented in the form of machinery. As we will see in chapter 8, the empire of repetition has built a world entirely of its own accord in machinery, remaining unquestioned and unmoved within their unfolding, and swallowing up all that is left surrounding them. In the machine world currently spanning the globe and reaching for the stars, the empire of repetition has found its purest manifestation, directly and immediately implementing itself as a the material basis for our lives. It is not, however, itself at the deictic frontier. To say that machines consume raw materials is misleading. The units of matter—organic and anorganic—consumed by machinery are already iterated, already absorbed, already pre-packaged for processing. By the time the cow meets the blade of the abattoir, it is already cattle, its deixis taken from it long before its body gets integrated into the machine's blades, which are likewise no longer deictic artefacts as they kill.

The same applies, as we analyze in chapter 9, to the world of computation. As this world is erected within and atop the world of machinery, it's more recognizable as a part of the empire of repetition than is the machines' world. After all, input and output of computing machines are readily recognizable as repetitions tailored to just these machines even by those of us who still know what a smartphone really is. Just like machines, computing devices seem to operate on raw materials, but this impression is misleading, as, again, they are not situated at the deictic frontier. Both operate in a world pre-packaged for them. Pre-packaged, that is, by the writing of the will to reification. This will, as discussed in chapter 10, is the ultimate basis not only of the realms of machinery and computation, but also of the ceaseless norming of writing and written rule, overwriting deixis by state intervention and taxonomic classification, and therefore ultimately of the pacified social field as a whole. Destroying the empire of repetition, as we aim to do, can only be achieved at this very edge of the field, where the will to reification prepackages everything into discrete things. Here we take our stand, tapping into the plant intuition to go to the very core of how things are constituted out of the continuous unfolding of the world. Much like we went back to the state's origin in chapter 5 to find it—and the pacified social field it protects—emerging from the origins of writing, so here we go back to the earliest expression of the will to reification, to get a grip on its logic and combat it with our own. We do not, therefore, engage with logic to develop new kinds of logical expressions, or to engage in an exercise of abstract philosophizing. We engage logic to ensure that the will to reification gets disrupted at its very core, so as to never be able to swallow up the continuous unfolding, and overwrite it with the empire of repetition, ever again.

8. Requiem for Prehensile Limbs

It is said that the development of industrial machinery inaugurated a radical departure in world history, and in many ways this is true. In Europe, Russia, and China, a world separates the industrial cities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from the towns that bore the same names a thousand years earlier. In the United States, India, and Australia, a world separates the industrial cities of Euro-American empire from small-scale agricultural settlements, if not from hunter-gatherer villages that still dwelled within the continuous unfolding, only some five hundred years earlier.

We all live in a world of machines, by machines, for machines. Each machine, once invented, comes with an inherent tendency to assimilate everything surrounding it. Once any kind of iterated human or natural gestures are replaced by machine gestures, then adjacent areas of energy exertion inevitably become subject to mechanization at some point, too. "The technical object distinguishes itself from the natural being in the sense that it is not part of the world. It intervenes as a mediator between man and the world,"[1] cutting humans off from the unfolding of the world that was once familiar to them, removing them from their dwelling within it.

Once this development was set in motion in the eighteenth century in Europe, there was no stopping it. Whenever and wherever technique or technics (as this movement of general assimilation of reality by the machine has variously been called), "penetrates a new milieu," it "tends to reproduce in this milieu the circumstances that it found favorable to itself in the nineteenth century in France and England."[2] That is, the machine everywhere generates the conditions that first enabled it to prevail over hand-held tools and artisanal crafts. The machine assimilates our world and forces it—and us—to resemble ever more thoroughly the machine itself: "when technics becomes the universal form of material production, it circumscribes an entire culture; it projects a historical totality—a 'world'."[3]

The machine world can thus be said to be an unprecedented material reality, a world whose every aspect is integrated into every-expanding mechanization, a world not so much characterized by omnipresent machinery as such, but rather by a ubiquity of mechanization or technicization of all things. Ours is a "technical civilization," which "means that our civilization is constructed by technique (makes a part of civilization only what belongs to technique), for technique (in that everything in this civilization must serve a technical end), and is exclusively technique (in that it excludes whatever is not technique or reduces it to a technical form)."[4]

Based on such analysis, it has also been said that humans in particular have become part of the technical apparatus within the machine world in totally unprecedented ways. Individu als are powerless in the face of a machine world that presents to them an endless series of processes

[1] Gilbert Simondon, On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 183.

[2] Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 126.

[3] Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 154.

[4] Ellul, The Technological Society, 128.

which they can neither comprehend nor influence. Citizens of the pacified social field lapse back into a powerlessness from which the grandiose lies of industrial democracy promised to free them: "The technics of the twentieth century is beyond the forces of the individual, and constitutes a compact and resistant, but alienated human reality within the industrial world, completely beyond the grasp of the individual just as it was for the previously hierarchized society."[5]

Rule by machine means also rule by the experts who alone know how to run and fix it: "Technicians," always waiting in the wings for the right moment to insert themselves, "find… the power to impose at last, with that persistence which is one of the hallmarks of bureaucratic departments, a plan which has been well thought out over a long period."[6] And why would they not? Democracy cannot be but a mockery in the machine world where, ultimately, human beings come to resemble the machines into whose processes they are embedded. After all, Ireland's call centers and China's shop floors are united in the principles of managerialism. And today just like a hundred years ago, these principles represent a "combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific advancements in the field of analyzing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc."[7]

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Yet this machine world, even with its nearly-universal and -automatic tendency towards self completion and assimilation of everything around it, is not as new as it seems. Introducing the machine did present a departure from the world of hand making. But this departure nonetheless remained on the spectrum of iteration from deixis to repetition. The machine threshold, everywhere reproducing itself since the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, is a threshold within the unfolding of repetition. With the machine world, repetition leaves hand making behind and establishes itself as machinery, without thereby changing its essence. Then as now, machines are a manifestation of the empire of repetition, deep at the heart of the pacified social field of iteration.

The machine world developed out of its predecessor and retains the marks of its birth. "Every successive technique has appeared because the ones which preceded it rendered necessary the ones that followed. Otherwise they would have been inefficacious and would not have been able to deliver their maximum yield."[8] This means that the machine, while it certainly does replace hand making, contains and preserves certain characteristics of hand-manufacture, for instance machines necessarily remain "sensitive to outside information," and perform their tasks better the more they remain open, meaning they remain open to "man as their permanent organizer, as the living interpreter of all machines among themselves."[9] The world of machinery develops itself by dynamics outside the control of individuals, and it closes in on humans everywhere by the same dynamics, but it does so in specific ways that are determined by specific iterated pasts and within specific iterated constraints. The forces that "are creating a more culturally impoverished and ecologically destructive world system" are not machines by themselves but "technical and

[5] Simondon, Mode of Existence, 119.

[6] Jean Meynaud, Technocracy (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), 252.

[7] Vladimir Lenin, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviety Government," in idem, Collected Works Vol. 27 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 265.

[8] Ellul, The Technological Society, 116.

[9] Simondon, Mode of Existence, 17.

economic forces" combined.[10] The pacified social field is always there for machines to assimilate and devour.

This means that machines, and the movement by which mechanization encroaches upon every corner of the world, remain vulnerable to resistance along the same lines analyzed in the first part of this book. Every part of the empire of repetition is somewhat vulnerable to the degrees of renewal that are inherent to iteration—i.e., to the politics of the pacified social field—and thus, to a much larger extent, to injections of deixis, to a return to the deictic frontier. Presenting the world of the machine as a totally unprecedented world means presenting it as an overwhelming force, one without meaningful alternative, and is thus not an analytical statement but a concession of defeat. Even in the old-fashioned politics within Solon's watershed, "contrary to some superficial judgments, the result of the technocrat's intervention is not to banish politics from the sphere of public affairs."[11] Technocratic power first and foremost relies on the "ability to supply a continuous current of information."[12] For the assessment of the machine world, this means that the technocrat relies on the ability to render resistance unthinkable by destroying the means to see the machine for what it is—and what it requires. Conversely, this means that resistance to technocratic power—to the economic and political forces paving the way for the machine to assimilate all that there is—entails an old-fashioned analysis of just this movement of assimilation, of the total world of the machine.

The machines' power is certainly awe-inspiring and terrible, but it is nothing new. Today's machines assimilate our world, and that of the animals and plants, with the same totalizing gestures as their predecessors, the war machines of antiquity, which

stride through the lofty copses. They slash with their axes:
they send great oaks flying, the holm oak is cut down,
the ash is smashed and the towering fir laid low, they overturn tall pines: the whole copse resounds with the leafy wood's rumbling.[13]

Then as now, this is only possible because the leafy woods are already assimilated—they are already lumber, readily to hand for the war machine. We must not fall into the trap of assuming that the machine world is anything more than a perfected version of the world of repetition. It remains susceptible to iteration and vulnerable to deixis just as its predecessors were.

Nor, however, must we succumb to the equally appealing trap of looking only at isolated technical objects. The world of the machine is a total world and must be taken seriously as such: "it is insufficient, for understanding technics, to start from constituted technical objects; objects appear at a certain moment, but technicity precedes them and goes beyond them."[14] Each machine is a crystallization of repetition just as the organic gestures of hand making are. Just as a tool is a result of the iteration of hand gestures and does not exist without it, so the machine is a result of this same iteration. It does take one step further towards repetition, however, in that it liberates repetition from the hand.

With this step, repetition becomes pure and hence endless: without degrees of renewal, the machine simply repeats endlessly what it implements, rather than iterating it. "The hand," by contrast, "can be trained to a degree of automatic facility. But one power is denied it: to remain

[10] Timothy W. Luke, Screens of Power (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 4.
[11] Meynaud, Technocracy, 14.
[12] Ibid, 30.
[13] Quintus Ennius, Annals I.175–179 (tr. Manuwald and Goldberg).
[14] Simondon, Mode of Existence, 176.

unvaryingly active. It must always be grasping, holding, manipulating. It cannot continue a movement in endless rotation. That is precisely what mechanization entails: endless rotation."[15] In the machine, therefore, the repetition of organic gestures is not replaced but repeated within a different medium. Just as a handwritten word and a printed word are recognizably the same, so the gesture performed by hand and the gesture performed by the machine are recognizably the same. And just as the letters printed repeat each other rather than iterating each other, so do the gestures of the machine.

By changing the means of implementing its movements, therefore, the machine purifies them and allows the writing of layers of repetition over iterations. This is because iteration, once implemented through machines, can be analytically decomposed and integrated into new amalgamations where iteration is more and more solidified towards repetition. This is where the machine does come to represent a new principle: "the setting in motion" of what used to be gestures implemented by humans and tools "by a single motor, whatever this motor may be, whether the human hand and foot, animal power, elemental forces, or an automatic mechanism (mechanical propulsion)."[16] Machinic motion is at the core of "the activity as a whole," of which "the continuing activity of the individual… only appears as a member" and which works "with the utter uniformity and tirelessness of an inanimate force of nature, an iron mechanism."[17] To achieve this transposition from human to machinic activity, from "the simplest mechanical impulse (turning the crank, treading the wheel) of human origin" to "the refined moments of a working machine," continuously applied force is key.[18] The mill, for instance, became a machine once "it was discovered that… a turning movement was more advantageous than a movement up and down."[19] Here, continuity of motion was just as important as its regularity; both inexorably drawing iteration away from renewal and closer to pure repetition.

As machinery developed further, repetition came to be imposed in ever more refined ways. On the one hand, repetition became more and more intricate. The initial step of this development saw machines isolate and emulate entire gestures and motions from human hands. As industrialism developed, each motion was disassembled into its constituent gestures and repeated in isolation by a separate machine or part of a machine instead of a full motion by one machine. The steam engine, for example, consists of boilers, cylinders, regulators, and condensers, each implementing a single one—or very few—gesture(s) in continuous repetition.[20]

On the other hand, such internal differentiation of individual machines or machine parts into their constituent gestures also rendered each of these machines or parts all the more suitable for successful integration into an overarching factory or assembly system. Combustion engines and light transmission, too, like belts and shafting, are internally differentiated to maximize repetition and to distribute it seamlessly across spacetime.[21] As machines came to be more differentiated internally, they could also be constructed to interact seamlessly across vast factory complexes. By

[15] Siegfried Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1948), 47.

[16] Karl Marx, "Economic Manuscript of 1861–1863," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 33 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991), 389.

[17] Ibid, 385.

[18] Ibid, 392.

[19] Ibid, 395.

[20] Phyllis Deane, The First Industrial Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 109.

[21] David S. Landes, "Technological Change and Development in Western Europe, 1750–1914," in H. H. Habakkuk and M. Postan (eds), The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol. VI: The Industrial Revolutions and After: Incomes, Population and Technological Change (I) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 508–512.

the end of the nineteenth century, "electricity freed the machine and the tool from the bondage of place," replacing "belts and shafting as a method of distributing energy."[22]

Capitalist imperialism is unthinkable without this double movement by which machines overwrite machines as repetition overwrites repetition. The machine everywhere overwrites deixis far more efficiently, far faster, and far more aggressively than any human hand could because it is that much further removed from deixis, that much more autonomously repetitive, that much less rooted in the continuous unfolding that it overwrites. By the turn of the twentieth century, the machine wrote its imperial traintracks all over the globe: "Powered by the steam engines that were the core invention of the industrial transformation, locomotives boldly exhibited the latest advances in metallurgy and machine-tooling."[23]

Yet at the same time, capitalist imperialism also created and sustained the pacified social field within which machinic expansion was, and is, possible to begin with. Trains were never able to overwrite the bodies of animals and plants along the repeated tracks carrying their repeated motions all by themselves. They relied, and still rely, on the pacified social field by which the animals and plants are first reduced to so much cattle, lumber, and pests, and by which their homes were constituted as so many landscapes for exploitation: mining grounds, colonial and postcolonial nation states, and—for better or worse— tourist wildernesses. Likewise, the world's oceans and their marine life didn't just come to be overwritten by the repetitive gestures of ships carrying cargo and passengers everywhere in themselves. Here, too, the pacified social field first and foremost constituted the oceans as exploitable zones, as navigable, international, extractive waters open for business.

Expansion of repetition in space and intensification of repetition in time go hand in hand in the machinic empire of repetition, as did its unfolding within the pacified social field on which it relies. In the early twentieth century, the assembly line implemented a new system of repeated distributed repetitions. The second and third decade of the twentieth century constituted "the time of full mechanization" in which "extremely precise time charts guide the automatic cooperation of instruments which, like the atom or a planetary system, consist of separate units, yet gravitate about one another in obedience to their inherent laws."[24]

At the same time, the principal product for which these assembly lines came to be known, the automobile, perfected the American system of mobility, and soon spilled back into Europe, whose roads enabled and still enable hundreds of thousands of wheels to cut their uninterrupted repetitive motions into the continuous unfolding of the continent. The pacified social field made all this possible, crystallizing car trips into leisure products, creating ads and vacation spaces, setting up hotels, bus stops, and later airports. In turn, the empire of uninterrupted repetition came to compartmentalize the household whose "mechanic core," by the 1950s, began to be "factory-made and assembled before being brought to the building site."[25] This, too, is inseparable from the capitalist expansion of household marketing, iterating products and slogans and gender roles, both normed and resisted within the pacified social field. And so the machine continued and still continues to pile repetition upon repetition to this day, relying on the pacified social field to prepackage the world for its consumption.

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[22] Ibid, 509.

[23] Michael Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men. Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 221.

[24] Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, 121.

[25] Ibid, 625.

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The bodies of humans, too, came to be ground down in the satanic mills of repetition. Obsolete as tool maker and tool user, the human body is nonetheless useful as it can be re-embedded into machinic, analytically-distributed repetition. Once again the initial preparation for this occurs through the application of contractual mechanisms within the pacified social field, distributing laborers such that their position within machinic organization yields the highest possible productivity. Outsourcing and subcontracting are the most frequent forms of this. Suitably prepared to be directly embedded into the empire of repetition, these bodies' positioning can then become physical, as a factory requires the integration of human bodies at the right places throughout the production processes.[26]

We have seen above how Taylorist scientific domestication famously contributed to this. It was far from alone, however. European bodies came to be analytically differentiated docile parts of the production process as early as the eighteenth century, when educational reforms inaugurated the "preparation of the human body as an obedient and submissive part of a machinery of power" that was "oriented toward work, competition, and performance."[27] Schools, hospitals, barracks, and prisons are the institutions at work here, enforcing iteration at first, then gradually increasing the rigidity of their domestication until they generate docile repetitive bodies.

Such docile bodies were and are fully embedded into the machine's empire by the same principles of intensified and expanded repetition to which individual machines were and are subject. The factory floor differentiated types of bodies such that, initially, female and adolescent bodies were employed for tasks not performed by male bodies.[28] Later, female and adolescent bodies were expelled from some factory floors while being retained in others, only to be reintegrated into them and then expelled again, however the tidings of capitalism went.

In each case, these tidings are crucial. Before bodies can be implemented within the machinic system, they have to be domesticated within the pacified social field. Only once this is achieved can bodies turn back into a supply of the motive force that is required by continuous and exact machine motion, supplanting the machine itself and ensuring its continuous exertion.[29] This type of integrated body thus adjusted "as a working body, a 'human motor' with psychophysical and physiological peculiarities, to the conditions at work and the workplace, selecting, controlling, correcting, stimulating, in such as away as to attain an optimum of efficiency and productivity in the time assigned to work."[30] This, too, has continued along the twin lines of internally intensified and externally expanded repetition wherever domestication ensured a steady supply of bodies capable of near-repetitive iteration.

This supply remains crucial. The empire of machine repetition was never complete. Resistance against machines is as old as machines themselves. Deixis remains as human bodies continue to inhabit shop floors and train stations and—to an extent astonishing to those who believe in machine invincibility—still do. A textile packaging business, for example, will continue to employ humans even for the most repetitive tasks—folding textiles—as machines still cannot do this. Like-

[26] Marx, "Economic Manuscript," 441.

[27] Rudolf Braun: "The 'Docile' Body as an Economic-Industrial Growth Factor," in Patrice Higonnet, David Landes and Henry Rosovsky (eds), Favorites of Fortune. Technology, Growth, and Economic Development since the Industrial Revolution (Harvard University Press 1991), p. 123.

[28] Marx, "Economic Manuscript," 436–437.

[29] Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men, 281.

[30] Braun, "The 'Docile' Body," 131.

wise, training humans for sorting jobs is often still easier than putting a machine in place. Here as everywhere, repetition is a spectrum extending through the hand and machine, not separating them. The machine never fully replaces the hand, it merely re-embeds it. Bodies remain within the empire of repetition, at least if they are suitably domesticated.

For not all such bodies remain docile—in fact, all domestication notwithstanding, only a tiny fraction of them is ever fully broken down, though all contribute in some measure to their servitude. And above all, machines were, and are, vulnerable to assertions of deixis—to having their repetition disrupted—to the extent that they rely on deixis. They are, were, and will always be crystallized repetition, which means they remain utterly dependent on continuing their repetitive motions. The Luddites were the first to realize that the end goal of machinery was not so much their replacement and starvation as such, but rather the destruction of their deictic potential. When they "fought for their survival against this progress," therefore, the Luddites were never "irrational, provincial, futile" but were rather "the last people in the West to perceive technology" for what it was, "and to act upon that perception. They smashed machines."[31]

Like the Luddites, we know that it is futile to turn to the iterated politics within Solon's watershed to resist the empire of machinic repetition. We know that resistance must always happen at the deictic frontier, aiming to crush repetition by physical acts, on shop floors everywhere, through absenteeism and Great Resignations and beyond. Machines are repetition and are thus vulnerable to anything that disrupts or stops repetition. In the world of today, their seemingly overwhelming power and omnipresence masks this weakness well. But it also points to paths of destruction. Precisely because so many repetitive movements are so intricately linked at the end of long developments of mutually reinforcing intensification and expansion, the failure of one machine or machine part ripples outward to affect myriad others.

If a gesture is split into five parts, each of which is repeated by a different machine, then the failure of the first machine to repeat its part inevitably cuts off the other four and renders them useless. Vulnerabilities of this kind abound, especially in power grids, pipelines, and underwater cables. Moreover, with repetition stacked on top of repetition, the more elaborate or later gestures tend to obfuscate the earlier ones on which they depend. Thus the US power grid may not even require much sabotage any more—as each winter harshly demonstrates. The British rail system, too, is regularly shut down by leaves on the tracks. And in continental Europe, Russia's natural gas grandstanding currently reminds everyone of the pivotal importance of pipelines.

We can take up the Luddites' struggle whenever and wherever we want. But we need to be aware of what machines are, and thus what we fight against. They are neither isolated technical objects nor an unavoidable fate, but rather crystallizations of repetition. This means that we must look at machines as part of the spectrum of iteration, where repetition gradually overwrites what is left of deixis. Doing so allows us to see that machines depend on the pacified social field into which they build their empire of repetition, and from which they receive their raw—that is, iterated—materials. We need to attack the machine just there, at the point where it gets those so-called raw materials. We have also seen that the machine started out as an implementation, in a different medium, of repetitive hand gestures. It has a history, as does resistance against it, both within and outside of the pacified field. Consequently, we also need to recognize that now, some two hundred years after the machine began overwriting the hand, another change has occurred in how repetition is implemented within the pacified social field.

[31] David Noble, Progress without People: in Defense of Luddism (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1993), 4.

Just as the machine overwrote the hand, never quite destroying it, so computation is now overwriting the machine, never quite abandoning it. Injecting deixis into machinic repetition, therefore, is more complex than it used to be, because it is now a question of not just technique or technicization, but also computation. On the other hand, injecting deixis into machinic repetition is also easier than it used to be, because computation introduces new repetitions into iteration, making it ever more precarious. While we segue from the analysis of machinic repetition to the analysis of computational repetition, we remain unwavering in our commitment to attack the component materials that sustain machines, computing devices, and the pacified social field.

9. Unwriting Turing Machines

The dominance of computing machines has facilitated a proliferation of fascism in all of its guises. Big Data is more than a buzzword when it comes to mass surveillance, working with urban planning to use computers for tracking, monitoring, and adjusting behaviour.[1] Even more prominently, the ubiquity of computers has contributed substantially to the rise of memetic disinformation—or rather the dissolution of the distinction between information and disinformation, between events and media.[2] Add to this that the global capitalist surveillance machinery invading our homes and assimilating our freedoms feeds on rare earths and minerals, and thus significantly contributes to ecological catastrophe (which it then greenwashes), and it seems clear that anarchy hardly needs any more reasons to eschew and, where possible, attack computing devices.

Anarchist countercomputing is a thriving array of resistance within the nooks and crannies of the so-called Internet, but is all too often caught up in the iterative politics within Solon's watershed, remaining performative and pacified. For a while in the 1990s and 2000s, it seemed almost as though this Internet itself, a seemingly weightless realm of cyberspatial freedom, might be an anarchic medium. But the anarchists who were smitten by this promise had fallen for the same errors that led some—apparently serious—political economists to declare the end of the nation state right around the same time.[3] Fortunately, the anarchist side of this divide has since corrected its overly-enthusiastic assessment regarding the so-called Internet.

But this has in its turn left anarchist countercomputing without a theory to tackle its most fundamental challenge, namely, that the empire of repetition manifests as a dominance of computing devices everywhere. Hacking (whatever concrete practice you may think of when hearing this curious word), DIY, tinkering, fork bombing, throwing away your smartphone, are all relevant and needed practices. But they do not add up to a serious and fundamental challenge to the empire of repetition or its surrounding iterative field. The challenge we must face, here as for machines, lies not in what computing machines do. In fact, focusing on what computing devices do can easily end in reformist attempts that focus on user behaviors, and fall into the trap of thinking of technology as neutral. Thus libertarian municipalism and other such absurdities can posit that smartphones be put to good use! Such a position accepts that resistance to the empire of repetition arises within—and remains within—the iterated politics of the pacified social field. Here as in the case of the machine world, therefore, we need to focus on what computing devices are rather than what they do.

Computing machines—smartphones, laptops, desktops, clients, servers, cryptofarms, manufacturing robots, and artificial intelligences—are entirely and exclusively a manifestation of the

[1] Claudia Clemens, Post-Industrial Cities in Transition. (Göttingen: Sierke, 2010).

[2] Sean Doody, "Reactionary Technopolitics: A Critical Sociohistorical Review", Fast Capitalism 17.1 (2020), 143–164.

[3] Kenichi Ohmae's The End of the Nation State was published in 1995, and thus written in the year following Netscape's release and the birth of the Internet.

empire of repetition within the wider field of authoritarian iteration. This was easier to see in the first half of the twentieth century, when computing devices were invented, than it is now, where they are hidden behind layers of user-friendliness. Thus a graphic application interface covers a graphic operating system, which—if you serve under the Microsoft Corporation—covers semi-graphic, semi-alphanumeric BIOS and MS-DOS interfaces, which in turn cover up assembly and op code layers, obstructing every last bit of access to the machine's actual writing: the endlessly repeated zeroes and ones of machine language immediately implemented by the electromagnetic differentials zigzagging across its circuitry. Only under cover of this many layers of repetitive abstraction could the idea of cyberspace emerge. In hardware reality, computing machines are, and have always been, nothing but authoritarian repetition. But this renders computing devices vulnerable in the same way machines are—not so much to the iterated and pacified politics of libertarian municipalism or cyberspatial performances, but to an intervention returning to the deictic frontier.

Any computational device, no matter how sophisticated, requires the world to be pre-packaged in discrete chunks, as the device itself requires a finite number of internal states processed in algorithms, procedures of finite length, consisting of a finite selection of possible steps to be taken at a finite number of possible junctures.[4] Computing devices are thus born from a world already formed by the will to reification; a world dominated by machines and secured by the pacified social field. They must be able to read any given input, i.e., to dissolve it into discrete internal states, and transform it into output, which in turn comes in the form of further discrete states. This is how the Turing machine overwrites the pacified social field: one by one, all of its iterations are re-rendered through discrete input and output routines.

At any given point, therefore, an exhaustive description of any computing machine is possible. Such a description is never more or less than a version of Turing's original machine—no matter how complex the different parts have become. No computing device, no matter how sophisticated, has ever been more than this: "We may think of a Turing machine as composed of three parts—a control element, a reading and writing head, and an infinite tape. The tape is divided into a sequence of squares, each of which can carry any symbol from a finite alphabet. The reading head will at a given time scan one square of the tape. It can read the symbol written there and, under directions from the control element, can write a new symbol and also move one square to the right or the left. The control element is a device with a finite number of internal 'states'. At a given time, the next operation of the machine is determined by the current state of the control element and the symbol that is being read by the reading head."[5]

No computing machine has ever been more than a finite set of discrete operations, endlessly repeated, to read symbols of a finite alphabet, endlessly repeated on an infinite tape's repeated squares, to make determined choices from a finite set of options, endlessly repeated, to write discrete symbols from a finite alphabet, endlessly repeated, and to move by one square, a motion endlessly repeated. Each such machine—every smartphone you've ever had, every fitbit, every laptop, every desktop—is an endless series of repetitions: repeated states leading to repeated procedures that repeat choices at repeated junctures, generating repeated outputs from repeated

[4] Peter Denning, Jack Dennis, and Joseph Qualitz, Machines, Languages, and Computation (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 88.

[5] Claude Shannon, "A universal Turing machine with two internal states," in idem and John McCarthy, Automata Studies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 157.

inputs. With computing machines, the empire of repetition reaches its apex. No material implementation has ever been closer to implementing pure repetition.

Thus the degrees of freedom that existed in analogue machinery in a rudimentary state have—by definition—vanished in the transition to digital throughput. At the inception of computing devices stands Claude Shannon's explicit definition of zeroes and ones as repetitive values overwriting the continuous voltage ranges naturally occurring in the early diodes—values never purely repeating but ever flickering.[6] Thus "any given number may be expressed by a sequence of high and low voltages" only once these voltages are overwritten by fixed, repeating values, rendering them equivalent to "a group of memory devices, each of which is capable of storing either a one or else a zero."[7] But what is overwritten are ranges, unfixed oscillations, unstable fluctuations, continuous unfolding: +22, +20, and +17 all become a value "one," and +3, +1, and 0 all become a value "zero." Once voltage ranges are overwritten in this way, it only matters if the actually voltage is above or below the threshold classifying it as a zero or as a one. The last remains of iterative renewal, which were still residually lingering in the degrees of deviation inherent to mechanical integration come to be hidden beneath purely discrete series of binary states. In the pacified social field, there may have been iterations, voltages:

+3 | +11 | +20 | +1 | +2 | 0 | +17 | 0

But within the empire of computational repetition, these become pure repeated values, redefined binaries:

0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0

And it is only because of this that a sequence emerges that is computable—a series of discrete binary states.

Thus at the very most basic level of all computation, iteration vanishes underneath repetition—by authoritarian fiat alone: by repeating the definition with each device. All other layers built on top of this, no matter how much freedom they simulate, remain subject to this authoritarian fiat. And if something within the computing machine gets other ideas, if it errors out or if it acts up? "In order to restore the circuit to zero state an inhibitory input is applied," and the realm of nearly pure repetition is restored.[8]

Besides, repetition repeats itself at each juncture of each layer of the computing machine. Instruction lengths are predefined, as are the digits within them and their meaning—then as now, a word mark determines what is operable and what is, from the machine's perspective, incomprehensible human excess.[9] Any such excess beyond what is computable used to be inconsequential commentary on the edges of handwritten programming sheets or punch cards—vestiges of iteration.[10] Thus the empire of repetition, manifested in computing machines, first redefined the vestiges of iterated gestures as an unintelligible outside—a residual without consequence. Later, these vestiges became pure noisy hardware, physical necessities of manufacturing: the end of a tape, magnetic drum field length, interrecord gaps to mark data blocks.[11] Thus the empire of repetition took a second step, redefining not only human vestiges of iteration but also machine ones as inconsequential residuals.

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[6] Claude Shannon, A Symbolic Analysis of Relay and Switching Circuits (Boston: MIT, 1936), 4.

[7] Montgomery Phister, Logical Design of Digital Computers (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), 17.

[8] Kathleen and Andrew Booth, Automatic Digital Calculators (London: Butterworths, 1965), 124.

[9] James Saxon and William Plette, Programming the IBM 1401 (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 17.

[10] Martin Harris, Introduction to Data Processing (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), 27.

[11] Martin and Seymour Lipschutz, Data Processing (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 29–36.

When computing machines finally outgrew such clunky vestiges of their origins, the excess beyond computation returned to authoritarianism pure and simple, and everything beyond instruction limits was simply defined away by relegating it to a zone outside of editing authorization.[12] In this third step, the machine came to be re-deployed by computation itself, redefined to be intelligible to pure repetition. It has remained there, in the form of yet more layers—Operating Systems with graphic interfaces in this case—to this very day. Now, even politics within Solon's watershed are assimilated into computational repetition, and we are back where we started, with smartphones used by communists and canonical anarchists alike.

Assembly language is no less repetitive than the origin of computation. It overwrites machine language by Op Code that is "not written numerically but mnemonically" and within which "addresses need not be specified numerically but can be written symbolically."[13] Code is thus an emergent property, just as machines were in the hand-made world, and just as Hieroglyphs were in the world of Naqada II. But just like them, it only serves to introduce new layers of repetition. Previously, direct access to numerical sections of computing machines—absolute addresses—allowed some residual iteration, however tenuous and however precariously close to their authoritarian origin. Perhaps some Luddite sabotage is possible there. But with Op Code and what is erected above it, new layers of repeated designations are introduced, repeatedly displaying the relative addresses to be called upon. Once again everything else is defined simply as meaningless babble, excluded by the developer routine assembling the program.[14]

Within Computing machines, all remains repetition. Clock pulses keep order by defining the endless march of repeated time units within the computational system, imposing them on all other parts of the machine. Not least, too, they determine where instructions cut off, separating repeated meaning from human or machinic iterated babble. Clock pulses also time the execution of loops, which are in turn so much defined by repetition that they have now come to represent repetition in our minds—obscuring the vestiges of iterative freedom inherent in the looped subroutines' dynamic aspects.

But to our minds, this is all invisible, as we are typically cut off even from the assembly layer, and thus from any recognition whatsoever of how many layers repeat lower levels of repetition, down to the original layer where zeroes and ones overwrite fluctuating, iterated voltage differentials. That these devices have come to be associated with liberatory potential (for example, during the brief Arab Spring) only shows how insidious the mark of authoritarianism has become—how far removed we are from deixis—and how much this world has become integrated into the computational empire of nearly pure repetition.

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So what is to be done? Here as with machinery, the answer is not just a piecemeal intervention within the iterated politics of the pacified social field. The answer relies on the structural presupposition that the empire of repetition—manifest as machinery and as computation—relies on the world being prepackaged for it. Without such a prepackaging, i.e. when we force a return to the deictic frontier, computing devices hold up as little as machines do.

Inspired by the primitive and egoist focus on throwing the stone rather than communicating its intensity, therefore, we aim to uncover the initial point where deixis is buried underneath the

[12] Intel, 80386 Programmer's Reference Manual (Santa Clara: Intel Literature, 1986), ch. 6, pp. 2–3.

[13] Arthur Gill, Machine and Assembly Language Programming of the PDP-11 (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 45.

[14] B. Randell and L. J. Russel, ALGOL 60 Implementation (London: Academic Press, 1964), 148.

accumulated layers of iteration. The short answer, not surprisingly, would be to ditch computing devices altogether when and where possible. This would recognize them for the cancer they are (figuratively, but in some cases also literally) and would cut them out of our lives before they can metastasize any further and turn our whole lives into an endless array of screens, each iterating the others as we wither away before them. As every primitive anarchist knows, though, this is much easier said than done. Nearly everything that needs to be done to participate in today's society requires a smartphone in one way or another, or at the very least a desktop of some sort—and however rudimentary such participation aims to be, there is typically no alternative to it. Particularly if one wants to get a job, the smartphone reigns supreme.

By focusing on this short answer, we not only leave behind those who might be willing to follow us, but who are concerned about putting food on their table. We also neglect tackling the very real potential that lies in finding out that computing devices, like machines, are nothing but repetition, and are thus dependent on a world that is already no longer deictic. Throwing our phones away only gets us back into the pacified social field. It squanders a real opportunity to get us to a structural analysis, which, in turn, opens up a path to the deictic frontier. We would thus be well advised to take guidance from primitive anarchy here and declare getting rid of our phones altogether a remote goal. In the shorter run, a longer answer that engages the Anti-Alphabet may help in the same way that the Anti-Alphabet emerged as a means of returning the pacified social field to its deictic frontier in chapters 5 and 6. In turn, this longer answer to our countercomputing challenge will even come to lead us directly towards confronting the will to reification at the deictic frontier.

Computing machines, as we have seen, are nothing but crystallized repetition, with each level of repetition reinforcing lower levels. But why is this the case? The answer lies once more in its point of origin, in the original Turing machine that is repeated all over the world. Computing machines in their present form could only have arisen from Turing's finite alphabet of discrete, endlessly-repeated symbols. These in turn are unthinkable without the Latin alphabet.

Thus the primary form of pacified iteration on which the computing machine relies is Latin alphabetization, and this is therefore the primary avenue for us to get computation back to the deictic frontier. The Latin alphabet developed directly from Greek and shares its core characteristics. Particularly, both contain two core characteristics without which no Turing machine could ever be conceived. First, the Greek and Latin alphabets have removed all polysemy from individual signs, which allows these signs to serve as purely repetitive elements on the tape. This in turn is the condition of possibility of an algorithm, a discrete procedure turning discrete input into discrete output.

Secondly, the Latin alphabet—again just like Greek—has removed all deictic involvement in the world, all direct connection with animals and plants. Therefore, each of its letters can serve both as an operand and as an operator. In this lies the origin of Turing's magnetic tape on which both computed data and the computation itself manifest as an endless series of repeated zeroes and ones.

Combined, these two characteristics form the core of the computing machine's implementation of nearly pure repetition. It is clear that both of them rely on deeply-rooted, iterated social formations: the dominance of the Latin alphabet. But leaving nothing intact, however deeply ingrained it may be, is of course exactly the point of the return of anarchic antipolitics to the deictic frontier. If the Anti-Alphabet intervenes here, the very foundations of computation could be attacked, and operations could be conceived that are neither mills grinding the world into repeti-

tive patterns nor a reliance on the pacified safety valve of iterated politics—and which could thus undo the empire of computational repetition once and for all.

First, the letters of the Latin and Greek alphabets, bereft of polysemy, become repetitive elements on Turing's infinite tape. They stand at the end of a long process of gradual but merciless iteration, moving towards every more repetition, starting, as noted, with Egyptian Hieroglyphs. In their original form, the Hieroglyphs of archaic Egypt emerged from animal and plant carvings, and retained this appeal to the unfolding of the world around them for a long time. Thousands of years into the history of ancient Egypt, individual signs still retained polysemy, pointing in part to a letter, in part to a symbol, and in part to the real animal or plant from which they were derived. Thus the catfish and the chisel were, on the one hand, just these objects— a catfish and a chisel—but also came to implement n'r and mhr, respectively, and thus spelled the name of the king Narmer. Likewise, the water glyph, if placed below a pot glyph, not only means nw-mw, as it would when read in linear fashion, but it also pictorially reads "water is underneath the pot". This in turn spells in ancient Egyptian mw-hr-nw, and was thus used, in abbreviated form of just the first letters (mhn), to mean "interior".[15]

Such polysemy eroded as the pacified social field absorbed the last remaining features that Hieroglyphs had preserved from the deictic frontier. As they became more and more repetitive, pacified, and institutionalized, Hieroglyphs morphed into letters of the Proto-Sinaitic, then the Phoenician, and ultimately the Greek and Latin alphabets. With the invention of written vowels in particular—around the turn of the ninth century BC somewhere in Eastern Greece, possibly in Syria—letters became stoicheia, parts and only parts of syllables. As only stand ins for the sounds made in speech, written letters lost their deictic potential, and came to be integrated fully into the pacified social field, normed by speech and subordinated to speech. Hence their definition in classical Greek grammar of the fifth century BC: "For any sound x, x is a letter if, and only if, x is the smallest part of any syllable in which x may occur."[16]

Based on this, the notion could emerge that letters are merely repetitive elements with no meaning of their own, bereft of deixis altogether. Plato's Cratylus, the oldest-extant systematic treatise on the subject,[17] teases an inquiry into letters where we "separate first the vowel, then in their several classes the consonants or mutes… and also the letters which are neither vowels nor mutes, as well as the various classes that exist among the vowels themselves."[18] But then, immediately following, this inquiry is turned back into one ascertaining for each letter "its fitness, whether one letter is to be applied to one thing or many are to be combined… In just this way we, too, shall apply letters to things, using one letter for one thing, when that seems to be required, or many letters together, forming syllables…"[19] Thus the letters are here only important with regards to their fitness for forming syllables—as repetitive elements—not as deictic phenomena in their own right, and especially not as pointers towards animals and plants. In other words, letters became computable symbols.

[15] Alan Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), 498.

[16] Andreas Schmidhauser, "The Birth of Grammar in Greece," in Egbert Bakker (Ed.), A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language (New York: WileyBlackwell, 2014), 504.

[17] It seems that the Presocratic philosopher Democritus wrote on the subject earlier than Plato did, but of his work we only have fragments.

[18] Plato, Cratylus, 424c.

[19] Ibid, 424e.

They remained stoicheia, repetitive and exchangeable parts of syllables, when the Latin alphabet succeeded Greek in the Western European world. For Isidor of Seville, writing in the seventh century AD, "letters (littera) are so-called as if the term were legitera, because they provide a road (iter) for those who are reading (legere), or because they are repeated (iterare) in reading."[20] Five hundred years later, Hugh of St. Victor regarded the letter "as the fit arrangement of words", subject to the sense, which is "a certain ready and obvious meaning", and inner meaning, a "deep understanding which can only be found through interpretation and commentary."[21] Either way the letters of the Latin alphabet disappear behind spoken meaning and thought sense and are thus mere repetitive vehicles to be combined and recombined as fits. According to Hegel in the nineteenth century, this openness to computation is the exact reason why the Latin alphabet is superior to Egyptian Hieroglyphs.

Letters in the Latin alphabet are thus always carriers of something other than themselves, always discrete elements of discrete syllables forming discrete words and sentences, the meaning of which resides outside of them. Thus Latin letters have come to be mere operators, devoid of any direct connection with the world, discretely isolated, ready to be fed into algorithms: "symbols of the sequence s(1), s(2),..., s(i)" that can be "presented sequentially to a machine M" for which they constitute "a finite set known as the input alphabet."[22] This machine is, of course, a Turing machine, and turns the input sequence s(1), s(2),..., s(i) into an output sequence r(1), r(2),...,r(i), which is likewise independent of its meaning, and likewise consists of a mere repetitive sequence of letters.

This is the heart of the computing machine's dumb, triumphant brutality: that meaning, unfolding, deixis, is completely outside of it. This is the premise of the computational empire of repetition. Amid the messiness of the world, and continually striving to overwrite it, there is an algorithm whose implementation is at all times "well-defined," i.e., there is at all times "a test which can be applied to a proposed solution"—a discrete test applied to repetitive elements of a discrete output sequence derived in repeated steps from a discrete input sequence.[23]

But the universality and versatility which lies in the Latin alphabet's discrete brutality doesn't stop here. We have seen that letters, which have become repetitive elements as they moved away from Hieroglyphs, have thus become sequences within algorithms. This also entails their severance from the unfolding of the world—the animals and plants have no place in the workings of a Turing machine. In this lies the Turing machine's unique ability to harness pure repetition. For letters, to the Turing machine, are not just operands within input or output sequences. The Turing machine also flattens the difference between operators and operands, program and content, user and input. Every letter of a given input sequence can thus be both a command and a value, a moment within an algorithmic operation or its preceding or succeeding state. Implemented Turing machines accept, transduce, and return data in the same format as commands and addresses: all three are just repetitive symbols on the infinite tape, which is to say, repeated patterns of zeroes and ones.

A line entered by a programmer may thus read COPY PLACEA TO PLACEB, but to the machine, this is all merely a sequence C-O-P-Y-P-L-A..., which is implemented as a sequence 0110000100111011011... There is no distinction, to the data tape or the reading or writing heads,

[20] Isidor, Etymologies, I.III.3.

[21] Hugh of St. Victor, Didascalicon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 92.

[22] Denning, Dennis, and Qualitz, Machines, 4–5.

[23] John McCarthy, "The inversion of functions defined by Turing machines," in Automata Studies, 177.

between COPY, the word that implements a command, PLACEA, which is an address, the value stored at that address, and PLACEB, which is another address and another value at another address. Thus the entire line can itself become an operand—its letters can become an input sequence for another command. Perhaps this other command is RETURN "COPY PLACEA TO PLACEB", which doesn't implement the COPY command but rather displays it as a line on the screen. The letters are the same, and so are their implementations in zeroes and ones; each repeated endlessly.

The distinction between COPY and PLACEA, between command and address, is implemented on a different level, as op code goes into the parser. But here, too, the distinction is based on a repetition: the letters of the word COPY are compared to the letters of the word COPY stored in the parser. If they don't match, a pre-defined error is returned—a repetitive motion. And if they match, COPY is recognized as a command and executed. But this in turn consists of a series of equally pre-defined tape head motions. Perhaps CLEAR ACC clears the accumulator, then READ PLACEA(0) places the value of PLACEA's first digit into the accumulator, RETURN ACC TO PLACEB(0) places the value into the first digit of PLACEB, and so forth, repeated until all digits of PLACEA are copied or all places in PLACEB are full, whichever happens first. Thus at this level, too, the letters themselves are irrelevant and interchangeable, mere elements to be repeated across locations. RETURN "COPY PLACEA TO PLACEB" does the exact same thing, except the target location is now a screen or output printer.

All letters are the same to a Turing machine, each a mere repeated element from an input sequence or an output sequence or a pre-programmed internal assembly sequence (which was an input sequence at some other point in time).

Only the Latin alphabet, with its completely discrete letters bereft of deictic connection to the unfolding of the continuous world, could have created such machines. This also means, though, that the Anti-Alphabet is uniquely dangerous to the Turing machine and its implementations. Because they retain their Hieroglyphic polysemy, the letters of the Anti-Alphabet—including the Latin letters absorbed into and freed by it—retain their deictic connections to the unfolding of the world. Thus writing practices can engage the animals and plants playing on the page as such. This attacks the presuppositions on which the equation of operator and operand rests, as each letter ceases to be a discrete entity and thus can no longer be implemented as a repeated encoding of zeroes and ones on an infinite tape. The Anti-Alphabet also makes each letter unique and playful, attacking the presupposition of their status as interchangeable elements.

Transitions to a world beyond the empire of repetition are thus thinkable through the quasi-letters of the Anti-Alphabet, each a playful being within a horizon of continuous unfolding. It is imperative to recognize how this challenges the status quo. For example, a straightforward insistence on polysemy alone would not achieve an unwriting of discrete computing. After all, polysemy alone can always be encapsulated—captured— through a discrete enumeration of all the possible meanings of a sign: as letter, as object, as symbol, as plant or animal. We cannot, therefore, rely on polysemy alone, but must ensure that the letter is actively read as a plant or animal. Only when it thus dissolves itself and points beyond itself is it truly deictic, as opposed to denumerably polysemic.

Other such principles and precautions need to be developed carefully if the Anti-Alphabet is to succeed against the world of computing. We could always just throw away our phones but this doesn't challenge the context, nor does it remove us from the pacified social field. If we want to truly blow up discrete computing and the empire of repetition as a whole, we need to look to a practical implementation that unwrites it. We must destroy the prepackaging by which the

continuous unfolding of the world is being absorbed into iteration to begin with. The will to reification at the deictic frontier, where the Latin alphabet overwrites continuous unfolding, is our real target, where we get to the bottom of machinery and computation alike. Just as Turing's machine started in the computational logic of the Latin alphabet's world, therefore, our thinking against it must start within the logic of the Anti-Alphabet's return to the deictic frontier.

Part IV: Plant anarchy

In the empire of repetition, in iterated politics within the pacified social field, and in domestication and classification at the deictic frontier, we have seen the work of iteration, which singles out constellations and writes things. In the loud, noisy, and smelly domain of the machine, which is everywhere now, we have observed iteration as it singles out movements and reifies them as discrete repeated motions. In computation, we have seen the Turing machine implement repeated input and output alphabets, singling out states and writing them as operators and operands that are fully removed from the deictic frontier. These gestures are at the heart of the empire of repetition. We find them manifesting a world of things: data and addresses, operators and operands ultimately overwriting constellations of electric currents into endless repetitions of so many discrete states in discrete machines, turning discrete inputs into discrete outputs. We find them again in the endless repetition of discrete motions within machines that absorb discrete things or units of things and transform them into other discrete things or units of things.

All of these are based on, and only function within, a world that is pre-packaged through iteration, overwriting continuous unfolding. We have seen how the state ceaselessly guards the boundaries of the field of iteration, singling out things and enforcing definitions on all constellations of the world's continuous unfolding. We have traced this world of things back to the oldest thresholds of proto-Hieroglyphic rock carvings, and to the innermost crevices of Stirner's final compromise. Looking back, we can see iterations creating the world of things through victories and losses in social interactions, through the silent accumulation of discursive watersheds, and through repeated definition overwriting deictic resistance in biological classification and zoning laws.

The megamachine overwriting every iteration with repetition and every constellation with iterated discrete things seems inescapable and unstoppable. But this has never stopped anarchy before, and it won't stop us now. Against looming fascism brought on by the impending climate catastrophe, we are unafraid to go to the root of the problem, the deictic frontier. Anarchy, after all, is committed to just what this exhausted planet needs: "a total transformation, a transformation of identity, ways of life, ways of being, and ways of communication."[24] This transformation is guided in our times by vast visions. Primitive anarchy "wants people to become free individuals living in free communities which are interdependent with one another and with the biosphere they inhabit."[25] Egoist anarchy dreams of creating a world wholly of my own free making, of a "solitude which becomes freedom, rebellion, open defiance of society."[26] At the intersection between these visions, anarchic antipolitics are guided by the dream of "an uncivilized, undomesticated life consciously chosen and meaningful for myself within a context of a small group of known and trusted people."[27]

In its struggles on the ground and in its tactics, too, anarchy remains undaunted, remaining ever sprawling and new. Anarchic antipolitics organizes itself in myriad ways, yet always temporarily and without rule. It shifts shape and interferes where and when it pleases, and remains always out of reach of authoritarianism. We have learned from past mistakes. Our antipolitics have become nimble and agile. Antipolitics is memetic and rhizomatic. It occupies trees and blows up anti-abortion centers with the same insistence with which it engages in Twitter spats. It is everywhere and nowhere.

[24] John Moore, A Primitivist Primer, via Anarchist Library.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Marilisa Fiorina, "Freedom and Solitude," in Enemies of Society, 245–246.

[27] (I)An-ok Ta Chai, "Max & I," in Uncivilized, 362.

Which is also to say, however, that anarchic antipolitics is reactive and situational, always responding in situ, restlessly flitting from opportunity to opportunity, from fires to frying pans and back into fires. Revolts and insurrections are beautiful individualities flaring up as quickly as they are extinguished. Anarchy is now both visionary and material and pessimist and idealist. It is exhausting and exhausted, and mirrors general society in this. Anarchic antipolitics has beautiful visions: primitive anarchy set against the looming climate catastrophe, boundless self unfolding set against encroaching fascism, small-scale riots against the global megamachine, small-scale solidarity against global chaos. But its insurrections are increasingly determined by path dependencies outside its control. We are at risk of moving back into Solon's watershed. Our antipolitics are at risk of becoming just politics in reverse.

This means, as we have seen, that a more radical departure is needed. We don't necessarily need further visions: the plant intuitions of primitive and egoist anarchy guide our way. Nor do we necessarily need to develop new tactics: we know these intimately. But we need to ensure that these tactics are not reabsorbed into iterative politics. What we need, then, is deeper than tactics and different from visions. To go beyond iteration and force a return to the deictic frontier, we need an insurgency within logic, opposing it to our plant intuition. Our insurgency proceeds from the understanding that computers, machines, the state, domestication, classification, and social tyranny are all part of one and the same project that writes a world of things by enforcing iteration over deixis and repetition over iteration. From there, we throw our stone, unconcerned about its parabola's communicative transmission because it's a stone thrown within a totally different framework than Solon's.

To be sure, we may ask what good an insurrection in logic is when the world is on fire. An entirely legitimate question. But as long as we don't tackle the deep mechanism by which the world is being torched, our response to the fire remains determined by the mechanisms mainstream society uses against it as well. Not least because it remains a response to the fire, rather than an attempt to steal its fuel. We know that the edifice that provides fuel to the fire is the problem, and that that edifice is not worth salvaging. We shouldn't extinguish it but blow it up. The idea that we inhabit a world of discrete things has arisen in a historical development and needs to be detonated in and through another such development. Unless we strike at the root of (all) things—literally—we remain doomed to fruitless, endless battles, and fighting only the surface manifestations of the world of things in its myriad manifestations.

Besides, we may well be convinced of the viability of our visions—and it certainly stands to reason that both primitive anarchy and the shameless immensity of egoist insurrection are excellent responses to the rapidly escalating global catastrophe—but we will never be able to destroy the iterations of past discourses by remaining within Solon's watershed. We must take primitive and egoist anarchy beyond themselves and really grapple with just how different a world would be into which iteration doesn't write discrete things.

For this is the prejudice that gives rise to all others: that there is a world of discrete, brittle things, readily to hand for our taking. As long as this root of all of today's problems remains intact, the visions of primitive and egoist anarchy, and our own, which are inspired by both, remain unintelligible. As long as it is intact, insurrections remain on the surface, and the fruits of the idea of discrete things continue sprouting. The idea of solidarity for example—of bursting through the discrete thingness of personhood, of propertied capitalist individuality, with a movement towards economies of continuous circulation—has turned into the commodified "sharing economy" of "platform capitalism." This has lead to exploitation that is worse than ever, as plat-

form capitalism compartmentalizes the very notion of continuous communality and sells it back to us in discrete chunks. Likewise, green resistance, the movement of returning to a continuous dwelling in a world that belongs primarily to non-human animals, rather than confining them to ours, is now appropriated in discretely-zoned wildernesses and discretely-packaged ecofriendly car batteries. If we remain within the old certainties of Solon's watershed and canonical small-republic anarchism, we too become activists who "want to fix things, to improve things" but who thereby "tend to function in much the same way as the corrective function of feedback in cybernetics."[28]

Not just in the interest of blowing up the world of things, but also to clarify our own connections between our visions and our insurrections, therefore, we need to look at the way discrete things are implemented in and through the deep logic of our language and gestures. Combating this idea above all requires destroying it in the same depths of language from which it arose, iterated endlessly. Only then can we begin to blow up a world that, overdetermined by the will to write discrete things, seems to confirm everywhere that this is the only way life could ever unfold.

Lest anarchic antipolitics remain tethered at all sides to existing discourse, existing meaning, existing negativity, we must therefore ensure that we unfold a logic of a different world. But for this to work, we must look at the history of the current discrete logic of the current discrete world, and replace its mere rejection in scattered insurrections with a systematic replacement that operates at the same level. Only when we understand the old logic can we fuse vision and insurrection, and make their fusion intelligible to ourselves. Hopefully by the time we've understood the old logic it is not too late—but even if it is, it's still worth a try.

[28] Jason Rodgers, "Progressive Degradation," 52.

10. Wind wolf, plant, and fog

What is the value of logic? "Behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stand valuations or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life."[1] The tyrannical will that manifests in logic today creates and preserves the world of iterated things within which the empire of repetition resides. This will is sophisticated, however. It hides in the plain sight of so-called common sense. To get to it we must ask unusual questions. Why must there always be a doer for there to be a deed? Why is it that the hand always makes gestures—could it not also be that the gestures make the hand? Why does there need to be a will for there to be a willing—a desire? And does there need to be a discrete desire—and not just continuous desiring? Why does every object require an author, a maker, or at least a cause? There are patterns in the sand as the waves recede: have the waves written them? Or have the patterns crystallized, as it were anonymously, without author, maker, or cause? Why does every gesture, every movement, every emergence, require a thing to precede it, and why does it need to result in a thing in turn? Why indeed are there discrete things, discrete gestures, discrete states at all? Why should "the definite be worth more than the indefinite?"[2]

Today the minds and bodies of the many are so far embedded into a world of discrete processes—of discrete processing—that we cannot even begin to ask such questions any more. Computational logic and mathematical logic give birth to a world of computation and mathematics—the world of technique and technics we have analyzed above. "Death, procreation, birth, habitat: all must submit to technical efficiency and systematicization, the end point of the industrial assembly line" and of the Turing machine's infinite tape alike.[3] Thus the value of computational logic lies in its ability to conjure up a world full of algorithms: of computable operations, of processes leading enumerable means to enumerable ends by enumerable steps. This is the world of the transducer: the input-to-output pipeline grinding down the nuances and exuberance of the world's unfolding into discrete, manageable, foldable chunks.

But while this world of technique, of systematic and efficient production, emerged when Alan Turing and Kurt Godel responded to David Hilbert, the pacified social field on which it is based—the field of Latin alphabetization—is much older. The movement of logic, which expresses the gestures by which the exuberance of the world's unfolding is wrapped into neat little chunks, is likewise much older. Western humanity has always lived in a world of reification—where the continuous unfolding of the world, in all its exuberance, came to be and has ever been compartmentalized into brittle discrete things. This will to discreteness, to brittle reification, is the valuation—the physical demand—behind the oldest form of logic, that of Aristotle's Categories.

If we are to counter the world of discrete things, therefore, we must understand the gestures fundamental to Aristotle's logic. There is a foolish tendency within anarchy to outright reject the study of Aristotle. Just like Hieroglyphs, Aristotle's logic is one of the first explicit manifestations

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, no. 3.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ellul, The Technological Society, 128.

of the mechanics by which the discrete world is written. This means, just as we have seen for Hieroglyphs a few chapters ago, that these mechanics are closest to the surface here, and most obviously implemented. Aristotle thus hands us a particularly clear user manual for the will to reification. After all, as one of his fanboys has pointed out, Aristotle is the philosopher of common sense.[4] If we are to blow up the world of things, we need to know where to place our dynamite amid this common sense, and Aristotle shows us just where.

The logic of Aristotle is uniquely positioned for this mostly because it is less sophisticated than ours. Aristotle doesn't yet make much of an explicit distinction between the forms of speech and the world of real things. While this is a deficiency of his logic in the halls of academea, it is an advantage for us: iteration, after all, likewise doesn't make this difference. When Aristotle analyzes speech, therefore, he directly assays the will to reification in all of its forms.[5]

For Aristotle, all speech comes down to "either simple or composite" expressions, where "the man runs" and "the man wins" are composites of the simple expressions "man," "runs," and "wins".[6] Once this is clarified, Aristotle proceeds to declare that "expressions which are in no way composite"—that is, expressions which are always simple and cannot be reduced or analyzed further—"signify substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action, or affection."[7] He then proceeds to give examples, which we may amend as needed for clarity:

— substance: man, horse — quantity: two cubits long, three kilos heavy — quality: white, pale — relation: double, half, greater — place: at home, at work — time: yesterday, last year — position: standing, sitting — state: ready, awake, armed — action: to throw — affection: to be thrown

These ten categories are not on an equal footing. Rather, the first, substance, is the underlying category to which all the others apply. No quantity or quality without a substance to count or assess; no place without substances within it, no time without substances emerging or disappearing; no position without a substance assuming it, nor a state without a substance being in it; no action without a substance acting, nor affection without a substance being acted on. Thus "being is substance, that is, the essential property that underlies all other categories."[8] The world obeys the same categories as logic does because the same will to reification is active in both. Thus the logical category of substance is the one we need to focus on here, as it implements the same gesture that underlies the material thing.

In Aristotle, the notion of substance denoted that which underlies all other categories, a "this" or thing which is indivisible and one by number.[9] Thus it is the individual thing on which all other categories are predicated. A substance has qualities and quantity, it is at a place and in a time,

[4] Georg W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy Vol. II (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 229.

[5] Within our approach, this makes immediate sense, as iteration is at work both in language and in the material world in the same way (this we will develop a few paragraphs below this footnote). For completeness sake, though, I wanted to mention that there is good reason to make this statement from a purely textual perspective, too. Like every other statement about Aristotle, there are plenty arguments that could be made here and which indeed have been made about this. Nearly every commentary on the Categories, however, emphasizes repeatedly how close their explanations are to those of the Metaphysics. Canonically, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, in an article written in 2021, refers to the concepts developed in the Categories as the framework on which much of the Metaphysics is based. Even on a purely textual level beyond our own approach, therefore, we are good to go.

[6] Aristotle, Categories, part 2. All quotes from Categories are from the Edgehill translation.

[7] Aristotle, Categories, part 3.

[8] Isidor, Etymologies, II.XXVI.11.

[9] Aristotle, Categories, part 5.

and so forth. Substance in this first or primary sense, Aristotle says, are individual things.[10] Thus every other category "is either predicated of primary substances, or is present in them, and if these last did not exist, it would be impossible for anything else to exist."[11] Not only is substance therefore a gathering-place for all the other categories, but it is this gathering-place reified into a brittle, solid individual. The will to reification is in full force: the substance of Aristotle is a thing before it is anything else.

Moreover, this solid individual is also an always welldefined, differentiated, stable, and fixed individual, for substance is not only the individual thing but also—Aristotle says: secondarily—its definition in species and genus. For Aristotle, therefore, "man" is both this individual man and the species "human being," as well as a genus (classically, "animal" or "rational") corresponding to this classification.[12]

Aristotle's logic thus exposes the work of the will to reification. According to this will, things always come first, discrete chunks of reality that are founded upon themselves and that establish themselves.[13] The world of the Categories, the world created by the will to reification, is first and foremost a world of things. But the continuous unfolding of the world remains, everywhere resisting reification and classification. No thing is ever steady in itself. Things become other; they morph and change, they merge and perish. A state is always metastable, ambiguous, unstable, and unfixed. Time flows undifferentiated, a place is never fully identifiable with its coordinates on a world map, an action seamlessly merges into another. Which means that, just as the world's unfolding continuously exceeds all discrete things, so the will to reification is constantly at work, clearing the mess and cataloguing in the fog: singling out, defining, and differentiating. Far from merely creating substances, the will to reification also absorbs and assimilates all the movements, instabilities or metastabilities, ambiguities, spillovers, and bleedthroughs of continuous unfolding, and relegates them to the shapes of relations between things, movements of things, actions, passions, and states of things.

Thus the things in Aristotle's world may well be in some constellation with one another, for instance in space or time, or have specific characteristics—states, positions, qualities—or they may act upon or suffer from one another. But above all things are just that: defined, independent, discrete. Relations, interactions, characteristics, all the spillover that cannot immediately be assimilated into the mould of thingness, is nonetheless assigned a place within it. The operations underlying the world of things, and whose results Aristotle describes, are thus three interrelated gestures. These are, first, the noun-gesture, which creates discrete things and reinforces them by creating discrete nouns. The second is the verb-gesture, which creates discrete motions and reinforces them by creating discrete verbs. Third is the adjective-gesture, which creates discrete states of discrete things or motions and reinforces them by creating discrete adjectives.

Nouns, verbs, and adjectives as they appear in the spoken word or in written texts do not name or refer to pre-existing things, motions, and states, but are part of the gesture that creates them in the world and, simultaneously, in speech and written letters. They are as Aristotle describes them: above all the noun-gesture which implements substance, solidifying things and writing them into

[10] Ibid. There are some textual issues here, as Aristotle's Greek didn't yet have an exact equivalent to our present-day term "thing". To conclude from this, however, that the gesture implementing a thing is different from the gesture implementing a substance, is quite absurd—as we will see in the main text.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid. part 4.

[13] This is the literal meaning of the word "substance": substantia, that which grounds things.

the world according to their species and genus; the verb-gesture, which unfolds as discrete time and encapsulates position, action, affection; and the adjective-gesture, which solidifies quantity and state and, in its adverbial guises, relation.

By means of these gestures, the will to reification implements substance as an ongoing labor of assimilation. Things do not simply exist, they are created by the noun-gesture. Before a thing can become a gathering place for categories, its noungesture must have defined it and made it a brittle self-contained entity. If this weren't the case, the thing couldn't force the continuous unfolding that surrounds it into the mould of discrete categories: the verband adjective-gestures. It must be able to control all that surrounds it, and shape it according to its own categories. The noun-gesture thus makes it such that nothing surprising can ever happen to a substance. All verb-gestures and adjective-gestures are its gestures, are assimilated into categories just as brittle and discrete as the thing itself, which its substance implements and which implements its substance. We can once again see here how the computing machine, with its ability to render all things familiar to its repetitions, could only have come about within the world of Aristotle's Categories, the world created by the will to reification.

In everyday language, to be sure, meaning is said to play out in sentences, not in individual words. Yet the reason why such sentences can come to create meaning—how language can come to implement the will to reification to create a world of discrete things in discrete relations—is that sentences are discrete chains of discrete operations. Thus the bride who says "I do" at a wedding utters specific words in a specific context, a self-referential pronoun implementing the noun-gesture, and a verb. The same structure applies if she affirmed some other contract: I sign, I swear, I affirm, and so forth. Nor does it matter structurally if she does sign, swear, or affirm for someone else—what is important is that the pronoun identifies—which is to say reifies—a discrete thing, in this case herself.

Here we can see the noun-gesture at work, assimilating all its surroundings until they become just as discrete; until only verband adjective-gestures remain of the continuous unfolding of the world. For the discrete thing "bride" can come to be only in an equally discrete, reified and domesticated context. "She swears" is a perfectly valid pronoun-verb combination for an emotionally gripping tale at happy hour, but lacks all validity in court, just as "she does" is permissible for marriages only in extreme circumstances (and even then, needs to refer back to the first-person affirmation). Thus the general form for this speech act is

[[(pro)noun] + [verb] in context]

The speech act works because the verb affects the (pro)noun in a discrete way, changing it from one discrete state to another, provided the context is under control of the noun-gesture; provided, that is, the world has been assimilated to form a discrete social context with an iterated meaning. Thus in the sentence "I do", the verb do stands for a longer statement—"do consent to being married." This is contextually evident: it works in a specific way in a specific office. But it does not work at all in an office a little further down the municipality building's floor, and works yet differently in a totally different way on a comedy stage. In the first case, context makes it a binding contract; in the second, a meaningless intrusion into some hapless bureaucrat's life; in the third, perhaps a well-timed joke. Legal validity only arises in the first context.

Thus all three contexts are reified in this one speech act: the (pro)noun goes from the discrete legal state single to the discrete legal state married; the verb implements this shift; the context determines whether it succeeds. But this cannot work without the context being discretely defined. An unfixed, unstable, undifferentiated non-entity cannot get married—except again in a

very specific discrete context, namely certain spiritual types of marriage, which may or may not have legal validity. In any case, all three elements must be reified for the speech act to succeed. Thus the (pro)noun, the noun-gesture, implements the movement of reification by assimilating all other continuous unfolding into the shape of verbs and adjectives. Its thingness supersedes the world exceeding it at all sides, cuts it off, and domesticates it into forming only specific relations between specific substances with specific categories. The will to reification makes the entire world in its image. In each case, the verb discretely manipulates the (pro)noun from one discrete state to another in a discrete context. Thus when I purchase something—say, a yard with a tree—I somehow become owner of the tree. Discrete context is once again key, as such ownership only makes sense in a Western legal system; elsewhere, it is a meaningless term. But then even in nonWestern contexts, the tree and I remain discrete things whose status changes; perhaps I become a conservator of it and it becomes sacred. Either way, we are things in a particular relation, not an undifferentiated unfolding. Either way, the (pro)noun started out not conforming to the discrete state the verb aims to engender—and after the speech act is complete, it does. But what can happen to it along the way must conform to the set of permissible verb-gestures and adjective-gestures that conform to this thing: to this substance with these categories.

The same applies to supposedly purely descriptive sentences. Here, too, the deictic placeholder gets replaced by a discrete thing in a discrete context, which is then changed in its adjectives by discrete verb-operations in other, equally discrete contexts. The difference between descriptive speech acts and their contractual variations is that, in the former, the context is nearly always entirely linguistic: definition and context are nearly always congruent. That a tree is a tree is a tree depends much less on the context of the utterance and much more on the definition of the word tree. But both descriptive and prescriptive sentences are juridical: in both, the noun-gesture writes things into the world, implementing the will to reification, creating substances and their categories.

This is also the reason why the precise shape of the (pro) noun is irrelevant structurally and only matters contextually; that is, it's the reason why we can allude, joke, quote, reference… in everyday language. It is the gesture of the nouns, verbs, and adjectives, not their linguistic features themselves, that implement the will to reification. In the work of logic, however, these gestures come to the surface, where we can see them and find out where to place our detonators.

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We can now pinpoint the exact logical structure of what we mean when we say that the world is pre-packaged by iteration, to be assimilated into the empire of repetition. The noun-gesture, of which the noun itself is one manifestation and which follows the logic of Aristotle's substance, writes a thing into the world. It does so in two steps. First, by means of a pronoun it singles out a previously purely-deictic constellation within the continuous unfolding of the world. Singled out to a "this," an "I," or a "you," the noun-gesture overwrites this constellation with a fixed and stable designation. Thus undifferentiated directedness—deixis—at first solidifies into a singled-out constellation, marked by a pointing finger or a pronoun. Then the pronoun further solidifies to a noun, which not only identifies the constellation as a thing but as a specific thing. This specific thing is Aristotle's substance, which comes with a definition. Defined substances inhabit the pacified social field, in turn eaten alive by machinery and computation.

Thus in the example of a marriage, the speech act "I do" substitutes the deictic placeholder "I" with the noun "bride": there was a unique being before entering the contract, and after there is a bride. She remains exuberantly unique, but the will to reification forces her to assume the

shape of a bride. The term "bride," in turn, forces the thing to iterate its definition. The logical result of the noun-gesture is therefore the substantial definition, "which is properly and truly called a definition" and which, "descending through the species and the differentiae, comes to the individual thing, and most fully describes" what it truly is.[14] The substantial definition is always accurate because it writes the thing. We can see how the substance overwrites the pronoun, which in turn overwrites the constellation, by a top-down gesture defining what species of thing the bride is, and how—within brideness—her iterated being is assimilated into further repetitions. The same happens to trees that become lumber to go into the factory, and pigs who become pork to go to the abattoir.

The noun-gesture also delineates which verband adjective-gestures can occur with, through, or by this well-defined thing. Only because the bride is defined as a living thing, for example, can she do something, and only because she is defined as a rational living thing (as opposed to, say, an animal or someone underage) can she marry someone. Thus a shift has been effected by the verb "do," transitioning the pronoun to a noun "bride" and re-defining it in its reified context according to its definition. If a thing is not rational—if it is an animal or plant—it cannot implement the verb "do" in the same way a human being can, i.e., with legal effects. And again if a thing is not defined as living, it can be assimilated into the empire of repetition without much ado at all.

What exactly a verb-gesture can or can't effect depends on the noun-gesture of the things involved. Thus a common sense verb-gesture can turn a woman into a bride, but not into a stone, or vice versa.[15] What a thing is determines what can happen to it and what it can make happen. Thus a human being's color or shape don't affect its being a human, nor does the bride's being a bride change her being a woman. This does not mean, of course, that substance is immutable. Quite the contrary: gender and sex can quite obviously be changed. But it does mean that this change within gender is based on the notion of gender, iterating it through the noun-gesture that writes this living thing as a woman, overwriting its unique constellation. Thus no matter what change is effected—changes to substance such as sex changes or changes to categories such as marital status or choosing a different hair color—the change will implement, through a verb-gesture, an iteration of one or more definitions, overwriting the constellation with their thingness every time. The verb-gesture, therefore, can change a substance or any of the other categories, but it does so according to either the definition of the preceding noun-gesture (the substantial definition of the thing it changes), or according to the definition of the subsequent noun-gesture (the substantial definition of the thing the change leads to), or both. Either way, substance or category are iterated or, if altered, are altered by other such substances or categories, which are in turn iterated. A gender transition moves from someone from one gender to another, and thus remains within the noun-gestures structured by the term "gender." If a woman wishes to turn into a stone, the definition of "stone" will need to be altered specifically to accommodate this wish—it needs to turn into a gender. Thus one iterated definition gives way to another: we never leave the pacified social field of iteration. The same applies to animals, plants, and things that are not alive—once they are overwritten at the deictic frontier, that is.

What the verb-gesture achieves, therefore, is the change of one thing into another thing, never breaking the mold of thingness. The will to reification is immortal within its empire. "Obviously

[14] Isidor, Etymologies, II.XXIX.2.

[15] This statement is of course not true in certain magical contexts, nor conceivably in the most advanced stages of contemporary theoretical physics. But we can let it stand here for the same reason we engage Aristotle's logic as opposed to Frege's or Tarski's: we are concerned with the everyday world of things.

then the form also, or whatever we ought to call the shape present in the sensible thing, is not produced, nor is there any production of it, nor is the essence produced."[16] Only the individual thing becomes, changes, or perishes, and its emergence, change, or disappearance remain within thingness and its categorization. All movement, instability, excess is relegated to categories of becoming or destruction of things, quantitative addition to things or subtraction from things, alterations of things, or changes in placement of things.[17]

The same applies to the adjective-gesture, which implements changes affecting a thing's state or characteristics. It frequently acts in tandem with the verb-gesture. Thus the noun remains—the woman has remained a woman, the tree a tree, a bull a bull—but a new adjective has been added to their definitions, packaging them differently for assimilation. And since definitions write things, the adjective-gesture changes the thing just like the verb-gesture does—albeit usually less so—and leaves its substantial thingness intact, just like the verb-gesture does. In each case, the pacified social field remains intact, pre-packaging women and stones, trees and bulls as so many persons, property, lumber, and cattle, for the machines and computers of the empire of repetition to handle.

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Thus the noun-gesture, which singles out things and then writes substances, the verb-gesture, which singles out motions and writes them as substantial or categorial changes, and the adjective-gesture, which singles out characteristics and writes them as categories, are the operations of the will to reification, overwriting deixis into iteration to prepare assimilation by the empire of repetition. We find these gestures in the Turing machine, where they manifest as data and addresses, operators and operands, turning discrete inputs into discrete outputs. We find them again in the endless repetition of discrete motions within machines that absorb discrete units of substances and transform them into other discrete units of substances. We have seen how the state ceaselessly guards the boundaries of the field of iteration, and we have traced its steps back to the oldest thresholds of proto-Hieroglyphic rock carvings, and to the innermost crevices of Stirner's final compromise. We can see the three gestures in which the will to reification manifests, asserting themselves through the victories and losses in social interactions and through the silent accumulation of discursive watersheds. We can see them, too, in the overwriting of deictic resistance by repeated definition in attempts at biological classification. And it is just here, at the deictic frontier, that we find and confront the innermost principle of iteration.

The physiological drive underlying the world of Aristotle's Categories, the world written within the logic of thingness, is the will to reification. How can we erase this drive and its manifestations? How can we think continuously beyond the noun-, verb-, and adjective-gestures? How can a continuous logic be developed? Before we can invoke our plant intuition to guide our unfolding of resistance, and to develop a response to these questions, we must first take stock of two dead ends to avoid even though they, too, are at the deictic frontier. Both of them go beyond Solon's watershed, but both of them may thwart our efforts if we ignore them. First, our response cannot be evoked or conjured, it must be implemented. Second, our response cannot be based in a conceptual notion of nature. Only a response that avoids both dead ends can use the blueprint Aristotle gave us, blow up the world of things, and get us to the undifferentiated, indeterminable, unstable world of continuous unfolding beyond discreteness.

[16] Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 7, part 8. This is from the Ross translation.
[17] Aristotle, Categories, part 14.

First, our anarchic effort to undo the will to discrete reification cannot consist in conjuring up its negation but must implement this negation, lest the effort lapse into reactionary obscurantism. The best example for this lapse—not least because it is still cited with approval in some parts of primitive anarchy—is the work of Martin Heidegger. To be sure, his invocation of a leap into a world beyond Zuhandenheit (the being-ready-to-use of discrete things) flowed from and potentially still fulfils a desire for a more wholesome approach to a more continuous world. Particularly, Heidegger's insistence on allowing the world to unveil itself, rather than tearing its secrets from it with the imperious grasp of science, seems to provide a good starting point towards the healed world of continuous unfolding.

Thus his definition of the phenomenon in Being and Time may sound useful for us: "what shows itself, the self-showing, the manifest… the totality of that which brings to daylight, to place in brightness."[18] It is clearly distinguished from the vulgar use of the term "phenomenon", which typically simply denotes things as they appear to us.[19] For Heidegger, "phenomenon" is the unveiling of the world towards us. The key task for Heidegger, as it is to some extent for us, is the development of a thought that does justice to this unveiling, which unfolds in its proximity and which takes up its movement and brings it forth into its own. Based on such a mode of thought, Heidegger can point to a mode of dwelling amid such unfolding. "Dwelling, being brought to peace, means: remaining embedded in… the free which preserves each into its essence carefully… this shows itself to us as soon as we consider that being-human rests in dwelling," in the very mode of thought that embraces the unfolding world.[20]

Such poetic attempts to conjure a world beyond thingness and substances seem to run parallel to ours. But Heidegger's vision comes at a steep cost. All too easily, his patience for the world's unfolding became quietism in search of "last gods" and "other modes of being". Thus Heidegger points at a desire to take the Earth's cries seriously but he resigns himself—and us, if we follow—to passively waiting for an otherwise unspecified different unfolding of being. It is not, therefore, the language of Heidegger that we leave behind here. Obscurity alone is no problem if its aim is right. But Heidegger's goal does not match ours. He is not looking to implement the continuous unfolding of the world, he is waiting for fate to confirm his prophesies.

Increasingly in his late works, Heidegger escalates the horizon of an altogether-different future unfolding of the world to a series of more or less apocalyptic prophesies: "Beyng essentially occurs as the event. That is the ground and abyss of the god's availing of the human being or, conversely, of the availability of the human being for god."[21] Starting out with an idea of giving the world's unfolding its due, that is, Heidegger reifies this unfolding into a movement of fate—a movement of which he himself is the prophet. Such cannot be our approach.

Merely conjuring the healed world always carries the risk of quietism and mystical authoritarianism. Steering clear of these requires implementing the logic of continuous unfolding against the will to reification. So as to avoid giving in to prophecy, one must remain on the conceptual level: "The concept's own concept has become a problem. No less than its irrationalist counterpart, intuition, that concept as such has archaic features which cut across the rational ones—

[18] Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), 28. My translation on the basis of Joan Stambaugh's 1996 version and the German original.

[19] Ibid, 31.

[20] Martin Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe vol. 7 (Pfullingen: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 151. My translation on the basis of Hofstadter's 1971 version and the German original.

[21] Martin Heidegger, Contributions to Philosophy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), par. 136.

relics of static thinking and of a static cognitive ideal amidst a consciousness that has become dynamic."[22] On the conceptual level, however, a different kind of treachery awaits, the concept of nature. Like Heidegger's apocalyptic mysticism, this concept and those adjacent to it (especially "wilderness"), seem at first to usher along the implementation of a continuous logic and hence a continuous world, but actually rather obfuscate our path.

This makes immediate sense considering the chequered past of the notion of nature. One of the originators of today's concept of nature is Kant, who was the first to characterize it as a realm of teleology—a realm whose every manifestation is oriented towards achieving specific goals within a means-ends rationality.[23] For Kant, to be sure, this was at the time a purely theoretical reflection. Since Kant argued that causal relations were put into nature by human cognition, anyone who wanted to think about nature on its own terms needed to resort to teleological explanations.[24] But it turned out quickly, and is now patently obvious, that Kant thereby recognized something that went far beyond his theoretical requirements, something for which he lacked the terms but we do not. Nature as current ly understood is part of the human and machine world, it is produced by ourselves, it is part of the pacified social field of iteration. "Active man creates the human world… He does not simply produce things" but "creates 'human nature': nature in himself and for himself, nature appropriated to man by means of his many conflicts."[25]

Nature is thus indeed teleological and does indeed obey a means-ends rationality because it is part of a world made entirely by humans: "the universality of man is in practice manifested precisely in the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body."[26] Kant's nature is the nature that we find in zoos and wildernesses: produced, as when zoos make their animals breed to preserve endangered species, or in the hubris of so-called genetic engineering. Beyond merely being caged, nature has come to be distributed, as when conservation campaigns confiscate native lands. Beyond merely being commodified, nature is constituted by the universe of machinery that we analyzed above, and within computations absorbing all living unfolding into greenwashed stochastic engineering.

Invoking nature, then, leaves us stuck within the pacified social field. Now, of course this is not the only concept of nature. If we call the nature of zoos and wildernesses second nature, as a sizeable literature indeed does, we are also identifying a first nature. This other nature might denote a notion of a blind and random realm of cruelty; a nature that lies beyond puppies and dolphins frolicking to David Attenborough's narration; the nature projected by Darwin's statistics of overpopulation and starvation. But this does not help our case, as first nature, too, is produced as an iteration within the pacified social field. To be sure, Darwin himself intended to invoke this notion of nature in an effort to naturalize man in his "attempt to see how far the study of the lower animals can throw light on some of the highest psychical faculties of man."[27] But instead of naturalizing man, Darwin did the opposite. After all, the notion of overpopulation pressures leading to what Spencer would call survival of the fittest, came to Darwin from the economist Thomas Malthus. Thus blind, cruel nature is really just a transposed iteration of blind, cruel capi-

[22] Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics (New York: Continuum, 2007), 153.

[23] Immanuel Kant, Kritik der Urteilskraft (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 306.

[24] Ibid, 370.

[25] Henri Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life, Vol. II (London: Verso Books, 2002), 101.

[26] Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844", in Robert Tucker (ed), The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1978), 75.

[27] Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man (Ware: Wordsworth, 2013), 56.

talism, as Kropotkin noted and attempted to correct in his Mutual Aid. In first nature as in second nature, "the social reality of nature, and human natural science, or the natural science about man" become identical.[28]

Nor does it help to separate the two natures, as such an attempt would keep the overall idea of nature subject to an endless labor of classification at the deictic frontier: sorting supposedly-human from supposedly-natural worlds. Both are discrete and implement classifications of things. Nature is everywhere second nature: man-made, man-managed, man-scaped and man-sculpted. First nature, far from helping us to escape second nature, is rather a dependent iteration of second nature, embedded into it at all sides: a supposedly pristine or violent, naked or cruel, pure or random outside. Far from having an independent existence somehow untainted by human conduct, as its concept would require, first nature rather serves a purpose within the planetary system of produced second nature. This purpose is that of a commodity (adventure holiday, camping trip, desktop background) or of a warning (nature is cruel and blind, let us incapacitate her before she can hurt us). First nature is fully integrated into second nature, a temporary dissimulation of the pacified social field not unlike Baudrillard's parking lot where "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real… It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real."[29]

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Leaving the dead ends and the pacified social field behind, how do we implement a world beyond the will to reification? How do we ensure that we remain willing to implement it rather than retreating in quiet desperation or apocalyptic quietism? How do we steer clear of deceptive categories—above all, the catchall category of "nature" with its bucolic overtones in produced second nature, and its false hopes of wildness in first nature?

Here we can combine our study of the Aristotelian logic (which underlies the world of things) with our foray into plant intuition (which gave us some first glances at new ways of thinking a few chapters ago). As we discussed there, the plants can lead the way, as their world remains unfixed, indeterminable, undifferentiated: they still live in the world of continuous unfolding. The will to reification rages everywhere against them with all its might, yet they still resist. If we follow their lead, we too can come to live in and though the continuous unfolding.

This is the world in which they live and in which we may come to live, the world of primitive and egoist anarchy combined, the world projected by our antipolitics:

<quote>The tree and the sky and the pond and my images of them are there and not there and not not-there in the same way that a wind wolf is there and not there and not not-there in the tall grass, or the way a group of leaves seems to make an indistinct total motion at once there in each of them and not there for all of them and yet not not-there in each and all of them; a dance as reality. There is no "me" jumping linearly from tree to cloud to road as though I were reading a tableau or scanning a screen. Continuously, the world unfolds through me in an indifferent rhythmic morphing or colors, shapes, sounds, and smells, unstably juxtaposing and separating them, indeterminately delineating and mixing them. This unfolding is ongoing: it establishes a continuous simultaneity beginning at my birth and ending at my death, knowing neither divisions nor breaks. Beyond time, waking and dream mix and morph into one another, and I am no more awake than I am asleep, or I am both awake and asleep, or I am neither awake nor asleep.

[28] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," 91.

[29] Jean Baudrillard, Simulations (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1983), 25.

As inside and outside of my head are indifferent, unstable, and indeterminate, so are the movements and rhythmic pulses echoing back and forth into and out of and through and beyond them. Beyond time, life is not a series of alienated rooms but a continuous unfolding of one continuous experience—one single indifferent, unstable indeterminacy—rhythmically coming and going, now lit and luminous, now dark and frightening, now friendly and curious, now scary and violent. Beyond time, there is neither now nor earlier nor later, but a single continuous simultaneity of simultaneities indifferently becoming one another, none any more isolated than not isolated, none any more stable than not stable, none any more determinate than indeterminate, and all swaying in patterns and cycles. Beyond time, my ageing too becomes part of the inside that is no more inside than it is outside, which unstably becomes the outside, which indeterminately envelops the outside. I am the world and the world is me, our unfolding embracing itself in a continuous rhythm.[30]</quote>

Now we see where to put our dynamite. The logic of plants lies beyond the will to reification as it does not move to implement things—it does not move towards or center around things—but rather moves away from thingness, embracing unfixed, unstable, undifferentiated dispersal. Where the categories of Aristotle aim to stabilize, determine, and differentiate, those of the plants blur, morph, render unmeasurable.

When using the term "plant" we must tread carefully. Beyond the notion of "nature," the word "plant" also loses its classical meaning. We must use it for now, but inhabit it in the same way we will inhabit the debris of industrial civilization— in the way of the hunter-gatherer. "I find these flintknapping sites where someone was just sitting on a nice little rock bench with a view of the country below them flintknapping…and then when they were done they just put down that tool and just walked away. And then, however many thousand years later, I show up and sit down in the same spot and pick up that tool. I pick up those tools, I look at them, I set them down and keep going."[31] This is how we need to approach our quasi-categories.

Plant becomes for us a quasi-category of a new logic, fulfilling in it the same function that "substance" fulfilled in the logic of Aristotle, at the heart of the empire of the will to reification. We have seen that substance is, first and primarily, an individual thing. Secondarily, but just as importantly, substance is the thing's definition, its species and genus. Thus substance first singles out a constellation from the continuous unfolding of the world (making it a thing) and then overwrites it with a definition (making it a substance). What is at work in substance is therefore primarily the noun-gesture, which creates a thing. This solid individual is a gathering-place for categories, and thus central to the will to reification as manifest in Aristotle's logic.

Conversely, as we depart into the continuous unfolding, the notion of plant reverses both the brittle thingness of substance, and its movement of gathering other categories, of assimilating them all into its solidity. Plant is a hinge that moves, a trace that vanishes, an opening that blooms: it is what is there and not there and not not-there. It is what the wind wolf touches and doesn't touch and doesn't not touch. It is like a wave moving through a place only to leave it, like a dance of leaves in the wind, making and not making and not not-making a total movement across all of them, like a face on a rock formation when the shadows are just right, and then never again. Plant is the residual directedness to a site of continuous unfolding; unfixed, unstable, undifferentiated.

[30] This is an excerpt from my "Writing Against Time" in Oak Journal no. 5.

[31] "Hunting for Stone with James Morgan," Oak Journal No. 3 (Spring 2021), 76.

As plant is indeterminable and undifferentiated, it may well be one but it is no entity; it may well dwell in the world but not in the brittle manner of a thing. Rather, it is a location of an unfolding, where directedness towards the unfolding precedes and undermines the location. Leaves swing in the wind and may thus pass through a location, forming a temporary, moving constellation with other leaves, vines, shadows, the sky: a mixture of colors and movements morphing and unstably swaying. The leaves are thus discernible, but only as a vanishing movement away from the constellation: they are there but also not there, now discernible from those of a nearby shrub, now not, and now not not-discernible; unclearly not-undifferentiated. "All fences are eventually transgressed, swallowed up… Birds plant the shrubs they want to live in."[32]

The parts of plant, even if they assemble to make it "a plant" which is one, do so by moving away from its solidity: by offshoot or sprout, by sway or fall. The category, plant, thus implements the exact obverse movement of the category, substance. Where the latter is a function of the noun-gesture whose creation of a thing precedes the creation of a classification and yet also requires it, plant is a gesture of vanishing, a place only defined to dissolve again, a touch never quite arriving, a fleeting constellation; traces of color and shade, sound and smell, presence unfixed, unstable and undifferentiated. Classification is impossible, plant recedes from it: its being there is a not notbeing there, a movement recoiling from the "there" into the shifting sands of constellations unfolding continuously.

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Which is to say, plant is what a plant letter of the Anti-Alphabet gestures to; that which is and is not and is not not-undifferentiated from the plant letter. As in Aristotle, where the logic of the noun-gesture (its existence as a noun, a name) corresponds exactly to the will to reification (its existence as a thing), so here, the dispersal of letters of the Anti-Alphabet corresponds exactly to the will to implement a continuous world. The noun gathers and precedes its letters just as substance gathers and precedes categories. Conversely, plant letters disperse into constellations just as plant disperses traces of wind wolves, leaf dances, shadow faces not not-being there.

Where the noun-gesture implements a movement from the definition that writes substance down to the pronoun by which this substance overwrites the deictic constellation, plant emerges from the level of deixis only to subvert and thwart each iterative attempt to overwrite it. Here, too, iteration can never fully disappear. The transposition of the Anti-Alphabet's plant letters to those of the Latin alphabet, and thus legibility in the classical sense, always remains possible. Consequently, the top-down norming of constellations to things and things to definitions can close at any time. But plant letters are only secondarily legible in this classical way. Primarily and above all, they are plant, they are a logical quasi-category within continuous logic in their own right. Repetition has a much harder time closing over the sprawling constellation of plants on the page or screen than it has with the Latin letters, which always remain stoicheia: mere elements of syllables without meaning of their own; mute implementations of noun-, verb-, and adjective-gestures. Plant, by contrast, is a logical quasi-category, thwarting above all the distinction between letters and plants, and thus making letters living constellations in their own right. None of them write things into the world; all of them allude continuously to the dispersal of continuously unfolding, fleeting, dissolving constellations all around them.

With the noun-gesture under constant attack by the quasi-category plant, the verb and adjective-gestures dissolve as well. As these are dependent on the thing-world generated by

[32] Prunella Vulgaris, "Elm Thoughts," Oak Journal no. 3 (Spring 2021), 7.

the noun-gesture writing substances, the attack on the latter by plant logic's dispersal is also an attack on the former. Relegating instabilities, excesses, spillovers, and bleedthroughs to an unfolding of merely discrete motions and discrete categories stops being a possible gesture as substance evaporates. Plant is the instability, the excess, the spillover and the bleedthrough. It is unfixed, unstable, and undifferentiated. Plant letters themselves, growing on page and screen, are the movement of not not-undifferentiating their presence from that of plants off the page and screen—and vice versa. The wind wolf is nothing but vanishing contours. The leaves' dance in the rain is nothing but unstable and unfixed movement. The shadow-face is nothing but indeterminable play. Just as nouns, so verbs and adjectives thus become constellations of plant letters implementing plant, the logical quasi-category whose essence is its continuous attack on the category of substance.

Strictly speaking, therefore, plant is not a logical category at all, as it is outside of the noun-gesture and the world of Aristotle's Categories founded on, and implementing, the noun-gesture. The principle of dispersal inherent in the quasi-category of plant renders each letter its own gesture. In turn, as plant letter, this gesture is not not-undifferentiated from plants off the page or screen, which are likewise each their own gesture. We can here nonetheless take up just nine other gestures of plant-logic, each subverting, thwarting, disrupting one of Aristotle's categories. We do this partly for reasons of symmetry, since no one after his death has been clear on where Aristotle got his categories from either.[33] But more importantly, we do this precisely because plant unfolds into a potentially infinite number of quasi-categories, each plant letter implementing its own in each of its contexts. To get there, we need to blow up Aristotle's categories; so we isolate ten quasicategories to do just that, and can then ditch them as we see fit.

We deviate from Aristotle's category order. For him, quantity comes second, right after substance, as substance had previously been defined as one in number. In the world of things, this makes total sense. Quantity reigns supreme not just under capitalism but also in its mutualist and socialist counterparts, not to mention the iron grip number has on computation. But in our plant intuition, the opposite applies. For this reason, we treat quantity's subversive plant replacement last.

We begin rather with quality, which we replace with the plant quasi-category of fog. Quality, in Aristotle's thing-world, is either a thing's habit or its disposition, or again its ability of passive quality.[34] Ability usually corresponds to habit in living things. It is a quality of cheetahs to be fast: an ability that becomes habititual as they grow. Likewise, it is a quality of human beings to be literate: an ability that becomes habitual through domestication. In just the same way, we can say that disposition corresponds to passive quality: it is a passive quality of fruit to be bitter or sweet, while the exact way in which these mix (for instance, to a tart sensation in overripe blackberries) is a disposition. In all four terms, and thus in the category of quality as a whole, we can see that the thing's substance writes its passive qualities and abilities by implementing them through nounand adjective-gestures, while the thing's dispositions and habits are written through verband adjective-gestures.

Plant, however, is not a thing and thus doesn't have qualities. We can call its equivalent quasi-category fog to express the unstable and unfixed contours of plant, just visible as they merge into and out of an ensemble of vague shadows in the fog. Just as material fog renders visibility

[33] See section 3 of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's entry on the Categories.

[34] Aristotle, Categories, part 8.

problematic, uncertain, unstable, so fog as a quasi-category of plant logic renders things' qualities just out of reach, doubtful, overlapping or underdetermined, unspecified or undelineated. There might be green, it might belong to this tree or this other tree or this shrub, but we have only outlines, soon covered again in the indifference of fog. Taste, smell, and hearing are very much used to these sorts of sensations and their vanishing movements.

Relation, as an Aristotelian category, denotes "those things… which, being either said to be of something else or related to something else, are explained by reference to that other thing."[35] Thus something is larger or smaller than something else, or something is more or less of a specific quality, lighter or darker perhaps. The category of relation thus largely comes down to a quantitative or comparative approach to the other categories. In each case, it is obvious how this category depends on there being a thing that is larger or smaller, lighter or darker, nearer or farther.

In the quasi-categories of plant logic, therefore, relation is replaced, subverted, thwarted by the notion of root. Relation is between discrete substances: it's implemented by an adjective-gesture. Root, by contrast, is the simultaneous distinction and interrelatedness—the not being undifferentiated—of plants under the surface. No tree in the forest, nor any shrubs in hedges, nor the grasses in a field, are ever alone or fully distinct. Their roots touch, overlap, merge into one another. Entire forests can consist of a single organism. And even if they don't, even if the imperial gestures of classification deem otherwise, forests form tightly interwoven ecosystems where no plant ever really ends and no other ever really begins. Where relation, therefore, reifies each characteristic to a quantitative comparison, root undermines the discreteness of substance and renders comparisons just as tenuous as fog did quality, both compounding the attack of plant logic on substance.

Place, or Aristotle's "where", is subverted and thwarted by the plant logic's quasi-category of soil. Just like root makes relation impossible by removing the underlying discreteness of substances related through adjective-gestures, so soil forces us to think plant as an embedded undifferentiation, an unfolding continuous with the unfolding of its surroundings, with the world. Placement is a thing-category, as place is external and accidental for brittle things. To a plant, its place is a dwelling, a soil providing or withdrawing the matter from which the plant lives. Thus the quasi-category of soil implements the movement by which plant gathers from its surroundings without assimilating them, as substance does. The quasi-category emphasizes that place is not arbitrary or external to plant, just as plant is not arbitrary or external to soil. Thing and place can exist independently of one another, as both are implemented by completely separate noun-gestures. Plant and soil are undifferentiated and cannot exist without each other.

In the empire of the will to reification, the category of "when" is structured in strict analogy to the category of "where": a thing is in a certain place at a certain time, and moves from place to place in a certain discrete time. Just as it is external and irrelevant to a thing where it is, so it is external and irrelevant to the thing when it is, or with what or how many other things it coexists in its where and when. "The term 'simultaneous' is primarily and most appropriately applied to those things the genesis of the one of which is simultaneous with that of the other; for in such cases neither is prior or posterior to the other."[36]

[35] Ibid, part 7.

[36] Ibid, part 13.

We replace, subvert, thwart the category of "where" with the plant-logic's quasi-category of water. Water flows by or around a plant in a river, or submerges it in a tide, endlessly renewing itself and its contouring of the plant in the process: "It is always different waters that flow towards those who step into the same rivers."37 Thus water as a quasi-category denotes restlessness, flow, and renewal—deixis as time, rather than thingness in time. It also leaves open the question of whether plant is really fixed in a specific time, or whether multiple waters correspond to multiple renewed and renewing places within a flow no longer strictly subject to linear time; a flow that is not a single unfolding but multiple, and which therefore knows not a single "when" but multiple. Water also merges with the plant, as it is sucked up by its roots and unfolds through its stem and into its leaves through the twin motions of adhesion and cohesion. Within the plant as well, therefore, water denotes both stable equilibrium and dynamic adjustment: "Changing, it remains at rest."[37] And finally, water leaves the plant, evades it, dries it out, as it seeps into the soil, away from plant's gathering. Thus the quasi-category water, in addition to replacing fixedness with deixis in its flow, and oneness with multiplicity in its "when", also denotes rest within change and change within rest, as well as movements by which plant's "when" remains altogether elusive—as elusive, say, as its former qualities are when dissolving within the quasi-category of fog.[38]

With these four quasi-categories established—fog for quality, root for relation, soil for where, and water for when—we can be more brief about the remaining five, as indeed Aristotle was, too: of these we need to say no more, as "they are easily intelligible."[39] Position, which denotes such gestures as lying, standing, sitting in Aristotle's thing-world, is a category whose application to plant-logic is limited by the latter's unfixed and unstable unfolding: that which is neither fixed nor stable can not implement a specific position. We are thus replacing this category with the quasi-category of dissimulation. A plant defends itself by pretending to be poisonous or larger than it is, or thornier. Plant can thus be said to defend itself by dissimulating its undifferentiated being. Just as the wind wolf seems to be there and is really not-there and not not-there, so plant seems to be a thing emerging from a constellation—a quality emerging from fog, a relation emerging from root, a where emerging from soil, a when emerging from water—but is really none of these, implementing them merely as a temporary and tenuous defense mechanism. Thus the tree dissimulates itself as solid wood to resist the chainsaw, and we dissimulate ourselves as bourgeois property-owners to escape prison as we reinforce the tree's resistance.

Likewise, the category of a state—armed, tired, ready for the input alphabet—requires a thing in which it inheres, whether a human, an animal, or a Turing machine. Plant does not have state but has instead shape: vague outlines barely audible in white noise or visible in fog or at night; enough to make them a deictic constellation but never sufficiently differentiated to form a thing. The tree differentiates itself from a shrub for our deixis, but remains sufficiently undefined to thwart exact definition. This quasi-category is thus a bit subsidiary, though it, too, leads down a path of resistance, as it allows plant to invoke fog to combat quality, and particularly to invoke root to combat relation. A thing has a state, defined and differentiated and ready to be appropriated by the commodity; plant has shape, always within and through multitudes of shadows.

[37] Heraclitus D65b, in Laks and Most, Early Greek Philosophy, vol III, 169. 38 Ibid, D58 (p. 165).

[38] I explore this more in "Writing Against Time" in Oak Journal no. 5.

[39] Aristotle, Categories, part 9.

In the world of things, action is a category encompassing cutting or burning: a thing acts on other things. Without thingness, plant is undifferentiated and not-undifferentiated through root and fog, and resists placement through soil and timing through water. Plant doesn't act, therefore, but sprouts or unfolds fruit. With these quasi-categories, we are much better capable of encapsulating the continuousness of the plants' unfolding with, through, and against each other in eternally intertwined dances, only interrupted by the chainsaws of the thing-world.

Affection, being affected or suffering, is likewise a category taken from the thing-world by Aristotle, and likewise presupposes that there are things and that these things act upon one another: to be cut and to be burnt requires someone or something else doing the cutting and burning. Our quasicategory replacing affection is fire: the movement by which old life perishes and forms nutrients for new life constitutes a way to encompass the continuousness of the unfolding of all plants through one another. For fire, as movement of perennial renewal, moves through all that is, affects it all, but thereby also renews all and directs all: "first sea; then half of the sea, earth; and the other half, lightning-storm."[40]

Finally, there's quantity. We have seen that, in a world without things, number cannot reign as it does in the world constituted by the will to reification. The category of quantity thus has no direct equivalent for us in plant-logic. Its counter-category doesn't subvert or undermine it but—like plant does for substance—attacks it directly and outright. We attack quantity with the quasi-category of offering. It is immediately clear why: plant offers itself nakedly and without reserve, it is honest even when it dissimulates, it follows wind and touch, bending or breaking. Its dwelling is out in the open, its resistance subtle and resourceful, its sprouts and fruits spread with vulgarity. Plant does not guard zealously like thing does, it does not assimilate, it does not limit its expenditure. Plant is generosity itself, even where it is poisonous, even where what it offers are darts and thorns. It offers without reserve, without count, without economizing.

In this quasi-category, therefore, continuous unfolding goes beyond the mathematical notion of continuousness, which remains tethered to the realm of quantity, denoting that which consists of wholes whose parts have no relation to one another.[41] Plant's offering does not come in parts and does not depend on placement. Its continuousness, like that of the world itself, is a continuousness of unfolding, not of partition. It is a continuousness of an excess so exuberant, so beyond all thingness, that the will to reification that aims to destroy it has barely begun to understand it—let alone understand it in the quasi-categories that alone are adequate to it.

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Unlike substance, plant is a quasi-category whose implementation unfolds not in a top-down motion from definition through thing to pronoun. Rather, plant implements a dispersal of plants and plant letters, undifferentiated and not-undifferentiated and this gesturing to, through, with each other. The other nine quasi-categories which we have enumerated above are thus merely first examples of a much bigger line of attack: direct counters to Aristotle's categories. Just as the latter are the foremost means by which the will to reification structures the world of things, so our ten quasi-categories—plant, fog, root, soil, water, dissimulation, shape, fruit or sprout, fire, and offering—can serve as a first basis from which to begin implementing our will to a continuous world, resisting state, machine, and state machines at the deictic frontier.

[40] Heraclitus D80, in Laks and Most, Early Greek Philosophy, vol III, 179.

[41] Aristotle, Categories, part 6.

The structure of the will to unfold a continuous world attacks the will to reification first and foremost in the noun-gesture, which writes substance into the world by overwriting deixis with pronouns and then pronouns with substance according its definition. One line of resistance, therefore, will use our ten quasi-categories, and especially plant, to attack the substantive definition. With this, we attack the gestures of classification that insert iteration at the deictic frontier bordering the pacified social field, undermining it and, with it, the empire of repetition.

Within this attack on the terrain of discrete reified logic, substantive definition comes under fire from multiple angles. We can take some clues to finding these from the fourth century AD grammarian Gaius Marius Victorinus, who wrote a book outlining fifteen different types of definitions. Again, as with Aristotle, we do this to find angles of attack in the less developed documents exhibiting the will to reification, which are there less able to hide that will, and thus better suited to give us strategic maps to use against it.

The first of Victorinus' definitions is, of course, the substantial definition, which implements the act of overwriting constellations with things through nouns, motions through verbs, and predicates through adjectives. In addition to the substantial type of definition, Victorinus offers fourteen others. Some of these are quite close to the substantial definition, or otherwise provide little in the way of undermining it. Thus definition-by-notion or -by-presentation essentially just consists of a restatement of a reified facet of the substantial definition. In Victorinus' example, the human being, defined above as rational, mortal, and capable of understanding, is now more closely described as an animal standing out in particular for its rationality. To Victorinus, this makes a difference, as this type would "not say what a human being is, but what one can do, calling a particular distinguishing feature to notice."[42] Yet this difference only reinforces the substantial definition, which upholds both the thing and the distinguishing feature as reified entities by singling out one of the categories ascribed to the noun/thing or verb/motion while reinforcing the substantial definition as a more complete implementation of the thing or motion.

The same goes for definitions by description, i.e., by applying a definition to an adjective and then applying that adjective to a noun or verb. This, too, only serves to reify the noun and verb by the adjective, while also reifying the latter by its definition.[43] Likewise, definition by purely quantitative comparison not only reinforces the substantial definition—for here we are comparing quantities, i.e., we presuppose that what we compare are the same things—but it also renders it even more abstract. Defining one monetary amount by another, as Victorinus does in his example, clearly indicates where this definition is headed. It is the kind of definition used by economists when comparing abstract quantifiers like "gross domestic product" or "happiness index," which rely entirely on both the noun-gesture (to create a thing-world), and on the commodity to absorb those things and render them subject entirely to Aristotle's category of quantity. In any case, this definition implements the very same nounand adjective-gestures as the substantial definition, just in an even more abstract fashion.

We can begin our injection of our quasi-categories beyond these first types of definitions. The potential of the other types becomes visible as we look, first, upon the qualitative definition. Victorinus, following Aristotle, describes this definition as one that "clearly shows what sort

[42] Isidor, Etymologies. II.XXIX.3.

[43] The same goes for the eighth type, which defines by contrary (good = not bad, just = not unjust), the thirteenth type, which defines by relation (in Victorinus: father and son, master and slave), and the fourteenth type, which literally defines by dictionary definition.

of thing is something that exists."[44] Victorinus' own example for this is a compound statement describing once again—and somewhat exuberantly—the human being. We can substitute this with any given simple definition by quality, such as "the apple is red" and "this job is boring", or again with compounds such as "the apple is red and sweet" and "a job is always boring and it pays but its pay is never enough." In each case, the noun is defined by a category, usually in the form of an adjective; except in the last sentence, where its quality is defined first by an adjective, then by a verb, and then by an adjective defining the verb, thereby defining the noun. Thus this type of definition is in Victorinus directly adjacent to the operation of the substantial definition.

As we replace quality with fog, however, we generate a quasi-definition by fog that relies on our ability to introduce adjectives and verbs to characterize a noun in ways not conforming to its substantial definition. Thus as the isolation of qualities evaporates, red becomes a spectrum, an ever-shifting hue between ochre and purple perhaps, vacillating in parameters intuitively healthy or rotten, fresh or past due as applied to plants, but never just red. Sweet, too, becomes a rolling sensation, a contouring of my mouth, a mix of tartness and just a hint of sour, rather than the sensation of refined or concentrated sugar to which we are all used in numerous ways by now. Combined, neither sensation defines an apple, and that is just their point. What we have here is rather plant: an undifferentiable, unmeasurable, indeterminable unfolding that is also edible or red, but which is primarily an offering, a presence, a shape, soil, root, etc. To a job, on the other hand, the definition by quality remains fully applicable, because a job does not exist outside of the pacified social field where the will to reification implements iteration.

The next type of gesture, which defines by causality, likewise offers just a very small glimpse into undermining the substantial type of definition in Victorinus himself. Here too, however, as in the definition by quality, we can attack by defining outside of Aristotle's self-evident categories that Victorinus invokes: "Day is the sun over the earth; night is the sun under the earth."[45] We can use the definition by causality instead in all sorts of ways undermining substance. Once thingness is removed, causality is no longer a matter of one thing acting on another but rather a combination of root and water in our quasi-categories. It is thus a movement where the unstable boundaries of a constellation, perhaps temporarily in a deictic focus, blur and morph into another in a continuum of sound, sight, smell, and other sensations hovering indistinctly between these. Our plant logic re-defines causality as a movement, making its definition a dispersed constellation of unfolding plant letters, acting through one another.

More straightforward is the definition by gloss. This type "explains the word for the matter in question by one other single word," as when "we speak of 'terminus' as 'end', or as 'depopulated' is interpreted to be 'devastated'."[46] In Victorinus' implementation of the world of Aristotle's categories, the gloss is typically used to poetically clarify, and thus to reinforce, the original noun-gesture, and as such is essentially part of the substantial definition. We however can use it for outright attacks as it introduces a degree of freedom to juxtapose bizarre or surprising glosses. One might, for instance, argue that Finnegans Wake consists entirely of such glosses. Such often purely-literary exercises usually only serve to reinforce the substantial definition, however, spawning commentary upon commentary, each more authoritarian than the last.

[44] Isidor, Etymologies, II.XXIX.4.
[45] Ibid, II.XXIX.16.
[46] Ibid, II.XXIX.6.

Still, there is potential in the definition by gloss, as—in a way—each of our quasi-categories is a gloss of one of Aristotle's. If we replace affection with fire or placement with soil, we change definition by substance to a sort of definition by gloss. Thus a house stops being an asset for ownership and instead becomes an unfolding of bodies and atmospheres, roof and soil, dwelling and vulnerability, protection and destruction. Fire and soil unfold as undifferentiations rather than categories, and thus provide each noun-gesture with a halo of glosses undermining its substantive definition.

Here, some angles of attack open up; some levers for undermining the substantial definition. Yet more of these occur by virtue of the next type of definition: definition by differentiation. This more forcefully introduces elements foreign to the substantial definition, and are often quite capable of undermining its meaning. This is already evident in Victorinus' own examples, at least to the limited extent possible in the fourth century AD. Thus Victorinus discusses definition by differentiation by contrasting a king and a tyrant: "a king is measured and temperate, but a tyrant impious and harsh."[47] This sounds harmless and quite far removed from anything anarchic, but the idea that a king conforms to ideas of measured and temperate behav ior while a tyrant does not can easily be applied to the king himself—after all, if he stops being measured and temperate, he becomes a tyrant. It's not far from here to a right of resistance by the people—a conclusion drawn by quite a few thinkers in the Middle Ages—and in turn to a right of resistance against any form of government… which may well turn tyrannical, too.

Thus by introducing this differentiation, Victorinus begins a process that could undermine both nouns, "king" and "tyrant". The differentiation feels like a clarification of the substantial definition, but is anything but. Our replacement of each category with a quasi-category takes advantage of the same sliding scale. Each quasi-category also refers to a categorical definition—an adjective-gesture reinforcing a noun-gesture—inasmuch as we inhabit terms that have a meaning beyond the way we use them here. But as we invoke shape, fruit, offering, and the others as quasi-categories, each works to undermine substance by smuggling plant into the ruins of the language of substance.

Definition by differentiation is one of the central gestures of plant logic. We inhabit words like water, offering, and the others, but differentiate their usage from that of substance to reflect the unfixed and unstable world of plant's quasi-categories. This seems paradoxical, as the world of plant is a world of undifferentiated entities that are not not-there, emerging from the fog only to vanish again. But what differentiates plant as a quasi-category from substance is precisely that plant introduces a continuous world. Definition by differentiation thus carries the contraband of plant's quasi-categories, and carries the seeds of its own dissolution—with the same gesture.

Departing from here, we get to the types of definitions that can fully serve to undermine the substantial type. These are the remaining four: definition by metaphor, by individuals, by analogy, and by praise or reproach. Each of these undermines the substantial definition by appearing as though it were merely complementing it, but in reality shifting the ground underneath it to such an extent that the substantial definition loses its validity, and the noun/thing, verb/motion, and adjective/predicate become something else altogether.

Right off the bat, the definition by metaphor introduces foreign elements into what seems to just be flourish on the substantial definition, allowing it to be undermined. Again it is Victorinus himself who starts this process by his examples, as he clearly states that definition by metaphor

[47] Ibid, II.XXIX.7.

"can be used to admonish, to distinguish, to praise, or to blame."[48] The example for a metaphor used to admonish, for instance, sounds quaint and old-fashioned but is anything but: "Nobility is the burden on descendants of the virtue of their forebears."[49] To be sure, this seems to evoke all those notions that anarchy has criticized and fought against for the last two centuries: the virtue and nobility of inevitably aristocratic—which, in practice, means oligarchic— society, and the tedious ties of descendants to forebears, forcing the former to obey the tyrannical dictates of their foolish and dead grandparents, as Lysander Spooner would have said.

But Victorinus also introduces this very tedium by talking about "burdens"; he alludes to generational conflicts and youth liberation by contrasting descendants with forebears; he holds politicians to the same standards as the above example held kings, and with the same results. We ourselves, at least in the West, may not be subject to substantial definitions by parental lineage to the same extent, but there are other burdens clearly exposed by definition-by-metaphor. Victorinus himself may not have meant things this way, but he might as well have implored his readers to throw off the shackles of parental lineage and its expectations. Shibboleths of this kind still abound, and we might be inclined to find a similar trajectory to Victorinus' example in this contemporary call to arms: "We are told to live for the sake of posterity, we must breed for posterity, eat for the sake of posterity, be moral for the sake of posterity, and even die when necessary for the sake of posterity… Our deeds have no value unless they feed the bulging belly of incalculable non-existent tomorrows."[50]

Thus definition by metaphor is a far cry from a harmless reinforcement of the substantial type of definition even within the trajectory of Victorinus' reinforcement of the world of things. Even there, it opens paths for explosive counter-attacks. We take full advantage of this opening by the new usage of the words that we have de-domesticated. Root is for us no longer a noun writing a discrete subterranean entity, but a sprawling of connection, of living unfolding, of meaningful death within a gathering that is also a vanishing, a constellation in fog. Dissimulation is not cunning for us any more, but rather a naked defense, an individualism of thorns and soft issue, a convincing and luring rather than a classification. Soil is for us what it is for animals and undomesticated humans, "a zone that moves, a zone that expands and contracts around them according to naturally occurring limitations on the capacity to act in the moment."[51] And so forth.

The same is done by definition by individuals. Victorinus himself refers to this as a definition "by a certain outline" that "always involves individual terms," and gives as an example, as was common at the time, the prehistoric Roman statement "Aeneas is the son of Venus and Anchises."[52] This does not sound particularly explosive, nor even intriguing, but becomes so when we consider the complexity of what is being done in this sentence. Asked who Aeneas might be, Victorinus' answer is not "an old man who fled from Troy and who was the forefather of the founders of Rome," as would be a combination of two definitions by description. Rather, Victorinus answers the question by pointing to two other individual entities, Venus and Anchises. To be sure, to the Ancients this would have referred primarily to a goddess and the lover of a goddess,

[48] Ibid, II.XXIX.8.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Benjamin de Casseres, "Posterity, the New Superstition," in Enemies of Society, 22–23.

[51] Mark Seely, "Defined by the center," Oak Journal no. 3 (Spring 2021), 27, without placing here undue emphasis on the notion of nature.

[52] Isidor, Etymologies, II.XXIX.10.

and so by extension to their love story (Anchises being the lover of Aphrodite), as well as the cultural overtones of the Roman-Greek divide and/reconciliation during imperial times (Aphrodite is the Greek version of Venus). Yet beyond all this it is imperative to recognize that Victorinus exemplifies one individual with two other individuals. When the question is "who is Jack," there is a crucial difference between the substantial definition "Jack is a male human being of such and such an age who works for this company," and the definition by individuals, "Jack is my friend and Jill's too," or "Jack is the son of Jill and Jane." The definition by individuals certainly engages social factors, too, as does that of Aeneas, as it defines Jack by relation not just to myself and Jill, but also to the noun "friend." Likewise, "Jack is the son of Jill and Jane" carries just as many social implications as does Aeneas' definition by Venus and Anchises, as here we have not only Jill and Jane but also implicit nouns such as "mother," "woman," "lesbian," "adopted," "IVF," and so forth.

Yet all of this complexity is ultimately brought to an individual level as the definition reminds us that Jack is not just a son but Jill's and Jane's, and that Jack is not just some guy but someone with a social circle. This undermines Jack's substantial definition, reminding us that Jack is an individual and indeed a unique being. Jack is never just the son of either Jill or Jane, nor is Jack ever just the friend of myself or Jill. Not only do these more personal relations play out against the impersonal substantial definition of Jack as human, of a certain age, and as worker. Victorinus' definition by individual also cuts off the full effect of social tyranny iterating noun-gestures in social battles, as these are here defined individually. Definition by individuals thus implements Max Stirner's advice: "The conceptual question: 'What is the human being?'—has then changed into the personal question: 'Who is the human being?' With 'what' one looks for the concept in order to realize it; with 'who' there is no longer any question at all, but the answer present personally in the questioner himself: the question itself answers itself."[53]

In this way, even Victorinus' own Aristotelian framework defines Jack as plant rather than substance. Within our quasicategories, definition by individuality constitutes humans, animals, and plants as constellations, following the quasi-category of plant. We thus become one another in the unstable dance of boundaries shifting, blending into one another's bodies. We stop being well-defined entities precisely because we are radically individual, and our individualism goes beyond stable boundaries and instead embraces fluidity. In the explosive individuality that our quasi-categories implement via Victorinus' definition by individuality, therefore, we "learn to see the streams, trees, the animals we hunt and listen to, the insects that help and hurt in our gardens, indeed our own intestinal flora," as parts of ourselves.[54] Moreover, the definition by individuals can be applied not just to humans but also to animals and plants even in the classical logic supporting the will to reification. This brings down the entire edifice of referring to "animals" and "plants" as entities. The only way to truly do a plant justice is to embrace the quasi-category of plant, and not even to attempt to name it or classify it as such. It might be done in the form of paintings, as practiced in Medieval Florilegia or books of Herbals, but even here one finds classifications and descriptions. Even as lovingly detailed a description as this from Theophrastos, whom we encountered a few chapters ago, only compares plant species, not plants as individuals: "The ostrys (hop-hornbeam)… is like the beech in growth and bark; its leaves are in shape like

[53] Stirner, The Unique and Its Property, via the Anarchist Library.

[54] Vincent Felix, "Welcome to Your World: a Collection of Egoist Ecologies," in Egoist Ecologies (Greensburg: Enemy Combatant), 8.

a pear's, except that they are much longer, come to a sharp point, are larger, and have many fibers…" and so forth for another ten lines in the English translation.[55]

Justice can be done to the definition by individual only in the context of using all four definitions that undermine the substantial type, which is to say, in the context of injecting the quasi-categories we have developed above. But definition of plants by individual might partially already be done in the form of poetics, thus leading us to the next type of definition. This is the tenth type, definition by analogy. Victorinus' own example makes little sense: "as if it were asked what is an animal, and it were answered, 'such as man'."[56] Our own times, however, don't have much in the way of better examples either, as analogies are among the most tediously overused examples in all sorts of business relations, from ridiculous entry-level interview puzzles ("a hammer is to a nail as a walrus is to a ___") to melodramatic movie quotes ("life is like a box…"). But this thick patina of capitalist nonsense shouldn't distract us from the power of analogical definition to undermine substantial definition even within the Aristotelian framework, let alone our own. After all, definition by analogy can serve to introduce poetic dimensions where there had been none in the substantial definition. And this in turn dissolves the brittle boundaries of thingness.[57]

Where definition by individual undermines the substantial definition by showing the real living constellations underneath things/nouns, motions/verbs, and predicates/adjectives, definition by analogy goes the opposite way, exposing the socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions behind what looks, from a long way off, like merely individual cases. It thus serves, against the world of Aristotle's Categories, to implement the same movement by which "where" becomes soil and "when" becomes water. Thus, definition by analogy exposes that— among humans as among animals and plants—"there is no social fact which is not determined by society as a whole," although "the notion of society may not be deducted from any individual facts, nor on the other hand be apprehended as an individual fact itself."[58] Each individual entity rather shows itself, through definition by analogy, as a movement towards being embedded in an undifferentiated, unfixed, and unstable constellation, within and inseparable from the world's continuous unfolding.

Finally, analogical definition is not just a strong weapon of critical juxtaposition, as demonstrated forcefully by Marx: "The prolongation of the working day beyond the limits of the natural day, into the night,… quenches only in a slight degree the vampire thirst of capital for the living blood of labor. To appropriate labor during all the 24 hours of the day is, therefore, the inherent tendency of capitalist production."[59] Definition by analogy can also introduce elements entirely foreign to the noun/thing, verb/motion and adjective/predicate, and serve as an outright attack

[55] Theophrastos, Enquiry into Plants, III.X.3.

[56] Isidor, Etymologies, II.XXIX.11.

[57] One other, more tangentially relevant type of definition, takes on two forms. First, there is definition by praise, as "Peace is tranquil freedom" in Victorinus or "Real tingly mint and natural fragrance" on contemporary shampoo bottles. Inversely, there is definition by reproach, as in any statement condemning millionaires slapping each other on Academy Award night. Like the others above, this does not immediately look as though it undermines the substantial definition noticeably. But just as in the definition by analogy, definition by praise or reproach is easily used to demolish the noun/thing, verb/ motion, or adjective/predicate to which it is applied, even without ever invoking quasi-categories. Examples from contemporary propaganda abound, from 'great leaders' and 'shining beacons of liberty' to whatever description is being used for the belligerents in the Ukrainian conflict at the time of reading this.

[58] Theodor Adorno, "Society," Salmagundi, No. 10/11 (1969/1970), 145.

[59] Marx, "Capital Volume One", in The Marx-Engels Reader, 372.

on discourse itself. Anyone familiar with today's online discourse—and blessed are those who are not!— will immediately know the most egregious example, Godwin's law regarding the proportional relation between the length of a thread and the likelihood of it mentioning a certain well-known German mass murderer. Definition by analogy may thus serve to clarify the substantial definition for Victorinus, but we know it more as a catch-all weapon of mass discursive destruction. No reason not to have this in our arsenal, even if it leads us quite far from our plant logic itself. Even with nonsense attacks, after all, we can get to the deictic frontier—whose physical violence need not always go against us, after all.

We can now look back on a battery of ways to begin combating the substantive definition, and its implementation in writing a world of things through substance. Breaking the noungesture obviously requires a good amount of work. But this is exactly what we set out to do: inject deixis whenever and wherever we can; following the lead of the plants to the deictic frontier.

11. Unfolding resistance

Inspired by primitive and egoist anarchy, our fusion of anarchic antipolitics differs from anarchist politics in its focus on deixis— on throwing the stone, on pure directedness and pure intensity, rather than the majestic parabola the stone projects into the air. Canonical anarchism, by contrast, tends primarily to focus on iteration, which mostly renders it a practice attempting to reduce mediation: a focus on small-scale revolt usually confined to ritualized clashes and iterated communiques within the politics of Solon's watershed. Getting us out of anarchism's rut, therefore, requires us to focus on insurrections at the deictic frontier, insurrections against iteration itself in all of its shapes and forms. Underneath the world of repetition, we blow up its merciless logic and see where that takes us. The focus on deixis which primitive and egoist anarchy have pursued and which we pursue here teaches us that acts of defiance can only be acts of resistance if they force a return to the deictic frontier and inject new logics of dispersing deixis. This is the way of the plants, whose quasi-categories we place at the heart of our insurrection against the logic of substance, and thus against the world of things built on it.

We cannot, therefore, simply take up Lenin's question at this point: what is to be done? Projecting trajectories of insurrection based on the quasi-categories we've developed here is the furthest away from an iron-clad instruction manual. We can arm ourselves with the ten quasi-categories which we have developed in our plant logic, knowing they are just tentative examples of a larger dispersal, not iron rules—and particularly with the quasi-category of plant itself, and its indeterminable, unstable, and undifferentiated dissemination countering the brittle solidity of substance. And we can use these quasi-categories to take a preliminary look back on our explorations of the various forms of repetition dominating iteration—computing, machinery, the state—and iteration dominating deixis—classification, domestication, and social tyranny. How could we go about injecting deixis into these axes of our unfreedom, of our assimilation into the death march of repetition? How can we blow up the thing as it implements all these instruments of planetary destruction?

Computing devices are at the heart of the social warfare aiming to contain resistance against ecological catastrophe. They are also, in their ceaseless hunger for rare earths, at the heart of that ecological catastrophe itself. Nonetheless, they are also overwhelmingly present everywhere and an anarchic antipolitics cannot simply tell people to throw away their smartphones—liberating though doing so is. On the other hand, current anarchic practices within the computational sphere, though they are richer and more varied than the questionable notion of 'hacking' could ever encompass, remain ultimately within the logic of discrete things on which computation is based. As the knowledge of where all these Turing machines came from fades from memory, so does the knowledge of what to do against them on a fundamental level.

The insurrection against computers must thus take a different shape, one informed by the knowledge that all computing devices are ultimately just iterations of the original Turing machine, with its infinite tape containing discrete squares filled with repetitions of the same symbols over and over, and with its reading and writing heads corresponding to various discrete

states, likewise repeated over and over. Countercomputing could focus on two aspects of this in particular as it returns computing devices to the deictic frontier where they can ultimately morph into something else—something self-destructive, something implementing the turn to the continuous unfolding on its own, following the lead of the plant quasi-categories.

With the first step, we force computation to the deictic frontier. Anarchic countercomputing could take up the idea of making the tape continuous rather than filling it with discrete squares and discrete symbols. In electromagnetic practice, this might come down to an operationalization of electric currents in a continuous fashion. Rather than decreeing that +11, +20, and +17 are all just "1", and +2, +1, and 0 are all just "0", a first step in countercomputing could well consist—ironically—in taking the machine itself seriously when it gives us crooked and imprecise values. This achieves a fundamental logical polysemy on the most basic level of computation, analogous to the polysemy we have introduced in chapter 7 when we re-inscribed Latin letters into Hieroglyphs, thus making each a letter, a symbol, a determinant, etc.

Replacing an (as it were) Latin interpretation of electromagnetic currents with a Hieroglyphic one is only a first step, however. By itself, this achieves little and may actually play into the hands of fuzzy logics and particularly quantum computing. The polysemy that we introduce when we make +17, +20, and +11 values of their own rather than just lumping them into a value "1" is the same kind of enumerated polysemy that Hieroglyphs give us if we just replace each Latin letter with its Hieroglyphic equivalent. What we had there were three discrete interpretations of the same symbol, rather than one interpretation—but they did remain discrete. What we have now are likewise three new values instead of just one, +17, +20, and +11. But each of these is as discrete as the "1" was, and each just as repetitive.

Once at the deictic frontier, therefore, anarchic countercomputing needs one more push, and this push must come directly from the plant logic with which our insurrection starts. We not only need continuous values, but we also need to assemble these values in a continuous way. Instead of interpreting +17, +20, and +11 as discrete values of their own—replacing a Latin reading with a Hieroglyphic reading—we need to ensure that we interpret these values in a continuous fashion, replacing a Latin reading with an Anti-Alphabetic reading. Our quasi-category of shape comes in here, as it replaces the Aristotelian category of state. The challenge at the deictic frontier, then, is to force computation to adhere to shape logic instead of state logic.

State is a category showing what precise characteristics any given thing has at a given point in time—implementing an adjective-gesture supplementing a noun-gesture. Thus state is the basis of the Turing machine's discrete operations: at any given point, the whole machine is in a discrete state (reading, calculating, writing…) and this decides the next symbol which it prints on the tape. Shape, on the other hand, is unfixed and unstable, a constellation emerging from a fog and receding back into it, a sound barely audible, only to disappear again, a faint smell telling us vaguely of things past. The directedness of a wind-wolf emanating from the tall grass and vanishing back into it.

Countercomputing, once at the deictic frontier, can start its attack here. Instead of interpreting +17, +20, and +11, as values of their own with the same defined thingness that "1" has, we can think of a tape filled with continuous interpretations of these values as they morph into one another. We might perhaps visualize this, tentatively and approximately, as a proliferation of roots rather than the neatly packaged screen of an operating system. Enumerated polysemy could thus give way to Anti-Alphabetic diffusion, and the Turing machine begins to implement a version of itself which destroys itself. Blowing up the logic values pre-packaging the world for the Turing

machine can thus lead us to rethinking assembly processes. Rather than searching for a realm of freedom within given computing structures like the so-called Internet, we can unfold an anarchic countercomputing along new and different lines emerging from insurrectionary plant-logic. The result may not look much like a machine. But that is precisely the point. Eventually, primitive anarchy is right: we do need to get rid of computing devices altogether, if we are to break the empire of repetition completely.

With such a direct attack on computing devices we also attack machinery. Here, anarchic antipolitics is already well established, but we need to make sure that here, too, we focus on forcing machines back to the deictic frontier and challenging them there, rather than focusing on reducing iteration within the pacified social field. The art of physical sabotage is so well developed among anarchic antipolitics (and anarchist politics) that very little needs to be added to it. We are already throwing the stone in myriad ways. Adding countercomputing to the mix, as it gets developed along practical lines emerging from our quasi-categories, can only extend the range of our weaponry and the depth of our tactics.

But for these to truly get to the deictic frontier, our challenge to machinery needs to focus also on the iterated social field from which machines arise so unquestioned. One avenue for such an injection of deixis is the social formation of antiwork. This too is an area of recent anarchic antipolitics which is incredibly rich and varied. Its achievements within the pacified social field are now so obvious that capital is panicking and developing new terms of social control (the notion of 'quiet quitting' for example, which aims to make acting one's wage immoral). But even though anti-work's best approaches can and do take us directly to the deictic frontier, the approach as a whole can and does in places merge back into Solon's watershed, determined too much by the notion of 'work' against which it rises in the first place.

We need to push it further to disrupt the pacified social field and get to the deictic frontier. Anti-work is neither proleisure nor pro-relaxation. Both of these terms are mirror images of the notion of work, and have emerged as such since Europe's counter-reformation. With leisure and relaxation, we are merely buying quantities of consumption time, firmly within the pacified social field. In abandoning these notions, we can return to the deictic frontier where our bodies unfold beyond and outside of residual realms of work. To get there, we might perhaps learn from older ages, if we integrate their lessons into the framework of our own insurrectionary logic.

In the European Middle Ages, for example, comfort could not "be measured on the material scale. The satisfaction and delight that were Medieval comfort have their source in the configuration of space. Comfort is the atmosphere with which man surrounds himself and in which he lives."[1] Where work is not at the core of life, comfort stops being material comfort, and becomes something deictic, unfolding beyond the grasp of discrete quantity and time and yet undeniably present. In the hammam, the Islamic bath-house, practices of total regeneration likewise developed without ever being defined by the negation of work: "Half light, quiescence, seclusion from the outside world are preferred. In the cupolas' near darkness, the spirits, djinns, are said to meet…A refined technique for loosening, cracking the joints, and a shampoo massage with special penetrative power supplant athletic sports."[2] Again something deictic; not Anti-Work as much as a totally different approach.

[1] Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, 301.
[2] Ibid, 637.

To be sure, we are not here endorsing a return to the Middle Ages, in whichever geographical or socio-cultural form. We can, however, take up the lessons of this totally different approach, untainted by concepts of work, from our plant logic's perspective. Plant logic replaces Aristotle's category of quantity with the quasi-category of offering, and his category of 'when' (time) with the quasi-category of water. Why not combine these to make a starting point towards a richer notion of Anti-Work: not just "…against work" but towards an un-mechanized existence, altogether beyond notions of time, death, and accumulation? Why not strive to live as a plant, unfolding without labor? Water is ever renewed and flows, but also withdraws and hides: why not think of life in this way, go beyond a focus on free time and embrace instead a non-accumulative approach to the indeterminacies of plant life?

Currently, work dominates the distinction between work and life, rendering life a subset of work much like first nature is a subset of second nature, and much like the pacified social field is a packaging plant for the empire of repetition. Calculating socially necessary work times, for example—something some of us still do to win people over—is a treacherous enterprise still dominated by the notion of a necessity of work. Pushing to the deictic frontier, where we can take up our plant logic's quasi-categories, goes altogether beyond such calculus.

Anarchic antipolitics is very much at home here, and most of the current Anti-Work literature seems to be headed that way. It may well be the case that we just need to stay the course and be more vigilant to ensure anti-work is not, in fact, determined by the notion of work. But this is just one example. There are countless other categories of machinic accumulation whose selfevidence we must disrupt: efficiency, technology, accumulation itself… Once these self-evidences are thwarted, the machines return to the deictic frontier and we can attack them in earnest.

Staying the course will certainly not do us any good when it comes to the state, however. Here the tired old iterations of marches, manifestos, protests, occupations still seem to hold sway. If not publicly associated with crypto bros on private islands, for many (including some of us), anarchy still predominantly conjures up the masked crusader in the black bloc. Which is not altogether problematic, as this image gives us much-needed visibility, and it does focus on throwing stones rather than communicating their throw in an unmediated way. We would be wrong to throw out the baby with the bathwater. But the water is certainly stale and we need to make sure we don't get pneumonia from it.

The main problem here is that riot cops shoving demonstrators about in Western countries are not the state, nor are their colleagues which are working to dissolve occupations and tear down makeshift defenses. Marches and their violent subsections, just as occupied houses and trees and their violent subsections, are social iterations whose theory—and thus practice—is structured by ideas of freedom as socially iterated longing for an absence of mediation. They are part of anarchist politics within Solon's watershed. As such, they are part of the pacified social field within which the state itself doesn't need to get active. Riot cop, prosecuting lawyer, and judge are certainly the holy trinity of institutional crackdowns on anarchist politics. But the heads that they smash and the bodies they imprison are their iterated mirror images just as relaxation is the determined negation of work.

Anarchist rioting on Western streets is the kind of enumerated polysemy we have encountered a few times now: politics calibrating itself but never threatening the pacified social field as a whole. It exceeds, temporarily, the Latin capacity to shoehorn it into categories, but it does so solely because it engages a slightly broader range of iterated political gestures than the cops and judges do. Discourse closes in over the heads of anarchists rioting just as surely as it closes

in over everything else. All it takes is the right concept. Re-packaging anarchists as looters and rioters means that they are easily locked away and are indeed welcome to the institutions of the empire of repetition, as they allow it to strengthen itself in the process of repressing them.

None of this is the state. The state emerges whenever iteration itself is threatened, i.e., wherever deixis comes to the fore. Iterating gestures of insurrection is not the same as insurrection, and the state knows this very well. Thus, ironically, anarchic antipolitics will first and foremost need to focus on actually facing the actual state at the deictic frontier, rather than iterating gestures of defiance which remain ultimately within the pacified social field. Replacing the dominance of the category of work by a focus on insurrectionary quasi-categories like water and offering, and blowing up the Turing machine through countercomputing—aiming to create something based on the notion of shape—are just such practices where we will inevitably face the state.

Just like countercomputing won't look like computing, therefore, and just like plant-logical anti-work won't look like leisure, a direct confrontation with the state won't look dangerous at all. It doesn't look like the iterated gestures facing the iterated trifecta of riot cop, lawyer, and judge. It won't be visible to a lot of people at the beginning. But it will call the state upon us like a fury, because we are now building an angle of attack which proceeds from knowing what the state really is—at the frontier of deixis—and thus an angle which can really attack the state's labor outright.

For the state doesn't implement itself—there is no attacking "the state"—but the pacified social field as a whole, which in turn pre-packages the world for the empire of repetition. Attacking the state thus means attacking classification, domestication, and social tyranny as interlocking gestures. In these, our angle is slightly different than it is for machinery and computing devices, although it is based on the same plant logic. The world of iteration consists, as we have seen, of two interrelated mechanisms. First, iteration overwrites deixis, and secondly repetition comes ever further to the fore within iteration, overwriting the ever diminishing extent to which deixis remains present in iteration. There is thus no deixis without the slightest hint of iteration, nor on the other hand pure repetition without any deixis.

With the machine and particularly with computing, we are dealing with repetitions so deeply stacked and so thoroughly entrenched that developing counter-practices must proceed in two steps: first, forcing repetition back to the deictic frontier, and second, injecting deixis there. Countercomputing is thus based on first replacing discrete values with oscillating polysemy and then replacing the category of state with the quasi-category of shape, while resistance to machines consists in a deepening of anti-work discourse (and the countless others which underwrite machinery) at first, leading subsequently to replacing the category of quantity with the quasi-category of offering, and the category of "when" (time) with the quasi-category of water.

With classification, domestication, and social tyranny, however, we are in regions where what is at stake is not so much the overwriting of iteration by repetition, but iteration as such overwriting deixis, and the crystallization of norming within iteration, solidifying its authoritarianism. Classification of plants in particular everywhere runs up directly against the undifferentiated unfolding of continuousness, and thus ultimately consists of an elaborate apparatus of iterated attempts to tame wildness through categories. Unlike machines and computing devices, this elaborate apparatus is already at the deictic frontier. It can thereby be directly confronted by our plant logic.

There are of course attempts to construct plants from the bottom up; but genetic engineers who claim to be able to do so without complications would be well advised to tone down their rhetoric a bit. Genetic modification is certainly happening, and terrifyingly so when considering whom it benefits and whom it destroys. But a modified plant remains a plant, and remains within the quasi-category of plant: recalcitrant, unruly, resistant. What we need to counter here is the idea that plants can be produced to begin with. Our quasi-categories eradicate the logical, linguistic, and gestural possibility of conceiving of plants this way. There is no prior step needed, as anyone who engages in this battle is already at the deictic frontier.

What we are combating in classification, therefore, is not, as in machines, a replacement of the world of plant unfolding but a norming of it at the deictic frontier. Attempts to overwrite the plant unfolding of plants with substance and categories nonetheless always have to accept that the quasi-category of plant will thwart their efforts. Plants already directly and openly implement the quasi-category of plant, with its dispersal of other quasi-categories ranging from the nine we enumerated to countless others towards which the plant-letters gesture. Norming is at constant war against this proliferation of quasicategories, and thus the state is, first and foremost, at war with plants. It is here that we must look for it; it is here that we can develop our anarchic antipolitics on the basis of our changed anti-iterative plant logic.

The same applies to domestication, both of wild animals and of so-called humans. Each of them, and each of us, remains a volcano of deictic uniqueness and, inasmuch as this is not overwritten by domestication, is already at the deictic frontier. Though they do self-domesticate, many animals, just like many humans, know that "behind the rod, more powerful than it, stands our—defiance, our defiant courage."[3] We may be beaten into submission to domestication through the apparatuses of social tyranny, through schools, workplaces, hospitals, barracks, and prisons, but ultimately there is, in each one of us, something unbreakable. We have the ability, at any given point, to follow the plants' lead and rise up against iteration and repetition. The state—the real state, not the institutions fumbling about in iterated tightrope dances—knows that "force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues," and that, at any given point, "the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself."[4]

Anarchic antipolitics are just such a secret machination or confederacy, and once we realize where the deictic frontier is—in every plant surrounding us, and within ourselves and the animals—we are also very much aware that we have strength enough to kill the strongest layers of repetition. We now know that classification and domestication, the closing of substance over constellations by noun-, adjective-, and verbgestures, are the foremost mechanisms by which the domestication of the world and ourselves takes place. We know that we can only strengthen and endorse the pacified social field, from which the state as such is absent, if we continue to participate in the iterated practices controlled by the holy trinity of riot cop, prosecuting lawyer, and presiding judge. We know that these are not the state, and that we meet the state instead in the field where it wages its ceaseless battle against the unfolding of plant, root, soil, water, etc, within ourselves and everywhere around ourselves. We know that when we change our logic, our way of implementing the world, we combat the pacified field as a whole, and throw the stone of deixis.

[3] Stirner, The Unique and Its Property, via the Anarchist Library.

[4] Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Ware: Wordsworth, 2014), 99 and 95.

We know, that is, that anarchist politics are a discourse within discourses, a formation within Solon's watershed, an heir to Aristotle's categories, and we break from it. We know that underneath repetition is iteration, and underneath iteration is deixis. We know that all things of this world are written into it as discrete things, and we know how to begin to change this. We know that things are nothing but crystallizations of repeated gestures, and that their implementation goes directly and violently against the real unfolding of the world, which is continuous: indeterminable, unstable, and undifferentiated. Which means that we can now plant anarchy instead of writing substances. The trees cut down by the war machines of antiquity spur us on just as their brethren cut down now, and exhort us to be like the fury,

of hellish body born,
to whom showers and fire, spirit and weighty earth are equal.[5]

[5] Ennius, Annals VII, 220–221.

Appendix

Appendix 1: The Anti-Alphabet

Writing letters onto pages or screens to form words, we perform the same gestures by which we write things into the world. Here as there, we form discrete units. Our words form sentences, to be sure, just as discrete things in the world form landscapes or cities. But these sentences and landscapes, in turn, only exist because of the words and things, not vice versa. That is, the sentence or landscape makes sense because its individual units make sense. And these individual units, in turn, are written into the world. With words, this is self-evidently visible as the letters form on screens or pages. But trees, houses, stars, and any other discrete thing in the world, is also written into it. Cut out of the continuous unfolding of the world, they form constellations, and these constellations in turn solidify into brittle things.

The Anti-Alphabet reverses the construction of syllables and words out of letters, so that we can learn to reverse, in the same way, the construction of discrete things out of constellations and the continuous unfolding. It does this, first, by turning each letter on the screen or page into an individual, thereby preventing their coagulation to words. (In the main text we refer to this as bringing the letters to the deictic frontier). Once a sample sentence loses, for instance, the dividing gaps between words, the transmission of their discrete meaning becomes that much harder: onceasamplesentencelosesforinstancethedividinggapsbetweenwords…

This has two effects. Directly, it undermines the gesture of reference, which is vital for the gesture by which things come to be singled-out from the continuous unfolding of the world, and written into it. Indirectly, it opens further ways for letters to become independent entities unto themselves, capable of much more than merely crystallizing into syllables and words.

The Anti-Alphabet takes this movement further and goes not only beyond the constitution of words out of letters of the Latin alphabet, but also beyond that alphabet itself. In doing this, we go backwards along the family tree from which the Latin alphabet came. (In the main text we refer to this as injecting deixis at the deictic frontier.) Invoking ancient Phoenician, we move past vowel signs, as their alphabet didn't have those. Invoking Linear B, we go beyond individual letters, as this is an alphabet based on syllables. And invoking Middle Kingdom Egyptian Hieroglyphs, we move past the written characteristics of letters altogether, as these become so many animals and plants growing on the page. Which is where the present book starts…

Appendix 2: Glossary

Iteration is the process by which gestures, whether human (handshakes, speech patterns), animal (walking, chewing, howling), or machinic or discursive, come to be re-enacted over time. Any such gesture has an inherent structure (the handshake for example comprises a slight angle of the torso, an outstretched lower arm, a vertical position of the hand, an arrangement of fingers and thumb), and to the extent that this structure is re-enacted with each handshake, its iteration becomes ever more repetitive. But any such gesture is also re-enacted in different ways by different actors in different contexts (the hand can be firm or limp, the torso can be leaning in or holding back, the thumb can grasp more or less, the other hand can come in, and so forth). The handshake remains structurally the same, and is thus to some extent repeated, but it is also different each time, and thus allows for some creative aberration. Iteration marks both.

Iteration becomes institutional repetition when not only the structure but also its context is predefined to establish control, and thus the possibility of aberration declines—without, however, ever fully disappearing. Repetition therefore denotes two aspects of iteration at the same time. On the one hand, repetition is a necessary part within the spectrum of iteration, by which the structure of a gesture is recognizably 'the same' across different contexts, situations, or implementations. (For example, lifting an item is a repeated gesture whether it is implemented by a human being or a machine.) On the other hand, repetition is the goal of norming, whereby institutionalized contexts induce, cajole, or enforce ever-more rigid following of the same structure. In this way, repetition is the part of iteration which supports domestication of humans and animals, turning their social interactions into increasingly rigid patterns, roles, and habits as the "civilizing process" (Elias) unfolds.

On the opposite end of the spectrum of iteration is deixis. Where repetition is the part of iterated gestures which is 'the same', deixis marks the part which is different; the aberrations, creative interpretations, and contextual adjustments to any gesture. Like repetition, deixis can never appear in a pure form. More so than repetition, however, it is a placeholder concept for something largely inexpressible—a pure directedness, a vector without trajectory, a gesture without end. Deixis is less expressible than repetition because we who express these terms are much closer to repetition than we are to deixis. It is very close to the notion of plant and finds its right place in a way of writing which follows the continuous unfolding.

The pacified social field marks the sphere of unquestioned iteration, the medium and expression of everyday social existence for the vast majority of humans. The field is pacified not because it represses dissent but because it expresses it in the iteration of alternative gestures. Thus in any given situation, the inhabitants of the pacified social field—which is all of us, for most of our lives—are very well able to deviate from beaten paths and subvert given options, but only by following other beaten paths, by iterating other given options. Resistance to institutions is thus an everyday phenomenon, but this resistance is based on iterated gestures of defiance (such as marches, doxxing, protests).

As institutions flourish and proliferate the empire of repetition grows, which marks those parts of the pacified social field where the repetitive aspects of iterating gestures are maximized, and aberrations in each personal motion minimized. Thus the empire of repetition is the most rigid, most formalized, most normed part of the pacified social field. This empire is mostly carceral, comprising the legal system and its prisons, the education system and its schools, the medical system and its hospitals, and the military system and its barracks. But it can also consist of rigid social norms outside of formalized channels, as when religious sects or conspiracy groups enforce behavioral codes.

Diametrically opposed to the empire of repetition is the deictic frontier, where the state confronts plants. This frontier is where we unfold most of this book. It is ever-present underneath the pacified social field, but we domesticated humans cannot see it for what it is without conceptual preparation. In the idea of a deixis without repetition—a revolt against iteration—lies our access to the continuous unfolding.

With the noun-gesture, discrete things are carved out of the continuous unfolding of the world. This gesture can take multiple forms. It is named after its written implementation, through speech and handand machine-writing: the noun, by which a tree is singled out from the green, brown, and blue background, and identified as an object. But the noun-gesture also comprises a logical implementation, whereby it becomes a substance, and a material implementation, whereby it becomes a material object through human labor, or a produced thing through machinic expenditure of energy. Each of these is an iteration of the others, and the structure of the resulting discrete thing is governed by the repetitive part of all these iterated gestures: a table remains a table over time because the gesture by which we recognize it as such re-enacts the gesture by which it was produced.

Just as the noun-gesture thus implements discrete things, the verb-gesture implements discrete movements, by singling out motions from the continuous unfolding and iterating them through different implementations. Like the noun-gesture, the verb-gesture is at once material, conceptual, and written. Thus the motion of water flowing down a river can be iterated in channels, sewage facilities, toilet bowls. In each case, the motion becomes a movement by its material, conceptual, and written norming through the verb-gesture.

The same applies to the adjective-gesture, which iterates characteristics of things materially, conceptually, or through writing.

All three gestures combined make up the will to reification: the total process by which the logic of iteration plays out against continuous unfolding. This will is not human or divine, but rather marks the structure of gestures that together overwrite deixis, create the pacified social field, and erect the empire of repetition. The will to reification is a historical force working through the domestication of humans and animals, and will find its end as this domestication does.

Sascha Engel
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