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# What is Critical Metaphysics?

Tiqqun

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1999

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the disaster. And even if we must succumb to the powers that this world will have unleashed against us, we will have at least presaged that happy time when there will be no more metaphysics, because all men will be metaphysicians, living bearers of the Absolute.

Then we'll understand that up to now *nothing's happened*.

“There was no longer any reality, only its caricature”

-Gottfried Benn

“We are the cause of the universe, its creation and its future destruction.”

-Baudelaire

It does not escape us that “‘metaphysical’- exactly like ‘abstract’ and even ‘thinking’- has become a word before which everyone more or less takes flight as before a plague victim.” (Hegel). And it is certainly with a shiver of wicked joy, and the worrying certitude that we're going right to the wound, that we bring back into the center what the triumphant frivolity of our times believed it had forever repressed to the periphery. In so doing, we also have the effrontery to claim that we're not just giving in to some sophisticated caprice, but to an imperious necessity inscribed in history. Critical Metaphysics is not just one more piece of blather about the way the world is going; nor is it just the latest piece of heady speculation with some particular intelligence to it – it is the most *real* thing contained in our times.

*Critical Metaphysics is in everyone's guts.*

Whatever we might protest about this, there is no doubt that *people* will try to say we were the inventors of Critical Metaphysics, so as to hide the fact that it existed *already* before finding its formulation, that it was already *everywhere*, in the state of emptiness behind suffering, in the denial behind entertainment, in the motives behind consumption, or, obviously, in anxiety.

It's clearly a part of all the sordid spinelessness, the incurable banality, and the repugnant insignificance of the times called “modern” that it's made metaphysics the apparently innocent leisure activity of learned men in stiff suits, and that it's reduced it to the sole exercise proper to insects like that: a kind of platonic mandibulation. Merely by virtue of the fact that it is not reducible to conceptual experience, Critical Metaphysics is *the experience* that funda-

mentally denies an inept “modernity”, and, with open eyes, celebrates more each day the excesses of the disaster.

## Act the First:

“When the false becomes true, truth itself is but a mirage. When nothingness becomes reality, reality in turn falls into nothingness.”

(The inscriptions at either side of the entrance to the “Kingdom of Dreams and Immense Illusion” in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*)

Western civilization is living on credit. It thought it could last forever, and get off without paying the outstanding debt it owes for its lies.

But now it’s suffocating under their crushing dead weight. Thus, before entering into more substantial considerations, we have to start by clearing the air, and unburdening this world of a few of its illusions.

For example: the fact is that modernity has never existed.

We’re not going to linger over indisputable facts. That the term “modernity” now just evokes a bored irony, no matter the progressivist senility accompanying it, and that it has finally appeared as what it always was — just a verbal fetish that the superstition of shitheads and simple spirits, ever since the supposed “Renaissance,” have decorated the progressive rise of commodity relations to a state of social hegemony with, in favor of interests we understand only all too well — hardly merits any critical explanation.

This is just another vulgar brutish use of labels, whose elucidation we’ll leave to the priests of tomorrow’s historicism.

We’ve got far more serious things to deal with.

In fact, in the same way as commodity relations never really existed as such, i.e., as commodity relations, but only as relations

Those who believe they can build a new world without building a new language are fooling themselves: the whole of this world is contained in its language. Ours does not hide its imperialist vocations any more than any other does: all poetry, all thought, all imagination that doesn’t manage to become effective, when that becomes *possible*, doesn’t even rise above the pathetic rank of cutesy crap.

Roger Gilbert-Lecomte gives this observation an expression we find perfectly suitable: “the birth of concrete thought (experimental metaphysics), by drawing upon the vision in its artistic expression, will transform its knowledge into power.” He has also remarked that “the experimental metaphysician bets on his disequilibrium, which gives him various different perspectives on reality.” Quite true. A world made of ideas is also a world at the mercy of ideas, as long as they rule arbitrarily. The matter that absorbs us, in sum, is the realization of the *concrete* utopia of a world where each of the great metaphysics, each of the great “languages of creation”, among which there can be “no overtaking nor doubling” (Peguy) can finally and in the full sense of the word *inhabit* the world, come into a kingdom of its own, and lose itself unrestrainedly in inexhaustible holy wars, schisms, sects and heresies, where the immanence of meaning in life will be rediscovered, where language will draw upon Being and Being language, where the metaphysical will no longer be a discourse, but the fecund tissue of existence, where each community will be another unique space within a reappropriated common, where man, giving up disguising his insoluble relationship with the world with the stupid and crude lie of private property, will truly open himself to the experience of anguish, ecstasy, and abandon. Life does not delight in our consciousness of it and its form is still experienced as suffering; this shows that we are living in times nearing their end. As for us, we announce a world where man will espouse his destiny as the tragic play of his freedom. There is no life more properly human than that. Doubtless the critical-metaphysicians carry in their unreason the outcome of

no one can recognize their brothers nor their enemies anymore. The interminable disputation of theologians comprises a model for social life. The utopia of Tlön does not displease us. We grant no laurels to the love of those who were never able to hate, nor to the peace of those who have never done battle. Therefore, in daring to act in such a way as to make “the utopian rejection of the conventional world objectivizes itself in a likewise existent reality, so that polemical refusal actually becomes the central form of the work” (Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel*), our search for chances to quarrel with those whose metaphysics are objectively adverse to ours is no less important than is our quest to find our brothers dispersed in Exile. The object of authentic community can only be the conscious construction of the Common itself, that is to say the creation of the world, or, to be more exact, the creation of a world. This is why critical metaphysicians are so particularly concerned with composing, *together*, the true alphabet whose application gives meaning to things, beings, and discourses; in other words with reconstituting a hidden order within reality, where what exists would cease to drown them and at last present itself in the familiar form of figures, rather than as faces, in Gombrowicz’ sense. It’s about elevating elective affinity up to the free construction of a common mode of reality-disclosure. We must make our individual perceptions and our moral sentiments a *collective creation*. Such is the task. But here we can already feel – along with an *objective* feeling of evil – an inexorable shiver of vice, like one gets when fucking a Young-Girl, or shopping in a supermarket. In each of our enemies, the postmodernist, the Young-Girl, the sociologist, the manager, the bureaucrat, the artist or the intellectual, all defects that can easily all come together in just one scumbag, we see only their metaphysics. Our “power of voluntary hallucination” has gone beyond such a degree of coherence to where now everything speaks to us of what we are doing – and that’s just what our messianic era is all about: *the re-absorption of the element of time in the element of meaning*.

between men mutilated into relations between things, everything that is said to be, believed to be, or held up as being “modern” has never really existed *as modern*. The essence of the economy, that transparent pseudonym with which commodity modernity always tries to pass itself off as eternally obvious, has nothing economic about it; and in fact, its foundation, which is also its program, can be expressed in these rude terms: it is THE NEGATION OF METAPHYSICS – that is, the negation of that the transcendence of which is for humanity the effective cause of immanence; to put it in other words, it is the negation of that which makes sense of the world, of the imperceptible appearing within the perceptible. This fine project is wholly contained within the aberrant but *effective* illusion that a complete separation between the physical and the metaphysical is possible – a fallacy which most often takes form as the underlying reality behind the physical reality, setting itself up as the model for all objectivity, and logically commanding a myriad of local ruptures, between life and meaning, dreams and reason, individual and society, means and ends, artist and bourgeois, intellectual work and physical labor, bosses and workers, etc. – which are not, by and large, any less absurd – with all these concepts becoming abstract and losing all their content outside of their living interaction with their opposites.

Now, since such a separation is really impossible, that is, *humanly* impossible, and since the liquidation of humanity has so far failed, nothing modern has ever existed as such. *What is modern is not real, what is real is not modern*. Thus there is indeed a *realization* of this program, but as it perfects itself at present we also see that it is just the opposite of what it thought it was, in a word: the complete de-realization of the world. And the whole extent of the visible now carries within it – with its vacillating character – the brutal proof that the realized negation of metaphysics is in the end but the realization of a metaphysics of negation. The functionalism and materialism inherent to commodity modernity have produced a void everywhere, but this void corresponds to the

primordial metaphysical experience: where there is no longer any response that goes beyond mere being-there, which would permit a position within the latter to be taken, anxiety surges forth, and the metaphysical character of the world blossoms in plain sight for everyone. Never has the sentiment of foreignness been so pregnant as it is in the face of the abstract productions of a world that had intended to bury it under the immense, unquestionable opulence of its accumulated commodities. Places, clothes, words and architecture, faces, acts, gazes and loves are nothing anymore but the terrible masks invented by one and the same absence to put on in order to approach us.

Nothingness has visibly taken up residence in the intimate depths of things and beings, and the smooth surface of spectacular appearances is cracking everywhere as a result of its growth. The *physical* sensation of its proximity is no longer the ultimate experience reserved for a few mystical circles.

On the contrary it is the only sensation left to us by the capitalist world, the only sensation still intact, and indeed increased tenfold, as all the others are slated to disappear.

It also happens to have been precisely the one it had explicitly proposed to eliminate.

All the products of this society- whether the hollow conceptuality of the Young-Girl, contemporary urbanism, or techno- are things that the spirit has gone out of, things that have outlived all their meaning and all their reason for being. These are all just interchangeable symbols that replace each other moving about on one plane; it's not that these symbols signify nothing, as the kindly morons of postmodernism like to think – indeed they signify *Nothingness* itself.

All the things of this world live on in a perceptible state of exile. They are the victims of a faint and constant loss of being. Indeed, this modernity, which claims to be free of mystery and thought it had liquidated metaphysics, has instead realized it. It has produced a décor comprised purely of phenomena, of pure beings-there that

for the moment to come to deliver a fatal blow it can't recover from; this means uniting, by any means necessary, all the particular forces currently confronting commodity hegemony – in other words, *building the Imaginary Party*. Solely because of the fact that “in a world of lies, lies cannot be eliminated by their opposite, but only by a world of truth” (Kafka), those whose vocation is but to destroy have no choice but to work for the formation, in the infra-spectacular space, of such “worlds of truth” if nevertheless they intend to become something other than the sworn professionals of social contestation.

Among the ruins, the positive elaboration of forms of life, community and affectivity independent and superior to the icy waters of spectacular morals is an act of sabotage where the power capable of defeating the *imperium* of abstraction acts without appearing. It thus comprises the *sine qua non* condition for all effective contestation, because unless they gather into mental families, those opposed to this society have *zero* chance of survival. Nevertheless, nothing will be able to prevent the critical metaphysicians from rallying to all agitation that explicitly attacks commodity domination, and fomenting some of their own too. We will never give up disrupting the dreary ceremony of the world. But such acts on our part will be falsely understood if without the understanding that they make sense only in the broader construction of a lifestyle that *war* has a place in. The peaceful coexistence of universal mutual ridicule, which makes our times such a strong emetic, is one of those things we intend to bring to a bloody end. It is intolerable that truth and falsehood go on living at peace with one another. The mutual compromise of so many viscerally irreconcilable metaphysics, in the baroque pay-toilet of the Spectacle, is one of the means at the enemy's command for breaking down even the liveliest of minds.

Human beings will have to agree to express their disagreements, trace out the clear borders between the different metaphysical homelands, and thus put an end to the world of confusion, where



*fillment* and the *transcendence* of nihilism; that is, in the words of Heidegger – that old swine – “The Appropriation of metaphysics,” “The Appropriation of the forgetting of Being.”

In the first place it’s about distancing yourself from the world as it is in representation; it “appears at first as a transcendence of metaphysics... But what happens in the appropriation of metaphysics, and there alone, is rather that the truth of metaphysics comes flooding back, the lasting truth of an apparently repudiated metaphysics, which is nothing else but its henceforth reappropriated *essence*: its *Dwelling*. What’s happening here is something different from a restoration of metaphysics,” (Heidegger, Contribution to the Question of Being).

“On Saturday, she’d left work while saying to her colleagues, as if it were a joke: ‘I’m leaving a little early today, I’m going to go throw myself into the Seine.’ The body of this resident of Villeneuve-Le-Roi (Val-de-Marine), 45 years of age, was recovered from the river yesterday morning by firemen.” (Libération, Monday November 30, 1998)

For the community of critical metaphysicians, there is now nothing more *concrete* than this Appropriation and this Dwelling, even if they still provisionally present themselves in the form of problems to solve, rather than as immediately given solutions. To whatever extent they can within the constraints imposed on them by this society, they are doubtless now building, somewhere in the crevices of the metropolises, a really – that is, *collectively* – practiced *ethos* where “Metaphysics (is) part of the everyday practice of life” (Artaud). One would be wrong to see this as a comfortable alternative to taking up arms and going on the attack.

Contrary to what certain hasty leftists would have us believe, in the current conditions, the immediate issue for revolutionary practice is not direct struggle against commodity domination, since that unavoidably crumbles away, “and what crumbles away may crumble away, but it cannot be destroyed.” (Kafka) Thus one must instead leave that old whore to decompose insidiously, and prepare

are nothing beyond the simple fact that they are there, in their empty positivity, and which ceaselessly push humanity to feel “the marvel of marvels: *that being-there is*” (Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics?*). In this ultramodern hall of ice, marble, and steel we’ve wandered into, a slight relaxation of our cerebral constriction suffices for us to be brutally confronted with seeing all that exists slip away and be inverted into a simultaneously oppressive and floating presence where nothing remains. Thus we get the experience of Total Otherness even in the most common of circumstances, even in newly renovated bakeries. Before us is spread a world that *can no longer hold our gaze*, a world that can no longer look us in the eye.

Anxiety is on guard duty at every street corner.

Now this disastrous experience, wherein we are violently expelled from all that exists, is the experience of transcendence and of the irremediable negativity *contained* in us. In that experience is the whole of the asphyxiating “reality” that all the great machinery of social deception works to make us take for granted, that suddenly and in so cowardly a way collapses, into the vast chasm of its nullity. This experience is the birth of metaphysics, where metaphysics appears precisely *as metaphysics*, where the world appears as the world.

But the metaphysics that arises again there is not the same metaphysics that *people* had hunted down and banished, because it returns as the truth and negation of what had defeated the old metaphysics: as a *conquering force*, as *critical* Metaphysics.

Because the project of capitalist modernity *is nothing*, its realization is but the spreading desertification of everything that exists.

And we are here to ravage that desert.

Enthroned on its rickety stilts in the middle of the mounting catastrophes, commodity domination no longer feels at home in the singular state of things that it itself nonetheless produced, every detail of which contradicts it more. And by domination we mean specifically the symbolically mediated relation of complicity between the dominators and the dominated; so for us there is

a little doubt that “the torturer and the tortured are one, that the former is fooling himself believing he’s not himself tortured, and the latter believing he’s not participating in the crime”: go sit at the back of the class, Bourdieu! To convince ourselves of this, we can merely take a close look at the *steps taken* by our contemporaries, who are reminiscent of a band of deserters running after themselves, spurred on by their own metaphysical disquiet. It’s a full time job now for Blooms to get themselves out of the fundamental experience of nothingness, which destroys all simple faith in this world. The mockery of things threatens to overwhelm his consciousness at any given moment.

To not know the forgetting of Being, the retreat of which closes in on us in every metropolitan slum, every vagina, and every gas station, now requires a daily ingestion of almost lethal doses of Prozac, news, and Viagra. But all these temporary fixes don’t suppress the anxiety, they just mask it, and banish it to an obscurity that only spurs on its silent growth. And in the end, in order to sell their lies and disease, women’s magazines all the same end up having to convince their readers that “the truth is good for your health,” cosmetics multinationals are decide to put things like “metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology” on their packaging, TF1 sets up the “quest for meaning”, as a profitable principle for its upcoming programming, and Starck, that enlightened counterfeiter, gives La Redoute information about its competitors a few years in advance by putting together for it a “catalogue of non-products for use by non-consumers.”

It’s hard to imagine how so totally at a loss domination must have been internally to get to such a state. In these conditions, critical thought must stop waiting for a mass revolutionary subject to constitute itself to show how imminent social upheaval is. It must rather learn to see this in the formidable explosion of the social demand for entertainment/distraction in recent times. That kind of a phenomenon is a sign that the pressure of essential questions which were for so long left unanswered, so profitably, has

The idea of the Imaginary Party, hence, gives form to that residue, to that *remainder*, to non-coincidence, to everything that falls outside of the universal plane of the economy, forced takeover, and Total Mobilization. Thus, Critical Metaphysics is the doctrine of transcendence which alone permits a liberation from and annihilation of this world, draws up the prologue for all future insurrections, and affirms itself as the *determined* negation of commodity domination, and simultaneously it *already* contains, in its present manifestations, the positive transcendence that goes beyond the zones of destruction. “Each man,” it says, “exercises a certain intellectual activity, adopts a vision of the world, follows a conscious line of moral conduct, and thus contributes to the defense and victory of a certain vision of the world.” (Gramsci, *Intellectuals and the Organization of Culture*). Consequently Critical Metaphysics will come to impose itself as an always more inflexible and virulent injunction to each Bloom to become conscious of the worldview underlying his lifestyle, then, either rejecting or appropriating it, to recognize his peers and adversaries, and thus, fundamentally, to awaken to the world. We won’t grant anyone the leisure of failing to understand the importance of their existence. Everything is bound to everything else. We will make people lose even their *taste* for consumption. Critical Metaphysics is thus not content to consider everything from the point of view of *Tiqqun*, in other words of the unity of the world, the final realization of all things, the immanence of meaning in life; it *produces* that unity, this realization and this immanence in its practical and exemplary character. It is itself part of the world of *Tiqqun*. In its everyday existence, Critical Metaphysics is the perspective from which the Beautiful, the Good and the True have already ceased to be contradictorily perceived. Because nihilism is the “provisional loss of the opening where a certain interpretation of being-there constitutes itself as interpretation” (Junger) and Critical Metaphysics presents itself as a general injunction to determine oneself *starting from* the metaphysical character of the world, it constitutes by its own trajectory the *ful-*

a mere interpretation, a construct, by merely showing that the essence of nihilism is not at all nihilist, already advances *beyond* nihilism. Everywhere it exposes its viewpoint, Critical Metaphysics marks being-there with signs contrary to the dominant convention. All reality which it is brought to bear upon brusquely changes its meaning, and its proportions are inverted: what had always appeared to be a few mere *remains* on the margins of the Spectacle proves to be the most real thing, what *people* had always thought of as the very world itself is rendered to its miniscule misery, that which appears firmly established begins to totter, what seemed to be of such airy consistency acquires a rock-hard presence. Thus Critical Metaphysics reveals the insignificance to which all being-there is reduced in the Spectacle, that false unity of meaning and life (false because it is abstract) – not as an insignificant fact, but as a *political* situation of servitude, a *concrete* form of social oppression. In so doing, it puts this insignificance into possession of a multiplied reality that nothing in this world can lay claim to.

But what it pushes into presence, and makes audible and thus real, is really all the non-identity that had been repressed to the feeble light of the infraspectacular world, everything that was neither expressible nor admissible in the dominant mode of disclosure. By starting from nothingness, Critical Metaphysics creates a truer, more compact, and looser fullness than the apparent fullness of the Spectacle: the fullness of dereliction, the absoluteness of disaster. In revealing to human suffering its political significance, it abolishes it as such and makes it the harbinger of a superior state. This goes equally well for anxiety, where what exists itself goes beyond what exists: once this experience is driven into the heart of Publicity, the finite as such falls apart and comes back together as a *sign* of the infinite. But the transfiguration that Critical Metaphysics is synonymous with operates first of all in man dispossessed of all that he'd believed was his own, in Bloom, who thus recognizes the nothingness left for him to share in as the only thing really of his own that he's ever had: his indestructible metaphysical faculty.

crossed the line into the intolerable. Because, if *people* distract themselves so furiously, it must be that they're getting their minds off something, and this something must be becoming an very obsessing presence. "If man were happy, he would be all the happier the less distracted/entertained he was." (Pascal).

Let's suppose that the object that spreads such a significant terror everywhere, which *people* can deny the effective action of only so long as it is unnamed, is Critical Metaphysics- and this is a definition, perhaps the clearest and most comprehensible one we'll give ourselves. The harmless sociologists are naturally not gifted with the proper endowments to comprehend what this is about, no more than is that handful of poor aesthetes, who in vain indignation denounce the misery of the times from the lofty heights of their profession as writers, and who see its mere consumption as its consummation. We would never dream to protest against the extent of the disaster, but its meaning. The generalized fear of getting old, the charming anorexia of women, the official takeover of all life, the sexual apocalypse, the industrial management of entertainment, the triumph of the Young-Girl, the appearance of unprecedented and monstrous pathologies, the paranoid isolation of egos, the explosion of acts of gratuitous violence, the fanatical and universal affirmation of a supermarket hedonism, make an elegant litany for paroxysms of all kinds. The trained eye sees nothing in all this to lend credit to some eternal victory of the commodity and its empire of confusion; rather it sees the intensity of the generalized state of patient expectation, a messianic waiting for the catastrophe, for the *moment of truth* which will finally put an end to the unreality of a world of lies. On this point as on many others, it is not superfluous to be Sabbatean.

From the perspective we've taken, the resolute plunge of the masses into immanence, and their uninterrupted flight into insignificance- all things that could make us lose hope for the human race- cease to appear as positive phenomena containing their truth within themselves, and come to be seen as purely

negative movements, accompanying our forced exile from of the sphere of meaning, wholly colonized by the Spectacle, from all the figures and forms in which one is permitted to appear, and which expropriate from us the meaning of our acts, and our acts themselves. But this escape is no longer enough, and it must sell off in individual packages the void left by Critical Metaphysics. The New Age, for example, corresponds to its infinitesimal dilution and the burlesque travesty by which commodity society attempts to immunize itself against it. The fact of generalized separation (between the perceptible and superperceptible as well as between humans), the project of restoring the unity of the world, the insistence on the category of totality, the primacy of the mind, and intimate knowledge of human pain combine themselves there, in a calculated fashion, as a new commodity, as new technologies. Buddhism also belongs to the mass of hygienic spiritualities that domination must put to work to save positivism and individualism in whatever form it can, so as to go on a little longer still in its nihilism. In any case *people* resort even to taking up the moth-eaten banner of religions, and *everyone* knows what a useful complement these can be to the reign of all miseries down here on earth – it goes without saying that when a weekly magazine of bigots in sneakers ingenuously worries in covering whether “Will the 21<sup>st</sup> century be religious?” one must read instead: “Will the 21<sup>st</sup> century manage to repress Critical Metaphysics?”; all the “new needs” that late capitalism flatters itself that it can satisfy, all the hysterical agitation of its employees, and even the expansion of consumer relations into the whole of human life – all that good news that it believes it can give itself that its triumph will be a lasting one thus only show the profundity of its failure, of suffering, and of anxiety. And it is this immense suffering that inhabits so many gazes and hardens so many things, that it must always race breathlessly to *put to work* by degrading into *needs* the fundamental tension of human beings towards the sovereign realization of their virtualities, a tension that grows in proportion

exploited malevolently enough could bring about the downfall of domination. We’ll provide for that.

Critical Metaphysics, in many aspects, pursues and completes the steady undermining successfully carried on by nihilism for five centuries. The consistency with which all simple faith in reality found itself, piece by piece, to be first shaken, then damaged, and finally destroyed, is not unfamiliar to it; it feels no regrets about helping that process. Critical Metaphysics has no vocation for procuring a new and refined type of consolation for humanity. Rather, its watchword is: GENERALIZE DISQUIET. Critical Metaphysics itself is this disquiet, which can no longer be understood as a weakness, or as a vulnerability, but as the origin of *all strength*.

It is not there to bring security to the weak in need of help, but to lead them into battle. It is like a weapon; whoever seizes it can decide who it’s going to serve. In each life that remains in contact with Being there is a devastating power; and *people* have no idea just how intense that power can be. The struggle against the real, taken up before us by so many others, is getting close to being won, but by the enemy. That’s why, on our wrong-headed path, we consider the preliminary to *everything* the pulverization of the last palpable structure for the apprehension of what exists: the quantitative abstract form of the commodity, which “for the reified” has become “the form in which its own authentic immediacy becomes manifest and – as reified consciousness- does not even attempt to transcend it.

On the contrary, it is concerned to make it permanent by ‘scientifically deepening’ the laws at work” (Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*). Rendering the wisdom of the world insane is indisputably part of our program, but that’s only the first step. Critical Metaphysics, rather, is “the spiritual movement that takes nihilism as its terrain and models itself on it, reflecting it into Being,” (Junger, *Treatise of the Rebel*), that necessary force that intends to reverse commodity hegemony by revealing it to be *metaphysical*. Only that act of reflecting reality and manifesting it as

in what still passes for “reality” by revealing it to be a mere construct, and to set up symbolic spaces in the recesses of the present semicratic tyranny, autonomous from the state of public explanation and foreign to it, but with as much a claim to universal validity as it has. *We* must everywhere contradict *People*. And that’s what we’re working on, according to our own penchants, when we reveal the Young-Girl as a *political* coercion apparatus, the economy as a ritual of black magic, Bloom as a criminal saintliness, the Imaginary Party as the bearer of a hostility as invisible as it is absolute, or the corner bakery as a supernatural apparition. It is above all about bringing out, in everything *people* say, in everything *people* do, and in everything *people* see, its natural unreality factor. This world will cease to be so monstrous when it ceases to be taken for granted. And so the whole of our theory is written in everyday life, where it must obtain, still and forever, all the familiar things that is our duty to render disturbing. Our maniacal interest for “miscellaneous events” could be related to this, because in them is the habitual itself uprooting itself from normal habit, the varnish on which thus suddenly fades away. The lucid and blind violence of a Kipland Kinkel or an Alain Oreiller is a testimony what happens when one takes a lethal doses of the *negative* truth of man, that a well-planned, everyday banality is invariably asphyxiating. Up to a certain point in this offensive language comprises the field of battle; what we’re doing is burying *mines* all over it. This isn’t an arbitrary choice; it’s based on the observation that domination, which was *forced* to infest it, will never be at ease there. Though in certain aspects the economy’s present effectiveness and its apparent durability are based on a free manipulation of signs, and their operative reduction to signals, it is just as clear that the definitive success of this reduction will be its death. So that domination can still handle them as its vehicles, the signs must contain some meaning, that is to say a transcendence which in one way or another goes beyond the present state of things and the threat of nullity. And there is a contradiction there, an open wound, that if it were

to the distance of their separation from them. But their evasion gets exhausted and its underlying effectiveness quickly wanes. Consumerism can longer manage to wipe away the excess of held-back tears. Thus it must put into place selection apparatuses that are ever more ruinous and drastic, so as to exclude from the gear-works of domination those who were unable to destroy any propensity towards humanity in themselves. No one who effectively participates in this society is supposed to fail to know just what it might cost for them to let their true pain be seen in public. But in spite of these machinations suffering nonetheless continues to grow in the forbidden night of intimacy, where it stubbornly gropes for a way to pour out. And since the Spectacle can’t prevent it to manifest itself forever, it must ever more often give in and allow it to come out, but only while misrepresenting its expression, by assigning one of its empty objects to the world’s mourning, one of those royal mummies it alone holds the secret recipe for the preparation of. But suffering isn’t satisfied with such doppelgangers. And so it waits patiently, almost as if lying in wait, for a brutal interruption in the regular course of the horror, where human beings would own up to themselves with an unlimited relief: “We miss everything unspeakably. We’re dying of nostalgia for Being.” (Bloy, *Gladiators and Pig-Keeper*s).

It should now certainly be clear to the reader that we are not in any way the inventors of Critical Metaphysics: all we had to do was open our eyes a bit to see that it is plain on the very surface of our times, sketched out in the *hollow imprint* it’s left. Critical Metaphysics manifests itself to anyone that decides to live with their eyes open, which only requires a particular stubbornness that *people* usually just pass off as madness. Because Critical Metaphysics is *rage* to such degree of accumulation that it becomes a *viewpoint*.

But such a viewpoint, one that has recovered from all the be-guilements of modernity, does not know the world as distinct from itself. It *sees* that in their typical forms materialism and idealism have had their day, that “the infinite is as indispensable to man

as the planet he lives on” (Dostoevski), and that even where *people* seems to be flourishing in the most satisfied immanence, consciousness is still present, as an inaudible feeling of decay, as *bad conscience*. The Kojevian hypothesis of an “end of History” where man would remain “alive as an animal in accord with his given Nature and Being,” where “the post-historical animals of the species *Homo Sapiens* (who [would live] in abundance and total security) [would be] *content* in virtue of their artistic, playful, and erotic activity, since by definition they [would be content in it],” and where discursive knowledge of the world and the self would disappear, has proved to be the Spectacle’s utopia, but has revealed itself to be unrealizable as such.

There is manifestly no access to the animal condition anywhere for human beings. Naked life is still a *form of life* for them. The unfortunate “modern man” – we’ll let the oxymoron slide – who had such a virulent need to liberate himself of the burden of freedom, is now starting to perceive that this is impossible, that he cannot renounce his humanity without renouncing *life itself*, that an animalized man is *still not* an animal. Everything, at the end of this era, leads one to believe that man can only survive in an environment that has meaning to it. Nothing shows the extent to which the possibilities that mankind contains themselves tend towards mankind’s realization as does the effort our contemporaries put into distracting themselves from them. Even people’s crimes are dictated by their desire to find an outlet for their capacities. Thus, thinking is not a duty of man, but his essential necessity, the non-fulfillment of which is suffering – that is, a contradiction between his possibilities and his existence. Human beings *physically* wilt when they negate their metaphysical dimension. At the same time, appears clearly that alienation is not a *state* that mankind has definitively been plunged into, but the incessant *activity* that *people* must engage in to remain alienated. The absence of consciousness is but the continual repression of consciousness. Insignificance *still* has meaning. The complete forgetting of the metaphysical charac-

lice. As long as they live, *people* will consider them null and void. The historic window opening at present is the psychological moment that will bring to light the content of truth, that is, the power of devastation, in all past and present critique. Since commodity domination has come to fight openly on the metaphysical battlefield, its contestation will have to place itself on that battlefield as well. This is a necessity which has as little in common with the good will of militants as it does with the resolve of their cardboard theoreticians: it has to do with the fact that this society needs that conflict in order to have something to employ all its accumulated technological powers in. Once again we’re in a high-speed chase where we can’t just be content to apply critique, but must begin by creating it. It’s about making criticism *possible*, and nothing else. Thus, Critical Metaphysics isn’t just another object jumping up on the world stage in all its definitive splendor; it is what elaborates itself and will elaborate itself in the fight against the present order. *Critical Metaphysics is the determined negation of commodity domination.*

Whether this negation manifests itself without betraying itself or whether its forces will be hijacked once again to serve the calculated spread of disaster has nothing to do with necessity; it depends on the melancholic decision made by a few free elements bound together by their determination to make a *practical* use of their consciousness, in other words, to sow in the world of the Spectacle a Terror that is the inverse of the terror that reigns at present. However, the simple fact that, faced with a reality that has taken such a perfectly systematic turn, it can no longer be contested in its details, leaves no room for ambiguity about the terrible radicalness of our era. Critique has no choice but to seize things by the roots; and the root of man is his metaphysical essence. So, when domination consists in *occupying* Publicity, building a world of facts piece by piece, a system of conventions and a mode of perception independent of any relations other than its own, its enemies recognize one another in their double ambition to destroy the aura of familiarity

## Act the Third:

*“It is necessary to take a position where destruction is not seen as the end goal, but as the precursor.” (Junger, *The Worker*)*

At the moment in the spectacle when commodity domination reveals its metaphysics, and reveals itself *to be* metaphysical, its real past and present contestation comes back onto the stage and reveals itself as such.

It is then that its relatedness to messianic movements, millenarianisms, mysticisms, the heresies of the past or even with Christians before Christianity appears.

All “modern” revolutionary thought settles before our very eyes into the encounter between German Idealism and the concept of *Tiqqun*, which in the Lurianic Kabbalah refers to a *process* – one of redemption, of the restoration of unity between meaning and life, the repair of all things *by the action of human beings*. As for its supposed “modernity,” that in the end it was but the repression of its fundamentally metaphysical character. Thence the ambiguity of the work of a Marx or a Lukacs, for example. As a rule, the Spectacle, where we saw the *conceptual* violence of idealism change into *real*, even *physical* violence, repudiates as “idealist” this very aspect of the thinking of those it didn’t manage to suppress soon enough.

That is a solid criteria to judge pseudo-contestation’s consequent criticisms, which are always allied with this society in their relentless evacuation of all the Unspeakable out of the politically expressible.

Such bastards can unfailingly be recognized by their rage to understanding nothing, see nothing, and understand nothing. As long as they live, anxiety, suffering, the experience of nothingness, the feeling of foreignness to everything – as well as the innumerable manifestations of human negativity – will be expelled from the gates of Publicity, either with a smile or with a team of riot po-

ter of all existence is certainly a catastrophe, but it is a metaphysical catastrophe. And the same affirmation, even though it’s thirty years old, still reigns in the domain of thought. “Contemporary analytic philosophy is out to exorcize such ‘myths’ or metaphysical ‘ghosts’ as Mind, Consciousness, Will, Soul, Self, by dissolving the intent of these concepts into statements on particular identifiable operations, performances, powers, dispositions, propensities, skills, etc.

The result shows, in a strange way, the impotence of the destruction- the ghost continues to haunt.” (Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man*).

Metaphysics is the specter that has haunted western man over the past five centuries, as he’s been trying to drown himself in immanence and has failed to do so.

## Act the Second:

*“The Truth must be said and the world must be shattered by it.” (Fichte).*

Even so, the *act* of acknowledging the forgetting of Being, and thus escaping nihilism, can’t be taken for granted and couldn’t have a rational foundation; *it is a question of ethical decision*. And it’s not abstractly, but *concretely* ethical: because in the world of the authoritarian commodity, where the renunciation of thought is the first condition for “fitting in socially,” consciousness is immediately an *act*, and an act for which the typical punishment is that *people* will starve you out, whether directly or indirectly, by the gracious service of those you depend on. Now that all the repressive courtrooms where ethics were alienated into morality have fallen to pieces, it has finally become clear what ‘ethics’ means, in all their original radicalness, which designates it as *the unity of the morals of human beings and their consciousness of them*, and as such the absolute enemy of this world. This could be explained in

more decisive terms as follows: you're either fighting for the Spectacle, or for the Imaginary Party; there's nothing in between. All those who could accommodate themselves to a society that accommodates itself so well to inhumanity, all those for whom it already sits well to give the alms of their indifference to their own suffering and that of their peers, all those who speak of disaster as if it were simply another new market with promising prospects – are not our brothers. Rather we would find their *deaths* highly desirable. And we'd certainly not blame them for not devoting themselves to Critical Metaphysics, which, as a mere discourse, could constitute a particular social object to decide to take up, but for *refusing* to see the truth in it, which, being everywhere, is beyond any particular decision. No alibi holds up in the face of such blindness; a metaphysical aptitude is the most common thing in the world: "you don't need to be a shoemaker to know whether a shoe is going to fit you" (Hegel); in the present conditions, refusing to exercise this aptitude constitutes a permanent crime. And this crime, the denial of the metaphysical character of what exists, has enjoyed such a lasting and generalized complicity that it has become revolutionary merely to *formulate* the a priori principles on which all human experience is based. And here we must recount them; our times should be ashamed of the fact that we have to.

1.

Like a disease is obviously not merely the sum of its symptoms, the world is manifestly not the sum of its objects, of "the case at hand," nor of its phenomena, but rather it is a characteristic of humanity itself. The world exists as a world only for mankind. Conversely, there is no *world-less humanity*; Bloom's situation is a transitional abstraction. Each person finds himself always already projected into a world which he experiences as a dynamic totality, and he necessarily goes out into it with a prior understanding of it, however rudimentary it may be. His mere preservation requires that.

appears like a foreign jurisdiction that he inhabits against his will. By buying its further survival at the price of putting the metaphysical *to work for it*, commodity domination has robbed this terrain of its neutrality, which alone guaranteed its victorious advancement: it made metaphysics into a *material force*. Every bit of progress it makes must henceforth be responded to by a substantial rebellion that will oppose its *faith* head on, and which will proclaim in one tone or another that humanity "can only be revived by a metaphysical act of reawakening the spiritual element that created or maintained it in its earlier or ideal existence" (Lukacs). And so the commodity order, which is taking on water everywhere, will have to *physically* eliminate, one by one, all extremism or sects, every independent metaphysical universe that may manifest itself, until the unification and victory of the Imaginary Party. All the individuals that refuse to wallow in its half-starved immanence, in the nothingness of entertainment, all those who are too slow to renounce their own most human attributes, and in particular to renounce any concerns beyond mere being-there, will be excluded, banished, and starved out. For the others, they must be maintained in an ever more vicious fear. More than ever, "the holders of power live haunted by the terrifying idea that not only some handful of loners, but entire masses might one day free themselves of their fear: this would be their certain downfall. It's also the real reason for their rage in the face of any and all doctrines of transcendence. There's a supreme danger hidden there: that man might lose his fear. There are places on the earth where the word 'metaphysics' itself is hunted down as a heresy." (Junger, *Crossing the Line*). In this final metamorphosis of the social war, where it's no longer mere classes, but "metaphysical castes" (Lukacs, *On the Poverty of Mind*) that enter into conflict with one another, it is inevitable that men – first a few at a time, and then in their vast numbers – will gather together with an *explicit project: to POLITICIZE METAPHYSICS*. From now on, those that do so are signals of the coming insurrection of the Mind.



of when it will die. Life within such an order, which has as its only ambition anymore just to last a little bit longer, is distinguished by the extreme sadness attached to all its manifestations. Here, the survival of commodity domination, which is but the prolongation of its death agony, is hanging from a thin thread: it must ensure that the visible not be *seen*, and thus must carry out an ever more brutal takeover of the totality.

It can only exercise its sovereignty under the constant threat that *people* might make its metaphysical character explicit, and that it might be recognized for what it is: it is a tyranny, and the most mediocre tyranny that ever was — the tyranny of servitude. Everywhere, domination's efforts to maintain a particular interpretation of the world that when realized finds that it is itself subject to interpretation end up more and more tending towards brute force. Certainly, the naturalization of the commodity mode of disclosure required a constant dose of violence towards humans and things in the past. It had to raze, intern, enslave, confine, brutalize or imprison in camps the whole mass of phenomena that contradicted commodity nihilism. For the others, suffering teaches everyone how to see them only from the point of view of reification, utility, and separation, and generalized equivalence, over the whole course of their lives, in an uninterrupted manner. But now a new configuration of hostilities is coming about. Commodity domination can no longer limit itself to merely keeping its contradictions in a frozen state, getting alienation, corruption and exile taken for granted by everyone, and repressing any aspirations Man might have to Being. It must make its progress a forced march, though every step it takes towards its perfection only brings it closer to the moment of its collapse. With Biopower, which, under the cover of ameliorating, simplifying and extending "life," "form," or "health," leads to the total social control of behavior, it has played its last card: by supporting its whole weight on the cardinal illusion of common sense, the immediacy of the body, it ended up destroying it. After that, everything is ambiguous now. Bloom's own body

2. *The world is a metaphysics*, that is: the way it presents itself first of all, its supposed objective neutrality, its simple material structure, are already part of a certain metaphysical interpretation that constitutes it. The world is always the product of a mode of disclosure that brings things out into presence. Things like the "perceptible" only exist for man relative to man's superperceptible interpretation of what exists. Obviously, this interpretation does not exist separately; it cannot be found outside of the world, since it itself is what configures the world. Everything visible rests on the invisibility of this representation, which is at the root of that which lets itself be seen, which conceals even in its disclosure. The essence of the visible is thus not something visible. This mode of disclosure, imperceptible as it may be, is far more concrete than all the colorful abstractions that *people* would like to pass off as "reality."

The given is always the posed, its being comes from an original affirmation of the Mind: "the world is my representation."

At their bottom, that is to say in their emergence, humanity and the world coincide.

3. The perceptible and the superperceptible are fundamentally the same, but in a different way. Forgetting one of these two terms and hypostatizing the other renders both of them abstract: "to dispose of the superperceptible is also to suppress the purely sensible and thus the difference between the two." (Heidegger).

4. Primitive human intuition is but the intuition for representation and imagination.

What's called perceptible immediacy comes only after that. "Men start by seeing things only such as they appear to them and not such as they are; by seeing not the things themselves but the idea they have of them." (Feuerbach, *Philosophy of the Future*). The ideology of the "concrete," which in its different versions fetishizes the "real, the "authentic," the "everyday," the "little nothings," the "natural" and other "slices of life," is but the zero-point of metaphysics, the general theory of this world — its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point of pride,

its moral sanction, its ceremonial complement, and its universal grounds for consolation and justification.

5. By all evidence, “man is a metaphysical animal” (Schopenhauer). By that it should not only be understood that he is the being for whom the world *makes sense* even in its insignificance, or whose disquiet does not let itself be appeased by anything finished, but quite eminently that all his experience is woven in a fabric *that does not exist*. That’s why materialist systems properly so-called, as well as absolute skepticism, have never been able *by themselves* to have a very deep or a very lasting influence. Certainly, man can for long periods of time refuse to consciously engage in metaphysics, and that’s most often how he deals with it, but he cannot completely do without it. “Nothing is so portable, if one wants, as metaphysics [...] And what would be difficult, and even totally impossible, would be to fail to have – would be to not have a metaphysics of one’s own, or at least some metaphysics... But it’s not just that not everyone has the same one, which is only too obvious, but not everyone even has the same kind of metaphysics, nor the same degree of metaphysics, nor a metaphysics of the same nature, nor of the same quality.” (Peguy, *Situations*).

6. The metaphysical is not the simple negation of the physical; it is, symmetrically, also its foundation and its dialectical transcendence. The prefix meta-, which means both “with” and “beyond”, does not imply a disjunction, but an *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian sense. Hence metaphysics is in no way something abstract, because it is the basis for all concreteness; it’s what stands behind the physical and makes it possible. It “goes beyond nature to get at what is hidden in it or behind it, but it considers this hidden element only as something appearing in nature, not as something independent of all phenomena” (Schopenhauer). Metaphysics is thus the simple fact that the mode of disclosure and the object disclosed in a primordial sense remain “the same thing.”

Thus all together it is *experience as experience*, and is only possible on the basis of *a phenomenology of everyday life*.

above all of objectivized discourses, pre-established codes, materialized grammars.” (Virno, *The Labyrinths of Language*). In the end, since “communicative action” is becoming the very material used in productive activity, the *reality* of language falls among the number of things that can be experienced in a mere leisurely way. In this sense, the Spectacle is the final figure of metaphysics, where it objectivizes itself *as such*, becomes visible and shows itself to man as material evidence for the fundamental alienation of the Common.

In these conditions, *man’s metaphysical dimension escapes him, confronts him and oppresses him*. But just as well, before man becomes completely and totally alienated he cannot *concretely* comprehend it, or consequently hope to reappropriate it for himself. The darkest days give us the greatest hope, precisely because they will come on the eve of victories.

“It would be ridiculous to reproach chewing gum for being an affront to metaphysics’ good taste, but one could probably show that Wrigley’s profits and their Chicago palace were due to its operation of a social function consisting in the reconciliation of men with their impoverished conditions of existence and dissuading them from criticizing them.

**It’s a matter of explaining that chewing gum, far from being harmful to metaphysics, is itself metaphysical.”**

(Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*)

As soon as the economy becomes flesh, it must perish like all living things. It falls under the hard law of the mortal realm, and knows it. In the overthrow of all things, in the chasms that we see opening up everywhere, we can already see the hints of its impending shipwreck. Commodity domination has now embarked upon an endless, hopeless war to put up obstacles to the necessity of this process. It’s no longer a question of whether it will die, but

which is the affirmation of the quantitative replaceability of all things, that is to say the negation of all qualitative differences and all real determinations, reveals itself to be *the negation of the world*. The principle according to which “everything has a price” was certainly always the morbid refrain of nihilism before it became the global hymn of the economy. Also, and this is an everyday experience that no one can escape, putting this interpretation of the world into acts would consist exclusively in taking away all the qualities of everything, purging every being of all particular meaning, and reducing everything to the non-differentiated identity of general equivalence – in a word, to nothing. There’s no more this or that; and singularity remains but an illusion. What appears now no longer arrogates to itself any higher organic nature, but gives itself over with infinite abandon to the simple fact of being, without being anything. Under the effect of this rising disaster, the world has ended up starting to look like just a chaos of empty forms. All the pronouncements made above, which *people* thought were safely cut off from having any possible effectiveness, take form in the ensembles of a tangible, oppressive, and, to put it plainly, diabolical reality. In the Spectacle, the metaphysical character of existence is taken as an obvious, central fact: the world has become *visibly* metaphysical. Even the narrowest of minds, whose custom it always was to hide in their comfortable sense of objectivity – whether it’s rainy weather or nice out – can’t even be spoken of without immediately evoking the decline of industrial society. There, the light has solidified, the incomprehensible mode of disclosure that *produces* all being-there has become *incarnate as such*, that is to say independent of all content, in a sprawling sector of social activity all its own. That which makes things visible itself becomes visible there. Phenomena, by autonomizing themselves from what they manifest, that is by manifesting no more than nothingness, immediately thus appear *as phenomena*. The surroundings man exists in, the metropolis, itself proves to be a mere “linguistic formation, a constituted framework comprised

7. The successive defeats that mechanistic science has for a century ceaselessly mopped up and repressed, both on the battlefield of infinitely great matters and on the battlefield of infinitely small matters, have definitively condemned the project of establishing any physicality without metaphysics. And once again, after so many foreseeable disasters, we must acknowledge along with Schopenhauer that the physical explanation – which, as such, though it refuses to see it, “needs a *metaphysical* explanation to give it the key to all its presuppositions – [...] clashes everywhere with a metaphysical explanation that suppresses it; that is, one that takes away from it its explanatory character.” “The naturalists try hard to show that all phenomena, even spiritual phenomena, are physical, and in this, they are right; their error is that they don’t see that all physical things equally have a metaphysical side to them.” And we read the following lines as a bitter prophecy: “The greater is the progress made by *physics*, the greater it will make felt a need for a *metaphysics*. In effect, though on the one hand, a more exact, more widespread, and more profound knowledge of nature undermines and ends up overturning the metaphysical ideas ongoing up to then; on the other hand it will serve to give a clearer and more complete perspective on the issue of metaphysics itself, by removing it ever more severely away from its physical environment.”

8. Commodity metaphysics is not just one more metaphysics among others; it is *the* metaphysics, that denies all metaphysics and above all denies itself as metaphysics. It is also why it is, among all, *the most null* of metaphysics, the one that would sincerely like to pass itself as simple physicality. Contradiction, that is, falsehood, is its most durable and distinctive character, the one that affirms so categorically what is but pure negation. The historical period of this metaphysics’ *explanation*, and its nullity, is one of nihilism. But this explanation must itself be explained. Once and for all: there is no commodity world, there is only a commodity perspective on the world.

9. Language is not a system of symbols, but the promise of a reconciliation between words and things. “Its universals are the primary elements in experience; they are not so much philosophical concepts as they are real qualities of the world as we confront it every day. ...Each substantial universal tends to express qualities that surpass all particular experience, but which persist in the mind, not as fictions of the imagination or as logical possibilities, but as the substance, the ‘matter’ our world is made of.” From this it follows that the operation by which a concept designates a reality is simultaneously the negation and the realization of that reality. “Thus the concept of beauty encompasses all the beauty not *yet* realized; the concept of freedom all the freedoms that not *yet* attained.” (Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*). Universals have a *normative* character, which is why nihilism has declared war on them. “The *ens perfectissimum* is at the same time the *ens realissimum*. The more a thing is perfected, the more it really is.” (Lukacs, *Soul and Form*). What is excellent is more *real*, more *general* than the mediocre, because it realizes its essence more fully: a specific concept does indeed *unify* a specific variety, but it unifies it by aristocratizing it. Critical thought is thought that brings about an exit from nihilism, starting from a profane transcendence of language and the world. What is transcendental to critical thought is *that the world exists*, and what is unspeakable is *that there is a language there*. There is an uncommon faculty of conflagration to a consciousness that spends its time on the edges of such nothingness, gazing into its abyss. Every time it finds that language to communicate itself, history will be marked by it.

What’s essential is to concentrate our efforts in that direction. Language is both what’s at stake and the stage that the decisive part of this will be played out on. “It will always only be about knowing whether we can reconcile speech and life, and how.” (Brice Parain, *On Dialectics*).

10. The basis for the “categorical imperative to overturn all the conditions in which man is a humiliated, enslaved, abandoned, and

sands,” remarked Valery in 1929, with all the disarming naivety of a time when the meaning of life had not yet become just another consumer product in the shopping cart, just the most hackneyed sales pitch. Even when the total realization of abstraction – in the mimetic behavior of hip youth, the televised image, or the new city – makes obvious to everyone the clearly physical character of metaphysics, Biopower, a differentiated moment of the Spectacle, shamefully admits the *political* character – and there is a “meta-physical nugget present in all politics” (Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*) – of the rawest physicality, of “bare life.”

Underneath this relationship is a process of reunification between the perceptible and the superperceptible, meaning and life, the mode of disclosure and the object revealed; that implies commodity society’s complete disavowal of its very basis, but at the same time such reunification only operates *on the terrain of their separation itself*. It follows that this pseudo-reconciliation is not a passage of each of these terms through each other and onto a superior level, but rather their suppression pure and simple, which brings them together not as united, but as separate. So much so, that on its flipside the Spectacle presents itself as the realization of commodity metaphysics, as the realization of nothingness. The commodity here effectively becomes the form in which all manifestations of life appear, the objective form itself both of object and subject – love, for example, appears from now on as a regulated exchange of orgasms, favors, sentiments, where each contracting party is ideally to benefit *equally*. The Spectacle is no longer content to externally tie together processes independent of it by monetary mediations. The commodity, that “superperceptible yet perceptible thing” (Marx), transforms into something *perceptible yet superperceptible*. It imposes itself *in reality* as the “universal category of total social being” (Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*). Little by little, its “ghostly objectivity” comes to drape itself over all that exists. At this point, the commodity interpretation of the world, the only content of

in these years began concretely abolishing space and time, which had put up such annoying resistance to the universal putting into equivalence of all things. The mass media then initiated the process by which little by little they concentrated together into an autonomous monopoly on the production of meaning. Then they had to extend over the whole realm of the visible a particular mode of disclosure, the essence of which is that it confers upon the ruling state of things an unshakeable objectivity, and thus models on the scale of the whole human race a relationship with the world based on a postulated approval of what exists.

It should also be noted that it was at that time that the first literary mentions of the repressive function of the Young-Girl were made, by Proust, Kraus, or Gombrowicz. It was among their contemporaries, after all, that there began to appear in the productions of the mind the figure of Bloom, so recognizable in the work of Valery, Kafka, Musil, Michaux or Heidegger.

This terminal phase of commodity modernity appears in a necessarily contradictory light, because in its process *it denies itself while realizing itself*. On the one hand, at this stage each of its advances contributes a little more to the destruction of its own foundation — the negation of metaphysics, in other words the strict disconnect between the perceptible and the superperceptible. With the virtually infinite extension of the world of experience, “the speculations...tend to obtain an increasingly realistic content; on technological grounds, the metaphysical tends to become physical.” (Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*). The separation of the perceptible and the superperceptible is ever further undermined by the new productions of industry. “the marvellous and the positive (contract) an astonishing alliance, the two old enemies swearing to engage us in a race of unlimited transformations and surprises ...The real no longer has a clear end. Place, time, and matter permit unanticipated liberties. Precision breeds dreams. Dreams take body...The fabulous is today to be found in business. The manufacture of marvel-making provides the livelihood of the thou-

contemptible being” (Marx) can only be a definition of man as a metaphysical being; that is, a being open to the *experience* of meaning. Not even Hans Jonas, that earthworm of intelligence, who will remain one as long as he exists, has failed to recognize this: “Philosophically, metaphysics has fallen into disgrace in our days, but we could not do without it — so we’ll have to risk going into it anew. Because only metaphysics is capable of telling us *why* man must exist, and thus does not have the right to provoke his disappearance from the world or to permit it by simple negligence; and also *how* man must be so as to honor and not betray the reason by virtue of which he must exist...thus we have a renewed need for metaphysics, which must, with its vision, arm us against blindness” (*On the ontological foundations of a ethics of the future*).

11. We mention in passing that reality is the unity of meaning and life.

12. All that is separated remembers that it was once unified, but the object of this memory is in the future. “The mind is what finds itself, and thus what had gotten lost” (Hegel).

13. Human freedom has never consisted of being able to go, come, and pass the time as one pleases- this is more suitable for animals, which *people* thus say, very significantly, are “at liberty” – but in giving *oneself* form, in realizing the figure one contains, or *wants*. Being means keeping your word. All of human life is but a bet on transcendence.

*People* could, in the past, treat such pronouncements with the special and amused contempt that philistines have always reserved for considerations apparently deprived of any effectiveness. But meanwhile, the metamorphoses of domination have conferred upon them an unpleasantly quotidian concreteness. The definitive and historic collapse of really existing liberalism in 1914 cornered commodity society; revolutionary assaults were making manifest, in all western countries, the incapacity of the economic perspective to fathom the *whole* of man, and finally to ensure the abstract reproduction of its relations.

Thus in order to keep the *fiction* of that liberalism feeling obvious, it had to colonize all the spheres of meaning, the whole territory of appearances and finally, as well, the whole field of imaginary creation, at first in a state of emergency and then methodically.

In a few words, it had to infest the whole of the continent of metaphysics in order to ensure its hegemony over all of the earth. Certainly, the simple fact that the very moment of its apogee, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was dominated not by harmony, but by an absolute, and absolutely false, hostility between the figures of the Artist and the Bourgeois, was in itself sufficient proof of its impossibility, but it took the great disasters that washed over the first decades of this century to fill its absurdity with enough pain to actually make the whole edifice of civilization itself appear to shake. Commodity domination then learned from those who were against it that it couldn't content itself anymore with seeing man simply as a worker, an inert factor in production, but that to remain what it was, it was going to have to organize the whole of everything that stretched outside the sphere of material production as well. However repugnant it may have seemed at the time to it, it had to impose a brusque *accelerando* on society's socialization process, and lay hands on everything it had denied the existence of up to then, all that it had disdainfully written off as "non-productive activity", "private fantasy", art and "metaphysics."

In the space of a few years, and at first without significant resistance, Publicity had entirely given itself over to the arbitrary power of the spectacular protectorate – it is a general fact that the undertaking of ancient offensives is rarely recognized when they make use of totally new means. Since the commodity interpretation of the world had been revealed in acts to be insane, *people* undertook to put it *into* the very heart of all acts. Once commodity mysticism, which *formally* and *externally* postulated the general equivalence of everything, and the universal interchangeability of all, proved itself to be a pure negation, a morbid official takeover,

*people* resolved to make all things *really* equivalent, and beings *inwardly* exchangeable. Since the systematic liquidation of all that contained a hidden transcendence in its immediacy (communities, ethos, values, language, history) put humanity in a place where it was dangerously likely to make demands for freedom, *people* decided to industrially produce cheap transcendences, and to hawk them priced like gold. We stand at the other extreme of this long night of aberration. Because even as it was its failure that in the past created the basis for the infinite extension of the world of the economy, the contemporary accomplishment of this universal extension carries the announcement of its upcoming collapse.

This critical *realization* process of the ever-impooverished commodity metaphysics has been referred to variously as "Total Mobilization" by Junger, as the "Great Transformation" by Polanyi, or the "Spectacle" by Debord. For the time being the lattermost concept remains indisputably one of the war machines it pleases us to use, as a *Figure* that transversely penetrates all the spheres of social activity – one where *the object revealed merges with its mode of disclosure*. Though the Figure can't be deduced simply from its manifestations, since it is at their very root, it could nonetheless be useful to take note at least of some of the most superficial of them. So in the 1920s, advertising took it upon itself to inculcate the Blooms with "a new philosophy of existence," in the terms of its first ideologues, Walter Pitkin and Edward Filene; to present to them the world of consumerism as "*the world of acts*" with the declared intention of thwarting the communist offensive. The adjusted production of cultural commodities and their massive circulation – the lightning deployment of the movie industry is a good example of this – was responsible for tightening up the control over joyous behavior, spreading lifestyles adapted to the new demands of capitalism, and above all spreading the illusion of their viability. Urbanism was responsible for building a physical environment commanded by the commodity *Weltanschauung*. The formidable development of the means of communication and transportation