

THESES ON THE IMAGINARY PARTY

The political and moral significance of thinking only appears in those rare moments in history when “things fall apart; the center cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,” when “the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.” At these moments thinking ceases to be a marginal affair in political matters. When everyone is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action.”

Hannah Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations”

I

The Imaginary Party is the particular form taken by Contradiction in the historical period when domination imposes itself as the dictatorship *of* visibility, and dictatorship *in* visibility; in a word, as *Spectacle*. Because it is above all merely the *negative* party of *negativity*, and because the sorcery of the Spectacle (since it is unable to liquidate them) consists in rendering *invisible* all the expressions of negation – and that goes for freedom *in acts* as well as for suffering or pollution – its most remarkable character is precisely that it is reputed to be non-existent, or – more exactly – to be imaginary. But *people* speak incessantly about it, and exclusively about it, since a little more every day it disrupts the proper operation of society. Still, *people* avoid saying its name – could it be said anyway? – with the same fear as if they were invoking the Devil. And *people* are quite right to do so: in a world so that has so conspicuously become an attribute of the Mind, pronouncements have the unfortunate tendency to become performative. Inversely, the nominal evocation of the Imaginary Party, even right here in these pages, may serve as its act of constitution. Up to now, that is, up to its naming, it could be no more than what the classical proletariat was before coming to know itself as the proletariat: a class of civil society that is not a class of civil society, but rather its very dissolution. And, in effect, today it comprises but the negative multitudes of those who *have no class*, and don’t want to have any; the solitary crowd of those who have reappropriated their fundamental non-belonging to commodity society in the form of their voluntary non-participation in it. At first, the Imaginary Party presents itself simply as the community of defection, the party of exodus, the fleeting and paradoxical reality of a *subjectless subversion*. But this is no more the essence of the Imaginary Party than the dawn is the essence of the day. It still remains to be seen

how it will come fully into its own, and that can only appear in its living relationship with what produced it and now denies it. "Only he who has the dedication and will to make the future come into being can see the concrete truth of the present."
(Lukàcs, *History and Class Consciousness*).

II

The Imaginary Party is the party that tends to become *real*, incessantly. The Spectacle has no other ministry aside from endlessly obviating its manifestation as such, that is, obviating its own becoming-conscious, its becoming-real, since were it not to do so it would have to admit the existence of the negativity of which (since the Spectacle is the *positive* party of *positivity*) it is the perpetual denial. It is thus part of the essence of the Spectacle that it acts like its opposition is just a negligible residue, makes it a total non-value, and declares it criminal and inhuman as a whole, which comes down to the same thing; otherwise of course it would have to recognize that it itself is the criminal monster. That's why there are really only two parties in this society: the party of those that claim that there is only one party, and the party of those who know that there are really two. That's all we need to know to see who's with us.

III

It is incorrect that people reduce war to the raw event of confrontation, but they do so for reasons that can easily be explained. It would certainly be quite harmful to public order if it were to be seen for what it really is: the supreme possibility, the preparation and adjournment of which are at work within all human groupings in a continual movement of which peace is really but a moment. The same goes for the social war, whose battles can be perfectly silent and, in a manner of speaking, clean [white]. They can hardly even be discerned in the sudden resurgence of the dominant aberration. In light of the facts, it must be acknowledged that the confrontations are exaggeratedly rare compared to the losses.



IV

It is by applying to these kinds of cases its fundamental axiom, according to which whatever is not seen does not exist (*esse est percipi*), that the Spectacle can maintain the exorbitant, world-wide illusion of a fragile civil peace, which to be perfected would require that the Spectacle be allowed to extend its gigantic society-pacification and contradiction-neutralization campaign to all domains. But its predictable failure is only logical, since its pacification campaign is *also a war* – and certainly the most frightful and destructive war that has ever been, since it is waged in the name of peace. After all, it's one of the Spectacle's most consistent traits that it only speaks of war in a language where the word "war" doesn't even appear anymore, and where it's simply a matter of "humanitarian operations," "international sanctions," the "maintenance of order," "protecting human rights," the fight against "terrorism," "sects," "extremism," or "pedophilia," and above all, of "the peace process." The enemy is no longer called the *enemy*, it is called *outside the law* and *outside of humanity* because of its having broken and disturbed the peace; and each war waged in order to preserve or extend positions of economic or strategic strength will have to make use of propaganda mechanisms that will transform it into a crusade or into humanity's last great war. The lie that the Spectacle hinges upon requires that it be so. Furthermore, this non-meaning reveals a surprising systematic coherence and internal logic, but even this system, which in appearances is supposedly apolitical – antipolitical, even – serves the existing configurations of hostility, and provokes new regroupings of friends as enemies and vice-versa, since not even it can escape the logic of politics. Those who do not understand war do not understand their times.

V

Since its birth, commodity society has never given up its absolute hatred of politics, and that's what bothers it the most: the fact that even the project of eradicating it is itself *still* political. It is certainly willing to talk about law, economy, culture, philosophy, environment, even about political policy -- but never about *the political itself*, that realm of violence and existential antagonisms. In the end, commodity society is but the *political* organization of a raging negation of politics. This negation invariably takes the form of a naturalization, the impossibility of which is betrayed in just as invariable a manner by periodic crises. The classical economy, and the century of liberalism that corresponds to it (1815-1914), was the first attempt – and the first failure – to bring about such a naturalization. The doctrine of utility, the system of needs, the myth of the "natural" self-regulation of markets, the ideology of human rights, parliamentary democracy – all these were means brought to bear over time in order to serve that purpose. But it was unquestionably in the historical period that began in 1914 that the naturalization of commodity domination came to take on its most radical form: Biopower. In Biopower, the social totality, which little by little becomes autonomous, begins to take over *life itself*. On the one hand, we're seeing a politicization of the biological realm: society has over the years more and more taken administrative responsibility for the health, beauty, sexuality, and

mobilizable energy of each individual. On the other, we're seeing a biologicalization of the political: ecology, economy, the general distribution of "well-being" and "care," the growth, longevity, and aging of the populace - all these emerge as the principal subjects for measuring the exercise of power. And indeed, this is only the appearance of the process, not the process itself. In reality it's about falsely setting up as obvious and as based on the body and biological life a movement towards total behavior control, control over representations and relations among people - forcing assent to the Spectacle by each individual, by making it out to be part of their instincts of self-preservation. Because it bases its absolute sovereignty on the zoological unity of the human *race* and on the immanent *continuum* of the production and reproduction of "life," Biopower is that essentially homicidal tyranny that is exercised over each person in the name of all, and in the name of "nature." All hostility to this society, whether that of the criminal, the deviant, or the political enemy, must be liquidated because it goes against the best interests of the human species, and more specifically the human species as it exists in the very person of the criminal, the deviant, and the political enemy.

OBVIOUSLY!

"Delinquency is becoming the primary force of socialization, in lieu of institutions."
(Le Monde, Tuesday, June 9th, 1998)

And so it is that each new diktat, restricting a little further our already pathetic freedoms, claims to protect each of us from ourselves by opposing to the extravagance of its sovereignty the *ultima ratio* of bare life. "Forgive them, they know not what they do," says Biopower, and readies the syringe. Certainly, bare life has always been the point of view from which commodity society considered mankind, a point of view where human life is no longer distinct from animal life. But now it is all manifestations of transcendence (which politics is just a loud expression of), all remnants of freedom, all expressions of the metaphysical essence and negativity of mankind that is treated like a sickness, which for the sake of general happiness must be suppressed. The revolutionary penchant - that endemic pathology which a permanent vaccination campaign has still not managed to deal with - is explained away as an unfortunate convergence of a risky heredity, excessive hormones, and a "chemical imbalance" among certain neuro-mediators. There can't be any politics *within* Biopower, just *against* Biopower. Because Biopower is the negation of politics fulfilled, real politics has to start by liberating itself from Biopower; that is, by revealing it as such.

VI

In Biopower, man's physical dimension escapes him, stands against him and oppresses him; and it is in that sense that Biopower is but a moment of the Spectacle, like physics is a moment of metaphysics. Iron necessity, felt even in what in appearances is the simplest, most immediate, most material detail - the body - condemns the present movement of contestation to having to either take a position on the metaphysical level or be nothing. And so it cannot be understood nor perceived from inside the Spectacle or Biopower, any more than can anything to do

with the Imaginary Party. For now its primary attribute is its de facto invisibility within the commodity mode of disclosure, which is most definitely metaphysical, but has that most singular of metaphysics which itself is the denial of metaphysics, and above all it denies that it itself is metaphysical. But the Spectacle fears the empty void, and so it can't restrict itself to just denying the massive evidence of these new kinds of hostilities agitating the social body ever more violently; it must go further and mask them. And so it falls within the proper role of the many-varied forces of mystification and concealment to invent ever more empty pseudo-conflicts, conflicts that themselves are ever more fabricated, and still ever more violent, however anti-political they may be. And upon this deaf equilibrium of Terror rests the apparent calm of all late capitalist societies.

VII

In this sense, the Imaginary Party is *the* political party, or more precisely the party of *the political*, since it is the only part of society that perceives the metaphysical workings of *absolute hostility* at the source of this society; that is, that sees the serious schism at its very heart. And so it too takes up the road of *absolute politics*. The Imaginary Party is the form taken by politics in the time of the collapse of Nation-States – we now know that they are quite mortal. It dramatically reminds every State that it is not demented enough or vigorous enough to successfully pass itself off as *total*, that the political space is in reality no different from physical, social, cultural space, etc., that, in other words - and according to an old formula - *everything* is political, or at least it is potentially. At this point, politics appears rather like the Whole of those spaces that liberalism believed that it could fragment, premise by premise. The era of Biopower is when, domination having applied itself to the very body, even individual physiology takes on a political character, in spite of the laughable alibi of biological naturalness. Politics is thus more than ever the total, existential, metaphysical realm where the movement of human freedom takes place.

VIII

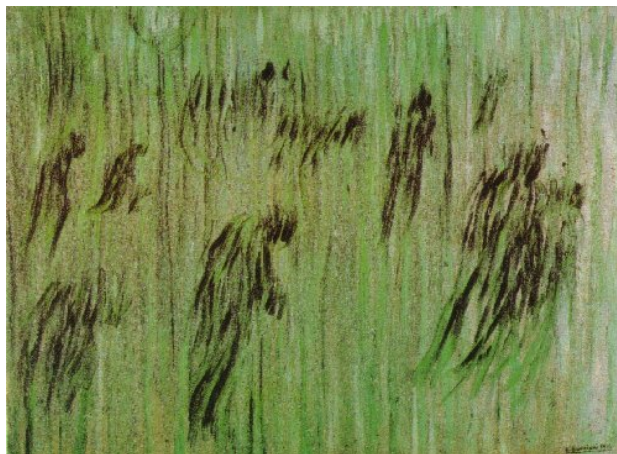
In these darkling days we are watching the final phase of the decomposition of commodity society, which, we admit, has lasted only too long. On the planetary level, we are seeing the divergence, of ever growing proportions, between the map of the commodity and the territories of Man. The Spectacle stages a global chaos, but this "chaos" only manifests the now admitted inability of the economic vision of the world to understand anything about human reality. It has become obvious that "value" no longer measures anything: its accountants are spinning their wheels. The only point of work now is to satisfy the universal need for servitude. Even money has ended up letting itself be won over by the emptiness it propagated. At the same time, the totality of the old bourgeois institutions, which rested on the abstract principles of equivalence and representation, have fallen into a crisis, and they look too fatigued to recover: Justice no longer manages to judge, Teaching no longer manages to teach, Medicine can't cure, the Parliament can't legislate, the Police can't get the law to be respected, and Families can't even raise their children. Certainly, the outer shell of the old edifice remains, but all the life has definitely gone out of it.

It floats in a timelessness that is ever more absurd and ever more perceptible. To stave off the mounting disaster they still from time to time put their symbols on parade, but no one understands them anymore. The only ones their magic fascinates now are its magicians. And so the National Assembly building became a historical monument, which is only exciting to the stupid curiosity of tourists. The Old World spreads out before our eyes a desolate landscape of new ruins and dead carcasses, all just waiting for a demolition that never comes, and they might wait for it forever if no one gets the idea to undertake it. People never planned so many parties, and their enthusiasm about them never looked so false, so feigned, so forced. Even the greatest celebrations these days have a certain air of sadness to them that they can't shake off. In spite of all appearances, the death of the whole takes place not so much in the way it decomposes and becomes corrupted organ by organ, nor in any other positively observable phenomenon for that matter; rather it is in the general indifference that this decomposition and corruption unleashes, an indifference that brings about the plain feeling that no one thinks it concerns them and no one resolves to remedy the problem. And since "faced with the feeling that everything is falling apart, to do no more than to wait patiently and blindly for the collapse of the old, cracking edifice, eaten away at its very roots, and to let oneself be crushed in the falling pile, is as contrary to wisdom as it is to dignity," (Hegel) we foresee the preparation of an inevitable Exodus out of that "old cracking edifice," from certain signs that the spectacular mode of disclosure makes impossible to decipher. Already, masses of *silent* and *solitary* people have begun to appear, who have chosen to live in the interstices of the commodity world and *refuse to participate* in anything to do with it. It's not just that the charms of the commodity leave them doggedly cold, it's that they have an inexplicable suspicion about everything that ties them to the world it has built, which is now collapsing. At the same time, the ever more obvious malfunctions of the capitalist State, which has become incapable of any kind of integration with the society upon which it stands, guarantee that at its very heart there will subsist necessarily temporary spaces of indetermination, ever vaster, ever more numerous autonomous zones. In many ways this resembles a mass experience of illegality and clandestinity. There are moments where people already *live* as if this world no longer existed. During this time, like a confirmation of this bad omen, we see everywhere the hopeless tensing and tightening of an order that feels itself dying. *People* still talk about reforming the Republic, when the time of republics is over. *People* still talk about the colors on flags, when the time of flags itself is past. Such is the grandiose and mortal spectacle that unveils itself to whoever dares to consider our times from the point of view of their negation; that is, from the perspective of the Imaginary Party.

IX

The historical period we are entering must be one of extreme violence and great disorder. A permanent and generalized state of exception is the only way commodity society can maintain itself when it has completely undermined its own conditions of possibility so as to set itself firmly in its nihilism. Certainly, domination still has force – physical and symbolic force – but it has no more than that. This society has lost its grip on the discourse of its *critique* at the same time as

the discourse of its *justification*. It finds itself faced with an abyss, which it discovers is actually located at its very heart. And it is this truth which can be felt everywhere that it distorts endlessly, by embracing at every opportunity the "language of flattery" where the "content of the discourse that the mind has with itself and about itself is the perversion of all concepts and all realities; it is the universal trickery of the self and the other, and the impudent expression of that trickery is thus the highest truth," and where "the simple consciousness of the true and good... can tell the mind nothing that it doesn't itself already know and say." In these conditions, "if simple consciousness finally demands the dissolution of this whole world of perversion, it can nevertheless still not require *the individual* to remove himself from this world, because even Diogenes himself in his barrel is conditioned by it; furthermore this requirement posed to the singular individual is precisely what passes for evil, since *evil* consists in being concerned only for *oneself* as a *singular being*... the requirement for this dissolution can only be addressed to the very spirit of culture." Here we see the true description of the language that domination now speaks in its most advanced forms, when it has incorporated into its discourse the critique of the consumer society and the spectacle, and of their misery. The "Canal+ culture" and the "Inrockuptibles spirit" are fleeting but significant examples of this. It is more generally the scintillating and sophisticated language of the modern cynic, who has definitively identified all uses of freedom with the abstract freedom to accept everything, but in his own way. In his blathering solitude, his acute consciousness of his world prides itself on its perfect powerlessness to change it. And that consciousness ends up maniacally mobilized against self-consciousness and all quests for substantiality. Such a world, which "knows everything as having become foreign to itself, knows being-for-itself as separate from being-in-itself, or the focus and the goal as separate from the truth," (Hegel) a world which, in other words, while effectively dominating, has attached itself to the luxury of openly acknowledging its domination as vain, absurd, and illegitimate, only calls up against itself - as the only response to what it expresses - the violence of those who, deprived by it of all rights, draw their rights from hostility. *People* can no longer rule innocently.



Umberto Boccioni, *Stati d'animo I: Quelli che restano* (1911)
[States of the Spirit I: Those That Stayed Behind]

X

At this stage, domination, which feels the life trickling out of it inexorably, has gone insane, and claims a tyranny that it no longer has the means to maintain. Biopower and the Spectacle are the complementary moments corresponding to this final radicalization of the commodity aberration, which appears to be its triumph and is but a prelude to its defeat. In both cases, it's a matter of eradicating from reality everything within it that exceeds representation. At the end, an unchained arbitrariness is attached to this ruined edifice that intends to regulate everything and annihilate as soon as possible anything that would dare to give itself an existence independent of it. We are giving ourselves one. The society of the Spectacle has become inflexible on this point: everyone *must* participate in the collective crime of its existence; *nothing* must be able to claim to remain outside of it. It can no longer tolerate the existence of that colossal abstaining segment which is the Imaginary Party. Everyone must "work," that is, put themselves at its disposition at all times and be *mobilizable*. In order to achieve its ends, it makes equal use of the most brute means, such as the threat of starvation, and the most underhanded of means, such as the Young-Girl. The dusty old tune of "citizenship," which is sung everywhere on any and every subject, expresses the dictatorship of this abstract duty of participating in a social totality which has nevertheless become autonomized. And it is thus, from the very fact of this dictatorship, that the negative party of negativity little by little becomes unified and acquires positive content. The elements of the multitude of indifferent beings, not knowing one another at all and thinking that they are part of no party, all find themselves facing a unique and central dictatorship, the dictatorship of the Spectacle - and the wage system, the commodity, nihilism, or the imperative of visibility are but partial aspects of that. It is thus domination itself that forces those who would be content with a floating existence to recognize themselves for what they are: rebels, *Waldgänger*s. "The contemporary enemy ceaselessly imitates Pharaoh's army: it hunts down the fugitives, the deserters, but it never manages to get before them or confront them." (Paolo Virno: *Miracle, Virtuosity, and Déjà Vu*). In the course of this exodus, unprecedented solidarities form, friends and brothers gather at new front lines that sketch themselves out, and the formal opposition between the Spectacle and the Imaginary Party becomes concrete. Thus a powerful sense of *belonging to non-belonging* develops among those who realize their essential marginality, a sort of community of Exile.

The necessary failure of total mobilization

"What would be the dangers of a total depersonalization of space? It would accentuate what has already begun, that is, the feeling of having a very fragile place in the business. It would reinforce the idea that we are pawns, that we are interchangeable. We would have to live as if in a state of pure transition with contractual and ephemeral relationships. Perhaps that would help people to lose their illusions, those who thought that with a CDI [indeterminate-duration employment contract] in a big structure they'd be safe? But this change could deteriorate the social climate, the coherence of the business. Relationships of loyalty and belonging to the business would be very attenuated." (Liberation, Monday October 5, 1998)

The simple feeling of being foreign to this world becomes, as circumstances change, an *intimacy* with that foreignness. Running away, which was simply an action, becomes a strategy. Now, "escape, called the thirty-sixth strategem, is the supreme

politics.” But the Imaginary Party is already no longer just imaginary; it has begun to recognize itself as such and to slowly progress towards its realization, which will be its disappearance. Metaphysical hostility to this society has now ceased being lived in a purely negative mode, as a smooth indifference to anything that might come about, as a refusal to *play along*, as a defeat of domination via a rejection of denomination. It has taken on a positive character, and one that is quite disturbing; thus power is not wrong, in its paranoia, to see terrorists everywhere. It is a cold, clean hatred, like a kind of angina; a hatred which for the time being does not openly, theoretically express itself, but rather shows itself as a practical paralysis of the whole social apparatus, a mute and obstinate malice, the sabotage of all innovation, all movement, and all intelligence. There is no “crisis” anywhere; there is only the omnipresence of the Imaginary Party, whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere, since it operates *on the same territory* as the Spectacle.

XI

Each of this society’s failures must be understood *positively*, as should the work of the Imaginary Party and the work of negativity, that is, of what is human. In a war like this, everything that denies one of the parties, even if only subjectively, *objectively* backs the other one. The radicalness of our times imposes its conditions. Regardless of the Spectacle, it is the notion of the Imaginary Party that renders visible the new configuration of hostilities. The Imaginary Party encompasses everything that conspires to destroy the present order in thought, word, or deed. The disaster is its doing.

XII

Up to a certain point, the Imaginary Party is the specter, the invisible presence, the fantasized return of the Other to a society where all otherness is *suppressed*, where the reduction of everything separate to equivalence is generalized. But this bad dream, this suicidal ideation running through the Spectacle’s mind, in light of the present character of social production - itself imaginary - must soon engender its reality as consciousness becoming practical, as *immediately* practical consciousness. The Imaginary Party is the other name for the shameful sickness of power when it has been weakened: paranoia, which Canetti only too vaguely defined as an “illness of power.” The desperate and planet-wide deployment of ever more massive and sophisticated apparatuses for the control of public space materializes in a piquant way the asylum-grade madness of domination when it’s been wounded; it still pursues the old dream of the Titans, the dream of a universal State, when it is just another midget like the rest of them; and that makes it sick. In this terminal phase, all it talks about anymore is the fight against terrorism, delinquency, extremism and criminality, since it is constitutionally forbidden to explicitly mention the existence of the Imaginary Party. This, moreover, is certainly a combat handicap for it, since it can’t name “the real enemy, inspired by infinite courage” (Kafka) so as to direct the hatred of its fanatics against it.

XIII

It must however be acknowledged that this paranoia has some reason to it, in light of the direction taken by historical development. It is a *fact* that at the point we have arrived to in the process of *the socialization of society*, each individual act of destruction constitutes an act of *terrorism*; that is, it *objectively* attacks the whole of society. And so, to the extreme, suicide - which in a single gesture intermingles freedom and death - manifests a limitation, a suspension, and an annulment of the sovereignty of Biopower, and acquires the sense of a direct attack on domination, which thus finds itself deprived of a fine source for the consumption, production, and reproduction of its world. In the same way, when the law rests on nothing but its pronouncement - that is, on force and arbitrariness - when it enters into a phase of autonomous proliferation, and above all, when no *ethos* gives it substance anymore, then all crime is seen as a *total* contestation of a solidly ruined social order. All murder then, is no longer the murder of a particular person - if anything like a "particular person" is still possible - but *pure murder*, with no object or subject, no guilty party nor victim. It is *immediately* an attack on the law, which does not exist but wants to reign everywhere.

Those who are the symbols of *something* that they do *not* in fact bear within them -

"Adolescents, more and more numerous and ever younger, appear to be creating a parallel system of their own, rejecting all consensual rules, and affirming themselves only on the basis of the economy of predation and the codes of violence. 'The night belongs to them,' say the police, exasperated to find themselves alone on the front lines." (Le Monde, Tuesday December 15, 1998)

The most minor of infractions have taken on a different meaning now. All crimes have become *political crimes*, and that's precisely what domination must hide at all costs so as to conceal from everyone the fact that an era has come to an end, that political violence, once buried alive, now demands that accounts be settled, in new forms that *people* didn't know it could occur in. And so the Imaginary Party manifests itself with a certain character of blind terrorism, which the Spectacle intuitively grasps. It might be interpreted as the moment when all developed commodity societies internalize the negation they had kept locked away in the illusory but cathartic exteriority of "truly existing socialism," but that is just its most superficial aspect. It would also be permissible for anyone to diminish its unusual character by affirming that as a general rule "a political unit can only exist in the form of a *res publica*, of *publicity*, and it is attacked every time a space of *non-publicity*, which would be an effective disavowal of that publicity, is created within it." It is certainly not a rare thing to see some people take the position of "disappearing into the shadows, but transforming the shadows into a strategic space from which emerge attacks that will destroy the place where the *imperium* has manifested itself up to now, which will dismantle the vast stage of official public life, which technocratic intelligence could not manage to organize." (Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*). It is a constant temptation in effect to conceive of the positive existence of the Imaginary Party simply as guerrilla war, as civil war, as partisan war; as a conflict without precisely established front lines nor declarations of hostilities, without armistices or peace accords. And in many ways what we are

dealing with here is a war that is indeed nothing but its acts, its violence, and its crimes, which appear at this point to have no other program but to become *conscious* violence, that is, a violence conscious of its metaphysical and political character.

XIV

Because the Spectacle, in virtue of the congenital aberration in its vision of the world no less than in light of strategic considerations, *cannot* say, see, or understand a single thing about the Imaginary Party, whose substance is purely metaphysical, the particular form in which the latter erupts into visibility is the *catastrophe-form*. The catastrophe is what discloses but cannot be disclosed. Thus it must be understood that catastrophe only exists *for the Spectacle*; it ruins, in a single, irreversible blow, all the Spectacle's patient labor to pass off as The World that which is merely its *Weltanschauung* -- and this shows that, like everything finite, it is incapable of conceiving of its own annihilation. In each "catastrophe" it is the commodity mode of disclosure itself being disclosed/revealed and suspended. Its character as something obvious and taken for granted thus shatters. The totality of the categories it imposes for use in the apprehension of reality is destroyed. Interest, equivalence, calculation, utility, labor, value -- all are derailed by the unattributability of negation. And so the Imaginary Party, within the Spectacle, is understood as the party of chaos, crisis, and disaster.

XV

It is to the exact extent that the catastrophe is a brilliant, searing truth that the men of the Imaginary Party work to bring it about by all means. The axes of communication are special targets for them. They know how infrastructure "worth millions" can be annihilated in a single audacious blow. They know the tactical weaknesses, the points of least resistance, and the moments when the enemy organization is vulnerable. They are thus able to choose more freely than it is what their theater of operations will be, and act on the point where the tiniest pressures can cause the greatest damages. The most troubling thing, when *people* ask them about it, is certainly that they know all about that without knowing that they know it. And so an anonymous worker in a bottling plant "just like that" dumps some cyanide into a handful of cans; a young man kills a tourist in the name of "the purity of the mountains," and signs to his crime the name "THE MESSIAH"; another blows out his petty-bourgeois father's brains on his birthday "without any apparent reason"; yet another suddenly opens fire on the peaceful flock of his schoolmates; and another "gratuitously" throws cinderblocks down onto passing cars on the freeway below from an overpass, when he's not setting them on fire in their parking lots. In the Spectacle, the Imaginary Party does not appear to be comprised of men, but of *strange acts*, in the sense understood by the Sabbatean tradition. These acts themselves are however not connected to one another, but are systematically locked away as exceptional enigmas; *people* would never think of seeing in them the manifestations of one and the same human negativity, because *people* don't know what negativity really is -- besides, *people* don't even know what humanity is, or even if such a thing exists. All this comes off as somewhat absurd, and indeed there

isn't much that doesn't at this point. Above all, *people* don't want to see that these are actually all attacks directed against them and their ignominy. And so, from the spectacular point of *view*, from the point of *view* of a certain alienation of the state of public explanation, the Imaginary Party is a mere confused ensemble of gratuitous, isolated criminal acts, the meaning of which their authors don't grasp; just the periodic eruption into visibility of ever more mysterious forms of terrorism, all things that end up producing the displeasing impression that in the long run *people* aren't safe from anything at all in the Spectacle, that an obscure threat is weighing down on the empty task-sequencing of commodity society. Doubtless what we're dealing with is a generalized state of exception. In either camp, no one can really claim security or safety anymore. That's fine. We now know that the denouement is close at hand. "Lucid holiness recognizes in itself the need to destroy, the necessity of a tragic outcome." (Bataille, *Guilty*)

XVI

The effective configuration of hostilities that the notion of the Imaginary Party makes legible is essentially marked by *asymmetry*. We are not dealing here with the struggle between two camps at rivalry over the conquest of one and the same trophy, where eventually they will shake hands over it all and one will concede defeat. Here the protagonists move on two levels so perfectly foreign to one another that they only meet at very rare points of intersection, and, to say the least, sort of randomly. But this foreignness is itself asymmetrical. Because although for the Imaginary Party the Spectacle has no mystery to it, the Imaginary Party must remain forever arcane to the Spectacle. What ensues from this is a strategic consequence of the greatest grandeur: whereas we can easily identify our enemy, which is after all the identifiable *par excellence*, our enemy cannot identify us. There is no uniform for the Imaginary Party, since uniformity is the central attribute of the Spectacle. And so all uniformity must now feel itself threatened, along with everything that uniformity acts as the currency for. In other words, the Imaginary Party *only* recognizes its enemies, not its members; its enemies are precisely *all those that people recognize*. The men of the Imaginary Party, by reappropriating their Bloom-being, reappropriate the anonymity that they have been forced into. In so doing they turn against the Spectacle the very situation that it put them in, and use it to make themselves invincible. In a certain way, they make this society pay for the *imprescriptible crime* of having deprived them of their name – that is, the recognition of their sovereign singularity and thus of all properly human life – for having excluded them from all visibility, all community, all participation; for having thrown them out into the indistinct mass of the crowd, into the nothingness of ordinary life, into the suspended animation of the mass of *homo sacer*; for having walled off their existence from any access to *meaning*. This condition, which *people* would like to keep them in, is where they *start from, by leaving it*. It is perfectly insufficient, however indicative of a certain intellectual impotence, to remark that in this terrorism, innocent people receive the chastisement "that they are nothing, that they have no destiny, that they are dispossessed of their name by a system that is itself anonymous, consigned to an anonymity that they then become the purest incarnation of. (Because) they are the finished products of the social, of an abstract

sociality which has now become globalized.” (Baudrillard) Each of these murders, without any identifiable motive or particular victim, each of these anonymous acts of sabotage, constitutes an act of *Tiqqun*; it executes the sentence that this world *has already* proffered against itself. It reduces to nothingness that which the Spirit has abandoned; it kills what was not living, but merely surviving itself; it reduces to ruins what for so long was merely remnants. And though it must be accepted that these acts be called “gratuitous,” it is only because they only aim to manifest that which is *already* true, but is still hidden; to realize what is *already* real, but not recognized as such. They add nothing to the course of the disaster; they merely *acknowledge it* and *put it into acts*.



Centre commercial Italie 2, le 17 janvier 1998

["Italy 2" Shopping Mall, January 17th, 1998]
(A squad of riot police vainly attempt to identify the agents of the Imaginary Party hidden among the consumers)

XVII

The fact that its enemy has no face, no name, and nothing identifiable about it, that it still presents itself – in spite of all colossal plans – in the guise of a perfectly normal Bloom: that's what sets off Power's paranoia most. Johann Georg Elser, whose bomb attack in Munich on November 8th 1939 almost killed Hitler were it not for a narrow, lucky escape, provides the model which in the years to come will plunge commodity domination into an ever more perceptible panic. Elser was a model Bloom, however unacceptably contradictory it may be to say that. Everything about him evokes neutrality and nothingness. His absence from the world was complete, his solitude absolute. His very banality was banal. Poverty of spirit, a lack of personality, and insignificance were his only attributes, but they could never really make him stand out as singular. When telling the story of his totally ordinary life as a carpenter, it all comes off as endlessly impersonal. Nothing appears to have stirred any passion in him. He was equally indifferent to politics and ideology. He didn't know what Communism meant or what National Socialism meant, even though he was a worker in Germany in the 1930s. And when the "judges" interrogated him about the motives for his act, which took him a year to prepare with the most meticulous care, all he could manage to mention was the increased deductions being taken out of the workers' wages. He even declared that he had no intention of eliminating Nazism,

but just of getting rid of a few men he thought were bad people. And this was the kind of being that nearly saved the world from the unparalleled suffering of a global war. His plans were based only on a solitary resolve to destroy what denied his existence; what was unspeakably his enemy; what represented the hegemony of Evil. He drew his right to do so from himself; that is, from the explosive force of his own *decision*. The “party of order” will have to face – and is already facing – the proliferation of such elementary acts of terrorism which it cannot understand nor predict, since they are authorized by nothing more than an inexhaustible metaphysical sovereignty, the insane possibility of disaster that each human existence contains within it, in however infinitesimal a dose. Nothing can protect anyone from these eruptions, which attack society itself in response to the terrorism *of social issues*, not even fame and glory. Their target is as vast as the world itself. And so everything that attempts to remain within the Spectacle must now live in the terror of a threat of annihilation – and no one knows where it’s coming from or what its about, and all anyone can tell is that it’s intended to serve as an *example*. The lack of any decipherable goal in such *scandalous actions* as these is necessarily part of the goal itself, since that’s how they show their exteriority, their foreignness, their irreducibility to the commodity mode of disclosure – and that is how they corrode that mode of disclosure. It’s a matter of spreading the *disquiet* that makes men into metaphysicians, spreading the doubt that breaks down level by level the dominant interpretation of the world. It is thus in vain that *people* would attribute to us any immediate goal, if not perhaps the hope of provoking a more or less lasting *breakdown* in the machine as a whole. Nothing is more capable of abolishing the totality of the world of administered alienation than one of these miraculous interruptions, which suddenly bring flooding back all the humanity that the Spectacle so constantly obscures, where the empire of separation is defeated, where mouths rediscover the speech they owe it to themselves to voice, where men are reborn to their peers and to their inextinguishable need for them. Domination sometimes needs decades to completely recover from a single one of these moments of intense truth. But it would be a serious misunderstanding of the Imaginary Party’s strategy to reduce it to the pursuit of *the catastrophe*. It would be just as much a misunderstanding to think that we would have the childish desire to pulverize in a single blow some military headquarters or other where power is concentrated. One does not take a mode of disclosure by assault as if it were a fortress, even if the one could usefully lead to the other. The Imaginary Party does not aim at general insurrection against the Spectacle, nor even its direct and instantaneous destruction. Rather it assembles the proper set of conditions to make domination succumb as quickly and broadly as possible to the progressive paralysis to which its paranoia condemns it. Though at no time does it give up the intent to finish it off, its tactic is not frontal attack; rather it is the very act of evasion, guiding and hastening the emergence of its illness. “That is what makes it feared by the holders of a power that does not acknowledge it: never letting itself be grasped, and simultaneously being the dissolution of the Social Fact, and the unruly stubbornness to reinvent the latter as a sovereignty that the law cannot circumscribe.” (Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*). Powerless in the face of the omnipresence of this danger, domination, which feels itself to be more and more alone, betrayed, and

fragile, has no other choice than to extend control and suspicion over the totality of a territory that free circulation nevertheless remains the vital principle of. It can surround its "gated communities" with all the security guards it wants; the ground will nevertheless continue to slip out from under its feet. It is part of the essence of the Imaginary Party that everywhere it eats away at the very foundation of commodity society: *credit/credibility*. And there is no limit to this dissolving activity other than the collapse of that which it undermines.

XVIII

It's not so much the *content* of the Imaginary Party's crimes that tends to ruin the *imperium* of bloodthirsty "peace" as it is their *form*. Because their form is that of a hostility with no precise object, a fundamental hatred that erupts from the most unfathomable interiority with no regard for any obstacle, from the uncorrupted depths where man remains in true contact with himself. That's why a force emanates from them that all the Spectacle's blather cannot dam up. Japanese children, who one might fairly consider a kind of frantic, violent avant-garde of the Imaginary Party, have created verbal locutions to name these heights of absolute rage, where something carries them away which is them but not them, which is indeed much bigger than they are. The most widespread of them is *mukatsuku* -- at root it means "to be *nauseous*," i.e., to be overtaken by the most physical of metaphysical sensations. In this special kind of rage, there is something somehow *sacred*.

XIX

It is however obvious that the Spectacle - faced with these massacres, crimes, and catastrophes besieging it, faced with this growing weight of the unexplainable - can no longer be content to affirm that there is a chasm opening in its vision of the world. And it expresses this, moreover, without beating around the bush: "it would certainly be preferable if this violence were the fruit of misery, of terrible poverty; that would be much easier to deal with." (*The Thursday Event*, September 10, 1998). As we can observe with breathtaking regularity, its first act is, at all costs, to put forth an explanation even if it ruins everything that it's based on in theory. And so, when the pathetic Bill Clinton was called to explain and draw the consequences of the Beau Geste* of Kipland Kinkel, an exemplary Bloom in many respects, he could find nothing more to blame than the "influence of the new culture of violent films and games." In so doing, he affirmed the radical transparency, insubstantiality, and liquidation of the subject by commodity domination, and publicly acknowledged that the tragic desert-island-fiction that it claims to be founded on, the irreducibility of the individual legal person, is no longer tenable. He thus artlessly undermined the very principle of commodity society, without which law, private property, the sale of labor power, and even what he calls "culture" is, at the most, just a piece of fantasy literature. *People* still prefer to sacrifice the whole edifice of their pseudo-justification rather than trying to understand the enemy's reasoning and nature. Because were they to do so, they would have to agree with Marx that "the

* A gesture noble in form but meaningless in substance.

coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary praxis*." And though *people* try so hard to hide it, *they* will eventually fall back and confess it at the painful moment when *they* at last have exhausted themselves with ridiculous blather about the non-existent psychology of the Blooms who've finally taken action. In spite of these endless considerations, one cannot prevent oneself from feeling that indeed it is *people* themselves being judged, and society being accused. It is only too obvious that the origin of these Blooms' gestures has nothing subjective about it; in its sacredness it quite simply opposes the objectivity of domination. At this point *people* will reluctantly admit that, yes, this is a social war *they* are dealing with here, without however precisely indicating *what* social war it is; that is, *who* the protagonists are: "the authors of these attacks of madness, these new barbarians, are not all nutcases. They are most often actually very ordinary people." (*The Thursday Event*, September 10, 1998). And it's this kind of rhetoric, a rhetoric of absolute hostility, which has begun to emerge universally: the enemy, that *people* refrain from naming, is declared barbarous and excluded from humanity. The proof is that now we can hear some dictator of public transit or other, right smack in the middle of a period of supposed social peace, proclaiming "we shall re-conquer the territory." And in fact, we see spreading everywhere the certitude that there exists an unnamable internal enemy, most often in camouflaged form, which is carrying out a continuous activity of sabotage: but this time, unfortunately, there won't be any more "kulaks" to "eliminate as a class." So it would be quite wrong to not subscribe to the paranoid perspective that thinks that behind the inarticulate multiplicity of the manifestations of the world there is a unique will, armed with dark intentions: because in a world of paranoids, the paranoids are right.

XX

The fact that the Spectacle fears that it harbors an imaginary party in its very heart, even if in fact it is the opposite – in effect it is really the Imaginary Party that harbors the Spectacle in its aura – clearly betrays its suspicion that by qualifying these acts of destruction as "gratuitous" it has not really said all there is to say about them. It is flagrantly conspicuous that the whole ensemble of the misdeeds that *people* attribute to these "madmen," these "barbarians," these "irresponsible individuals," merge adjacently into a unique, non-formulated project: the liquidation of commodity domination. In the final analysis, it is always *objectively* a matter of making life impossible for it, of propagating *disquiet*, doubt, and distrust, of doing whatever damage is possible, to whatever modest extent each person's means permit. Nothing can explain the systematic absence of any remorse among these criminals but the mute sentiment that they are participating in a grandiose oeuvre of devastation. In all obviousness, these men, themselves insignificant, are the agents of a severe, historical, and transcendent reasoning that demands the annihilation of this world, that is, *the fulfillment of its nothingness*. The only thing that distinguishes them from the conscious fractions of the Imaginary Party is the fact that *they* are not working for the end of the world, but for the end of *a* world. And this difference may at a given moment give sufficient room for a most reasoned

hatred. But that is inconsequential for the Imaginary Party itself, which must remain *the next figure of the Mind*.



An illiterate struggles to erase the inscription "DESTRUCTION KEEPS YOU YOUNG."
"...because the sorcery of the Spectacle, since it is unable to liquidate them, consists in rendering invisible all the expressions of negation..."

XXI

The men of the Imaginary Party carry on an irregular warfare. They are engaged in a kind of Spanish War where the spectacular occupier bankrupts itself stationing troops and munitions, and a paroxysmal dialectic holds sway within the terms of which "the strength and significance of the irregulars are determined by the strength and significance of the regular organization they attack." (Carl Schmitt) and vice-versa. The Imaginary Party can count on the fact that a handful of partisans is enough to immobilize the whole "party of order." In the war being waged at present, there is no *jus belli* left. The hostilities are absolute. Even the "party of order" itself sometimes doesn't shy away from acknowledging it: *one must operate as a partisan everywhere there are partisans* – it's enough to know how prisons have changed over the last decade, and look at the habits that the various kinds of police have gotten into when it comes to the way they deal with "the fringe elements" to understand what that watchword can mean in terms of bloodthirsty arbitrariness. And so, as long as commodity domination continues to exist, the men of the Imaginary Party will have to expect to be treated like criminals, or be hunted like game, depending. The disproportionate magnitude of the weapons and punishments that *people* now wield against it has nothing to do with any particular juncture in the politics of repression; it is consubstantial with what they are, and what their enemy is. What is expressed in this is the simple fact that the Imaginary Party contains in its very principle the negation of everything that commodity domination is based on, a negation that will be manifested in acts before it is manifested in discourse. The coming rebellion will be different from the revolutions of the past in that it won't call upon any of the age-old transcendences, rendered detestable by being worn down to a thread so continually by so many oppressive regimes thirsty for justification. At no moment will it claim to draw its legitimacy

from the People, from Public Opinion, the Church, the Nation, or from the Working Class, even in an attenuated manner. It will base its cause on nothing, but that nothing is Nothingness itself, which as we know is identical to Being. That its crimes demonstrate such a miraculous sovereignty comes from the fact that they are not rooted in any of these particular transcendences, which after all are totally defunct, but rather take root in *transcendence as such*, with no mediation. Thus it represents the most formidable peril to the Commodity State that has ever been mounted against it. What's before it now is not to contest this or that aspect of the legal system, or this or that law; rather it is to attack that which *comes before all law*, the obligation of obedience itself. Even further, the partisans of the Imaginary Party grow and develop in the most complete violation of all the existing rules, without ever having the feeling that they're breaking them, since they act *in total contempt* for them all. These partisans do not oppose the legal order, they *depose* it. They claim a higher justification beyond all written and unwritten laws: the lawless text that they themselves *are*. They thus unearth and renew the absolute scandal of Sabbatean doctrine, which affirmed that the "fulfillment of the Law is its transgression," and leave it behind. They themselves constitute a fragment of *Tiqqun*, inasmuch as they are the living abolition of the old law, which split, divided, and separated.

FEAR...

"When it comes to subjectivity,' explains Christophe Dejours, [...] 'we are entering into a realm that is not included in the visible. Suffering and pain can be felt, but not seen. What is visible are the defensive strategies and decompensations.'"

"Beyond the 'classic' strain pathologies – among which we have the Japanese '*karoushi*' (death by overwork), and the Anglo-Saxon 'burnout,' Mr. Dejours sees '*a recent and massive eruption of fear*.'" (*Le Monde*, Thursday, April 9th, 1998).

AND TREMBLING

"Thus we've been seeing more and more of these '*executive shakeups*' (by the shoulders), which Christophe Dejours affirms '*generate fear not only in the shaken-up executive but also among his colleagues*.'" (*ibid.*)

They respond to the state of exception with a state of exception, and thus throw the sad unreality of the whole legal edifice back in its face. In sum, if they represent no one and nothing, that's not by default but on the contrary *by excess*, in their refusal of the very principle of representation. Starting from the fundamental irreducibility of all human existence, they proclaim themselves unsusceptible to representation; they are *the unrepresentable* itself, but also *the unrepresentative*. Analogous in this sense to the totality of language, or of the world, they defy all concrete reduction to equivalency. Such an Imaginary Party, which renders the whole monument of legality to its infamous origins as a Romanesque fiction, brings the Commodity State down to the level of a criminal association merely more consequential, better organized, and more powerful than the others. This in no way presumes any kind of social disorganization. Chicago was administered in quite the exemplary fashion in the 1920s, after all. As you can see, the Imaginary Party is just as fundamentally anti-state as it is anti-popular. Nothing is more odious to it than the idea of a political unity, except perhaps the idea of obedience. In the present conditions, it

can be none other than the non-party of the multitudes, since as that piece of shit Hobbes so forcefully put it, "when the citizens rebel against the State, it is the Multitudes against the People."

XXII

If the notion of an Imaginary Party above all names the *suspended* negativity of our times, while at the same time designating its invisibility, it must inseparably be conceived of as the idea on the basis of which one can understand the *positive* content of all these practices, which the Spectacle only grasps the negative aspect of; that is, the basis for an understanding of that which they are not. The Spectacle calls the mass defection from the appalling institutional political sphere a "crisis of politics," calls the obstinate indifference that welcomes the overwhelming flood of trash produced year after year by contemporary art a "crisis of culture," calls the growing refusal of imprisonment in schools a "failure of education," calls the mute resistance to capitalist modernization and the ever more widespread refusal to work an "economic crisis," calls the resolute destruction of the unhealthy nuclear family a "crisis of family," and calls what is no more than the transparent rejection of alienated social relations and spectacular morality a "crisis of the social pact"; thus it remains blind to this "silent revolution... which is not visible to all eyes, that contemporary minds are the least capable of observing, and which is as difficult to put into words as it is to conceive of." It fails to realize that "the forming mind ripens slowly and silently into its new figure, disintegrating fragment by fragment the edifice of its prior world; and the collapse of this world is only indicated by the sporadic symptoms thereof. Frivolousness and boredom invade whatever is still left, the vague foreboding of the unknown – these are the signs announcing that something different is happening. And then this continual crumbling - which causes no change whatsoever in the physiognomy - is suddenly interrupted by the sunrise, which, in a lightning flash, sketches out all at once the form of the new world." (Hegel) After all it is true that while serpents shed their skin they remain blind.

XXIII

All the positivity of the Imaginary Party is located in the gigantic blind spot of *the unrepresentable*, which the Spectacle is atavistically incapable even of merely perceiving. The Imaginary Party is, in all aspects, merely the political consequence of this positivity, the concept of which is Critical Metaphysics, and the figure of which is Bloom. When Bloom, that creature justiciable by no social determination other than the negative, whose primary characteristics, as attributed to him by Hannah Arendt - who identified him perhaps a bit prematurely with the mass-man - are "isolation and the lack of normal social relations," becomes the dominant human type in more than just one world, commodity society discovers that it no longer has any grip on these subjectivities which were nevertheless *entirely* formed by it, and that thus, simply by following its own natural course, it has engendered its own negation. Domination's defeat by its own products appears in a privileged fashion in the sphere of sociology: *Bloom is everywhere, but sociology cannot see him anywhere*. In the same way, it would be vain to expect that the latter would ever be able to give any indication whatsoever of the effective existence of the Imaginary

Party, the essence of which is extraterrestrial to it. And this, be it said in passing, is but one of the aspects of the *death of sociology*, which has definitively spoilt the socialization of society, and thus also sweeps away the socialization of sociology. In this process it disappears upon becoming realized, and is made ridiculous as a separate science by its very lackeys, who in the meantime were forced to become themselves their own sociologists. And so, as soon as a central, unique, undifferentiated instance of authority – the Spectacle – takes over the continual secretion of all social codes, the social sciences have their share reduced to the mere weight of their lies, from Weber to Bordieu. With the death of sociology, a whole sector of classical social criticism *based on* sociology and *as* sociology shows its double-dealing, servile essence by collapsing. That kind of criticism is no longer able to keep up with the times; it is no longer apt to describe them or to contest them. This task now falls to *Critical Metaphysics*.

XXIV

Up to now the front lines along which the friends and enemies of the dominant order are arranged have been very poorly sketched out as continual and linear. This representation must now be replaced by an image of innumerable, circular front lines, each of which has its space-time located within communities of human beings, practices, and languages that are in a state of absolute rebellion against commodity domination, and which the latter besieges ceaselessly, in keeping with its immanent logic. Everything that contributes to the maintenance of the old representation belongs in the enemy camp. The first consequence of this new geometry of struggle has to do with the form subversion spreads in. Faced with the world of the authoritarian commodity, we are no longer dealing with the advance of a battlefield company after company – that of the poor, the workers, or the wretched of the Earth – but with a contagion, similar to the succession of concentric waves on the surface of a pool of mercury when a drop falls into it. Here the herd instincts of the past are also attacked, by the *intensity of what is lived* at the drop zone. It follows that the elementary revolutionary subject is no longer the class, or the individual, but the metaphysical community, whatever its degree of exile may be – this is what testifies to the fundamentally insignificant and inconsequential default character of all personal adventures and all private histories in the Spectacle. A good geometrician does not consider it exaggerated to reduce the world as a whole to these miniscule, dispersed focuses, since everything that is not them, everything that does not give life to a particular and shared existential content, is dead, beyond the boring waltz of appearances. Each of these metaphysical communities arises from an extreme world, where men can no longer find one another except on the basis of essentials, and constitutes an exclusive pole of substantiality in the middle of the desert. All recognition that does not have its own laws and all simple superficiality are excluded from within it. There the conditions are created in which the Absolute can recover its temporal pretensions, and possibilities open up that had been lost since the millenarian uprisings and the Jewish messianic movements of the 17th century. Whatever *people* may say about it, the acute demand for a new strength and a new language which is felt there shines a light clarifying things far beyond the misery of our times. And that is precisely what the forces of decomposition fear, forces which

promise such excessive favor to those who consent to renouncing themselves in order to be loved by them.

"The professor spoke, then wrote on the chalkboard, and she waited for us to write, to write, to write – to write everything she said. And all of a sudden I looked and saw what a beautiful day it was outside. I don't have to bother anyone else if I don't agree with what is being proposed to me. So I left." (Le Monde, Tuesday July 7, 1998).

The Imaginary Party, above all, refers only to the positive fact of this multitude of autonomous zones, free from commodity domination, which are experiencing *here and now* - beyond the reach of the deterioration of the alienated Common and the last death throes of a perishing social organism – their own forms of Publicity. Up to now, there has been no federation to it except *by intellection*. And that which bonds them is in effect at first merely a passive character: these are communities in which the meaning and form of life is more important than life itself, where the duty of *being* has been elevated up to the point of incandescence. They thus share the same metaphysical substance, although they still don't know it. It is only under the black auspices of their common persecution by the global hegemony of the commodity that they must come to recognize themselves for what they are: fractions of the Imaginary Party. There is something ineluctable about this process; the resistance that these communities put up to the generalized reduction to equivalency expressly sets them out before the roller-compactors of the reigning abstraction. But in the end the only identifiable effect of this oppression is that these independent universes see themselves forced by their enemy to leave the immediacy of their own particularity one by one; and to receive their universal character from their enemy in the course of their struggle against it. And it is to the precise extent that this enemy is none other than a permanent effort for the negation of metaphysics that they attain to the consciousness of what unites them: not the affirmation of any one metaphysics in particular, but *of metaphysics* itself as such. This bond, which is certainly not immediate, is in no way formal, and not at all a construct; rather it is something that precedes all freedom, and gives it its very foundation: an existential, absolute, concrete hostility to commodity nihilism. It follows from this that, contrary to everything that has been called a "party" in the past, the Imaginary Party does not need to converge on a general united intent or will, because it already shares the Common, here identified with a language, Mentality, metaphysics, or even a politics of finiteness – and in these circumstances all these terms become pseudonyms for one and the same Unspeakable thing. To say that the coherence of the Imaginary Party is of a metaphysical nature is thus in no way intended to evoke anything other than the everyday war that each of us is already engaged in, which opposes that coherence against the ruminant negation of all forms-of-life. At this point, the need for its unification imposes itself on all its elements, as identical to its becoming conscious: "the battle is between the modern world, on the one hand, and all the other possible worlds on the other." (Péguy, *Sequential Notes*). All those who, in love with truth, though certainly not the *same* truth, come together to wreck the pathetic commodity metaphysics, are rallying round the Imaginary Party. But the movement that produces this unity is also the movement where differences are set

out and freeze in place. Each particular community, in its struggle against the empty universality of the commodity, recognizes its particular nature little by little, and elevates itself to a consciousness of that particularity; that is, it apprehends its reflection and mediates itself through the universal. It inscribes itself in the concrete generality of the Mind, whose progress through figures is a banquet celebration where all irreducibilities rejoice in drunken revelry. Fragment after fragment, the reappropriation of the Common continues. And so it is that over the course of the battle the nomadic ballet of communities takes on the complex, architectural structure of a metaphysical caste system whose principle can only be *play*, that is, a sovereign consciousness of Nothingness. Each metaphysical reign slowly learns the frontiers of its territory on the continent of the Infinite. At the same time a general common is constructed which contains within it all the differentiated totalities of the regional commons; that is, it is the layout of their *Limes*.^{*} It is to be expected that as victory approaches the men of the Imaginary Party will no longer so much have to wage battle to defeat what is, after all, a very weakened enemy, as they will have to fight to finally give free rein to their metaphysical conflicts, which they intend to exhaust, *physically* and in *play*. And in such matters they are fierce partisans of *violence*, but of a highly ritualized, agonistic violence, rich in meaning. As one can plainly see – and it would be quite wrong to be disappointed about it – the triumph of the Imaginary Party will also be its defeat, and its disintegration.



"In these darkling days we are watching the final phase of the decomposition of commodity society, which, we admit, has lasted only too long. On the planetary level, we are seeing the divergence, of ever growing proportions, between the map of the commodity and the territories of Man."

XXV

The form of Publicity prefigured by and prevailing in the Imaginary Party has nothing to do with anything that could have been elaborated in classical political philosophy. If we really had to attribute some ancestry to it, we would have to hearken back to what was fugitively sketched out in those rare and precious moments of insurrection that arose in the Soviets, the Communes, the Aragonese collectives of 1936-1937, or in the secret schools of the Kabbalah, the Safed school for instance. Every time that the latter managed to carve out a way onto the unwelcoming stage of History, the consequences knew no limits. Few among those who lived through those instants where History emerged, shattering whole slabs of the amputated and limited forms of

^{*} i.e. the *limes romanus*. The *limes* (pl. *limites*) was the Ancient Roman border delimiting/defense system, marking the boundaries of the Empire.

Publicity, and made itself plainly perceptible, were then able to endure seeing the world as it is remaining as it is, once their eyes had glimpsed the unparalleled dawn of the *restitutio in integrum* – of *Tiqqun*. But it is now a necessary consequence of evolution as it has taken place in all developed commodity societies that this thing, which we have only seen violently breaking and entering, has now taken up residence in silence and calm for the long haul, unperceived, with its advancement apparently taken for granted. A strange spectacle indeed, this world where the dominant forms of existence are known conceptually to have been transcended, but persist within being, as if it were nothing, while, beyond the extreme alienation of Publicity imposed by the Spectacle, and as a counterweight thereunto, we see the dawning – though still mingled together with the contrary principle – of a humanity which feeds exclusively on *meaning*, adulterated though it may be. Liberated from the need to produce, freed from the chains that bound them to working landed estates, fragile worlds take shape in which elective affinity is everything and servitude nothing. The ruins of the metropolises already have nothing living within them besides these fluid human aggregates of individuals who, finding no more real reason for their alienation, scurry around in it in all directions. The slavery of the men of the Spectacle appears just as extravagant to them as their freedom appears incomprehensible to the former. In the suspended animation of their existence, the problematic nature of the world has ceased to be problematic; it has become the very material of the life they live. Language no longer appears to them as a laborious exteriority that must first be recovered in the self and then applied to the world; it has become the immediate substance of the latter. At no moment does their action come off as separate from their speech. And so then we can understand that the Spectacle, where politics and economics remain abstractions separate from metaphysics, represents for them a bygone figure of Publicity. But it is in fact all the old petrified dualisms that have been abolished in the substantial continuity of meaning. In these totalities, rich in meaning, full, and open, eternity takes up residence within each instant, and the whole universe in each of its details. Their world, the city, shelters them as an interiority, while their interiority takes on the dimensions of a whole world. In a partial, and unfortunately reversible and provisional manner, they are already within the “restoration of the broken unity of the real and the transcendent.” (Lukàcs). Were it not for the caprices of domination, their lives would by themselves tend towards the realization of all the



“The fact that things ‘continue as they are’ is itself the catastrophe. It is not something that might hit us at any moment; it’s happening right now.” (Walter Benjamin)

human potentialities that they contain. This coming figure of Publicity corresponds to the maximum deployment of that realization; that is, it espouses language without the slightest reserve: indeed, it *is* language, as it *knows* silence. There, the essence is no longer separate from the appearance, but man has ceased to confuse them with himself. There, the Mind has its Residence, and it peacefully watches its own metamorphoses. Language is the unique, new, and eternal Law, which goes beyond all the past laws which it was, after all, but the material for, though in a frozen state. If the old forms of Publicity arose with a more or less balanced, more or less harmonious construction, it, on the contrary, is horizontal, labyrinthine, topological. No representation can extend to cover it at any point. All its space demands to be traversed. As for the operational structure of the Imaginary Party -- as for the innervation of this world -- it is not comprised of any kind of a vertical delegation system at all, but of a mode of transmission which itself is party of the limitless horizontality of language: the Example. The flat geography of the world of *Tiqqun* in no way signifies the abolition of values and the end of the very human pursuit of recognition. It's simply that instead it is by "the authority of the *prototype* and not the normativity of order" (Virno, *Miracle, Virtuosity, and Déjà-vu*) that it is there permissible to men, as it is now to the fractions of the Imaginary Party, to impose their excellence. The map of the world we are sketching out is none other than the *map of the Mind*. It is at present this Publicity of the Mind that is everywhere overflowing with the party of nothingness, whose idiocy and tactlessness become more ferocious and more intolerable every day. And we will inevitably put an end to it.

XXVI

The all-out war waged by the Spectacle against the Imaginary Party and on freedom has doubtless already devastated whole regions of the social space. *People* have decreed that protective measures be implemented in that space, measures that the world had been accustomed to only in global conflicts: curfews, military escorts, methodical collection of personal information for databases, arms and communications control, takeover of whole sectors of the economy, etc. The men of these times are marching straight into a world of maniacal fear. Their nightmares are populated by tortures that are already no longer just the stuff of dreams. Once again one hears *people* speak of pirates, monsters, and giants. Tied to the progress of a universal sentiment of insecurity, everyday facial expressions show the demonstration of a fatal and continual accumulation of petty nervous exhaustions. And since each era dreams of the era to come, little *big shots* proliferate, who fight for control over public space, which has already been reduced to the mere space of circulation. The weakest minds give in easily to insane rumors that no one can confirm or deny. An infinite darkness fills the distance men leave between each other. Every day, in spite of that growing darkness, the gloomy outlines of the civil war are clarified a little more, a civil war where no one knows who's fighting and who isn't; where the only limit to the confusion is death; where in the final analysis the only thing that is certain is that the worst is yet to come. And so we remain, before the coming birth, within the obvious disaster; but nothing keeps our gaze from going beyond it. It appears, then, that these are the "birth pangs," that no new

era has the right to be exempt from. He who squints to see in the night the coming clash of the Titans will discover that all this desolation, all these deaf echoes of cannon blasts, all these faceless cries are but the doing of the *lone*, hideous Titan of Commodity Domination, which, in its bloodthirsty delirium, is struggling, howling, firing at will, stomping its feet, convinced that someone's after him, barking insane orders, rolling around on the ground, and ending up slamming his whole weight against the walls of his *living room*. From the depths of his madness, he swears that the Imaginary Party is the darkness surrounding him, and that it must be abolished. He appears to really have a problem with this nefarious territory, which insists on never agreeing with his maps, and already he threatens it all with the worst reprisals. But as his day wears on, no one's listening anymore; even his closest subjects lend no more than a distracted ear to the demented old fool as he huffs and puffs... They just pretend to listen, then wink a knowing eye.

XXVII

The Imaginary Party expects nothing from the present society and its evolution, because *practically* – that is, in its real acts – it is already its very dissolution and that which lies beyond it. Consequently, it cannot be a matter of taking power, but only defeating domination everywhere, by making it durably impossible for its apparatus to go on functioning – the *temporary*, and in places even the *fugitive* character of the contestation at work under the banner of the Imaginary Party can be explained by this: it guarantees that it itself will never become a Power. That's why the violence it takes recourse to is of a totally different nature than the Spectacle's violence. And that's also why the latter is in fact just struggling alone in the darkness. Even when commodity domination unleashes its "freedom of the void," its "negative will that only feels its existence when it's being destroyed" (Hegel), whereas its violence without content only aspires to the infinite extension of nothingness, the exercise of violence by the Imaginary Party, unlimited as it may be, is only attached to the preservation of forms-of-life that centers of power are preparing to alter, or already threaten. That is where its incomparable force and aura comes from. That is also where its fullness and absolute legitimacy originate. Even when it is totally on the offensive, it is a *preserving* violence. We thus reencounter the dissymmetry that we spoke of before. The Imaginary Party does not have the same goals as domination does, and if they are concurrent, it's only because each of them wants to destroy that which the other pursues the realization of; the difference is that the Spectacle *wants no more than that*. Whether the Imaginary Party will defeat commodity society and make that victory irreversible or not will depend on its ability to give intensity, grandeur and substance to a life freed from all domination, no less than on the aptitude of its conscious fractions to *explain it* in their practice as much as in their theory. It is to be feared that domination will find a generalized suicide, where it will at least be guaranteed to take its adversary down with it, preferable to its defeat. But from start to finish, that's the bet we're making. It's going to be up to history and its frozen operation to judge whether what we're undertaking is merely a beginning or already an end. The Absolute is in history.

