

I

Urbi et Orbi

Urbi et orbi: this formulation drawn from papal benediction has come to mean “everywhere and anywhere” in ordinary language. Rather than a mere shift in meaning, this is a genuine disintegration. This disintegration is not simply due to the dissolution of the religious Christian bond that (more or less) held the Western world together until around the middle of a twentieth century to which the nineteenth century effectively relinquished its certainties (history, science, conquering humanity—whether this took place with or against vestiges of Christianity). It is due to the fact that it is no longer possible to identify either a city that would be “The City”—as Rome was for so long—or an orb that would provide the contour of a world extended around this city. Even worse, it is no longer possible to identify either the city or the orb of the world in general. The city spreads and extends all the way to the point where, while it tends to cover the entire orb of the planet, it loses its properties as a city, and, of course with them, those properties that would allow it to be distinguished from a “country.” That which extends in this way is no longer properly “urban”—either from the perspective of urbanism or from that of urbanity—but megapolitical, metropolitan, or co-urbational, or else caught in the loose net of what is called the “urban network.” In such a network, the city crowds, the hyperbolic accumulation of construction projects (with their concomitant demolition) and of exchanges (of movements, products, and information) spread, and the inequality and apartheid concerning the access to the urban milieu (assuming that it is a dwelling, comfort, and culture), or these exclusions from the city that for a long time has produced its own rejections and outcasts, accumulate proportionally. The result can only be understood in terms of what is called an *agglomeration*, with its senses of conglomeration, of piling up, with the sense of accumulation that, on the one hand, simply concentrates (in a few neighborhoods, in a few houses, sometimes in a few protected mini-cities) the well-being that used to be urban or civil, while on the other hand, proliferates what bears the quite simple and unmerciful name of misery.

This network cast upon the planet—and already around it, in the orbital band of satellites along with their debris—deforms the *orbis* as much as the *urbs*. The agglomeration invades and erodes what used to be thought of as *globe* and

which is nothing more now than its double, *glomus*. In such a *glomus*, we see the conjunction of an indefinite growth of techno-science, of a correlative exponential growth of populations, of a worsening of inequalities of all sorts within these populations—economic, biological, and cultural—and of a dissipation of the certainties, images, and identities of what the world was with its parts and humanity with its characteristics.

The civilization that has represented the universal and reason—also known as the West—cannot even encounter and recognize any longer the relativity of its norms and the doubt on its own certainty: this was already its situation two centuries ago. (Hegel wrote in 1802: “[T]he increasing range of acquaintance with alien peoples under the pressure of natural necessity; as, for example, becoming acquainted with a new continent, had this skeptical effect upon the dogmatic common sense of the Europeans down to that time, and upon their indubitable certainty about a mass of concepts concerning right and truth.”)¹ This skepticism, in which Hegel saw the fecundity of the destabilization of dogmatisms today, no longer harbors the resource of a future whose dialectic would advance reason farther, ahead or forward, toward a truth and a meaning of the world. On the contrary, it is in the same stroke that the confidence in historical progress weakened, the convergence of knowledge, ethics, and social well-being dissipated, and the domination of an empire made up of technological power and pure economic reason asserted itself.

The West has come to encompass the world, and in this movement it disappears as what was supposed to orient the course of this world. For all that, up until now, one cannot say that any other configuration of the world or any other philosophy of the universal and of reason have challenged that course. Even when, and perhaps especially when one demands a recourse to the “spiritual,” unless it is to the “revolution” (is it so different?), the demand betrays itself as an empty wish, having lost all pretense of effective capacity, or else as a shameful escape—and even when it does not appear as a supplementary means of exploiting the conditions created by the economic and technological exploitation. (To take what is “positive” of the West and to infuse it with something new—“values”—on the basis of an African, Buddhist, Islamic, Taoist, perhaps supra-Christian or supra-communist soul, such has been for a long time the sterile theme of many a dissertation . . .).

The world has lost its capacity to “form a world” [*faire monde*]: it seems only to have gained that capacity of proliferating, to the extent of its means, the “unworld” [*immonde*],² which, until now, and whatever one may think of retrospective illusions, has never in history impacted the totality of the orb to such an extent. In the end, everything takes place as if the world affected and permeated itself with a death drive that soon would have nothing else to destroy than the world itself.

It is not a question of "weighing in" for or leaning toward either the destruction or the salvation. For we do not even know what either can signify: neither what another civilization or another savagery arising out of the ruins of the West might be, nor what could be "safe/saved" when there is no space outside of the epidemic (in this respect, AIDS is an exemplary case, as are certain epizootic diseases on another level: the scale of the world, of its technologies and of its *habitus*, brings the terror of the plagues of the past to incommensurable heights).

The fact that the world is destroying itself is not a hypothesis: it is in a sense the fact from which any thinking of the world follows, to the point, however, that we do not exactly know what "to destroy" means, nor which world is destroying itself. Perhaps only one thing remains, that is to say, one thought with some certainty: what is taking place is really happening, which means that it happens and happens to us in this way more than a history, even more than an event. It is as if being itself—in whatever sense one understands it, as existence or as substance—surprised us from an unnamable beyond. It is, in fact, the ambivalence of the unnamable that makes us anxious: a beyond for which no alterity can give us the slightest analogy.

It is thus not only a question of being ready for the event—although this is also a necessary condition of thought, today as always. It is a question of owning up to the present, including its very withholding of the event, including its strange absence of presence: we must ask anew what the world wants of us, and what we want of it, everywhere, in all senses, *urbi et orbi*, all over the world and for the whole world, without (the) capital³ of the world but with the richness of the world.

Let us begin with a lengthy citation to which we must give our sustained attention:

In history up to the present it is certainly an empirical fact that separate individuals have, with the broadening of their activity into world-historical activity, become more and more enslaved under a power alien to them (a pressure which they have conceived of as a dirty trick on the part of the so-called world spirit [*Weltgeist*], etc.), a power which has become more and more enormous and, in the last instance, turns out to be the world market. But it is just as empirically established that, by the overthrow of the existing state of society by the communist revolution (of which more below) and the abolition of private property which is identical with it, this power, which so baffles the German theoreticians, will be dissolved; and that then the liberation of each single individual will be accomplished in the measure in which history becomes transformed into world history. From the above it is clear that the

real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creation of man).⁴

This text from *The German Ideology* dates from the time that is considered, not without reason, as that of the “early” Marx: he nevertheless formulates what was his conviction to the end according to which “communism” is nothing other than the actual movement of world history insofar as it becomes global and thus renders possible, and perhaps necessary, the passage to consciousness and enjoyment of human creation in its entirety by all human beings. Human beings would henceforth be freed from what limited the relation in which they mutually produce themselves as spirit and as body. In other words, it was his conviction that humanity is defined by the fact that it produces itself as a whole—not in general, but according to the concrete existence of each, and not in the end only humans, but with them the rest of nature. This, for Marx, is the world: that of the market metamorphosing itself or revolutionizing itself in reciprocal and mutual creation. What Marx will define later as “individual property,” that is to say, neither private nor collective, will have to be precisely the property or the proper of each as both created and creator within this sharing of “real relations.”

Thus, for Marx, globalization and the domination of capital converge in a revolution that inverts the direction [*sens*] of domination—but which can do so precisely because the global development of the market—the instrument and the field of play of capital—creates in and of itself the possibility of revealing the real connection between existences as their real sense. The commodity form, which is the fetishized form of value, must dissolve itself, sublimate or destroy itself—in any case revolutionize itself, whatever its exact concept—in its true form, which is not only the creation of value but value as creation. Transcribed in terms closer to our current linguistic usage (if we retain the distinction of senses between “globalization” [*globalisation*]⁵ and “world-forming” [*mondialisation*])—a distinction that sometimes in France in particular encompasses two usages of the same word *mondialisation*—these semantic complexities are the indicators of what is at stake): globalization makes world-forming possible, by way of a reversal of global domination consisting in the extortion of work, that is, of its value, therefore of value, absolutely. But if globalization has thus a necessity—the necessity that Marx designated as the “historical performance” of capital and that consists in nothing other than the creation by the

market of the global dimension as such—it is because, through the interdependence of the exchange of value in its merchandise-form (which is the form of general equivalency, money), the interconnection of everyone in the production of humanity as such comes into view.

If I may focus even more on this point: commerce engenders communication, which requires community, communism. Or: human beings create the world, which produces the human, which creates itself as absolute value and enjoyment [*jouissance*] of that value.

Consequently, the “communist revolution” is nothing other than the accession of this global connection to consciousness and through it the liberation of value as the real value of our common production. It is the becoming-conscious and the mastery in act of the self-production of human beings in the twofold sense of the production of human quality (“total humanity,” free producer of freedom itself) and of the production of each by the others, all by each and each by all (“total humanity,” as circulation of value freed from equivalence, circulation of the value that responds to the human being itself, each time singular, and perhaps also to others, or to all other existents as singular).

Certainly, each of the determinative concepts of this interpretation of the history of the world appears to us today as what we know to be its fragility: process, consciousness, the possibility of uncovering a value and an end in itself. We could note that these concepts are not those upon which Marx constructs his argument explicitly: they rather subtend his argument. But what diminishes their role also reveals their uncontrolled and hidden presence. Whatever the case, something remains nonetheless, in spite of everything, something resists and insists: there remains, on the one hand, precisely what happens to us and sweeps over us by the name of “globalization,” namely, the exponential growth of the globality (dare we say *glonicity*) of the market—of the circulation of everything in the form of commodity—and with it of the increasingly concentrated interdependence that ceaselessly weakens independencies and sovereignties, thus weakening an entire order of representations of belonging (reopening the question of the “proper” and of “identity”); and there remains, on the other hand, the fact that the experience undergone since Marx has increasingly been the experience that the place of meaning, of value, and of truth is the world. Whoever speaks of “the world” renounces any appeal to “another world” or a “beyond-the-world” [*outré-monde*]. “World-forming” also means, as it does in this text from Marx, that it is in “this” world, or as “this” world—and thus as the world, absolutely—that what Marx calls production and/or the creation of humanity, is being played out.⁶

Our difference with him nonetheless reappears on this very point: with him, “human” implicitly remains a teleological or eschatological term, if we

understand by that a logic where the *telos* and/or the *eschaton* take the position and the role of an accomplishment without remainder. For Marx, the human being, as source and accomplishment of value in itself, comes at the end of history when it produces itself: the source must therefore end entirely spread out and accomplished. For us, on the contrary, "the human being" is reduced to a given principle, relatively abstract ("person," "dignity") and as such distinct from an actual creation. In truth, it is the figure of "the human being" and with it the configuration of "humanism" that are erased or blurred while we have, at the same time, the most compelling reasons not to replace them with (the figures of) "the overman" or "God."

It is, however, not certain that with Marx the teleo-eschatological logic is so strictly geared toward the accomplishment of a final value. In a sense, it is even the determination of such a finality that remains lacking in Marx (if the absence of a finality is a lack at all . . .)—and this is perhaps what produced all sorts of myth-producing interpretations. In Marx's entire text, nothing determines, in the end, any accomplishment except as, essentially open and without end, a freedom ("free labor") and a "private property" (that which is proper to each in the exchange of all). But what, since Marx, has nonetheless remained unresolved [*en souffrance*]⁶—and we know what "suffering" means here—is precisely the grasping of a concrete world that would be, properly speaking, the world of the proper freedom and singularity of each and of all without claim to a world beyond-the-world or to a surplus-property (in another capital). Quite to the contrary, the world which, for Marx, could be the space of the play of freedom and of its common/singular appropriation—the infinity in act of proper ends—only appears to us as a bad infinite, if not as the imminence of a finishing that would be the implosion of the world and of all of us in it.

At this point, it is necessary to clarify the nature of absolute *value* in itself: the one that Marx designates as "value" pure and simple, not a use-value of which exchange-value is the phenomenal mask and social extortion or exploitation.⁷

Much attention is usually given to "commodity fetish," the concept and/or representation of which are certainly important; but this also risks fetishizing this "fetishism" and risks making it the open secret of commodity. Now we must distinguish two perspectives: the first is that of the phenomenality of value (of "meaning" or of "the human"), a phenomenality that the "fetish" can make us forget (by reducing it to a religious mystification)⁸ that it probably pertains to a general law according to which value or meaning can only be (re)presented,⁹ even if not strictly speaking "fetishized." The other perspective—the only one I will consider here—is the one that must consider value as such, the "thing in itself" behind the phenomenon.¹⁰

Absolute value is, in fact, humanity incorporated in the product through work as human work. It is thus humanity producing itself by producing objects (or, I will return to this, creating itself by producing).¹¹ But what is humanity? What is the world as the product of *human beings*, and what is the human being insofar as it is *in the world* and as it *works* this world? What is the “spiritual richness” of which Marx speaks, which is nothing other than the value or meaning of human labor as human, that is to say, also, “free,” but free to the extent that it is to itself its own end and that therefore it is neither value measured according to its use nor value giving itself as general equivalency (*it too is its own end*, but abstract and formal, a finality *for itself* . . .)? What is a value that is neither finalized nor simply equivalent to itself? What is a “human value” toward which the work refers, or whose trace it bears, without however signifying it and without covering it with a mystical veil? (This question, we note, amounts to asking: What is human value considered at a level beyond the reach of “humanism”?).¹²

Perhaps by considering its inverted figures one can approach this value. On September 11, 2001, we witnessed the collision, in the symptom and symbol of the clash, between the United States (summarized in the name, heavy with meaning, of “World Trade Center”) and Islamic fanaticism, two figures of absolute value that are also—not surprisingly—two figures of monotheism. On the one hand, the God whose name is inscribed on the dollar, and on the other, the God in whose name one declares a “holy war.” Of course, both Gods are instrumentalized. But I neglect here the examination of the instrumental logic that is latent, at least, in every religion. It remains that these two figures proceed from the same unique God (or from the same One taken as God) and expose the enigmatic sameness of the One that is, no doubt, always self-destructive: but self-destruction is accompanied by self-exaltation and an over-essentialization.

Let us keep in mind in any case that these two figures present absolute value as all-powerfulness and as all-presence of this all-powerfulness. Value is therefore first itself instrumentalized therein: it serves the reproduction of its own power, indefinitely, through spiritual or monetary capitalization. Value has value through this endless autistic process, and this infinite has no other *act* than the reproduction of its *potentiality* (thus in both senses of the word, power and potentiality). The “bad infinite,” following Hegel, is indeed the one that cannot be *actual*.¹³ On the contrary, the enjoyment of which Marx speaks, implies, as for any enjoyment, its actuality, that is to say, also the finite inscription of its infinity. It is not power that wills power, nor presence that insists in itself, but the suspension of will, the withdrawal, if not the fault, that marks enjoyment as enjoyment of a truth or of a sense, of a “spiritual wealth” or a “beatitude” in Spinoza’s sense (that is to say, as an exercise, as the act of a relation to the totality of meaning or truth).

Power founds itself on itself as if on a reason that is always sufficient with respect to its exercise, even if destructive and self-destructive. Enjoyment does not give an account of itself. It is in this actuality without reason or end (no doubt the “free labor” of which Marx spoke) that value can be incommensurable, unable to be evaluated, to the point of no longer being a “value” and becoming what the German calls *Würde*, beyond the *Wert*, and which we translate as “dignity.”

The question posed by the world in formation is this one: how to do justice to the infinite in act, of which infinite potentiality is the exact reverse?

When the bad infinite appears to be clearly without end, completely unbound (having rid itself of its teleological humanism), then this question imposes itself, stark and blinding. To reverse an infinite into another, and potentiality into act, is what Marx calls “revolution.” It is necessary, in the end, that the world has absolute value for itself—or else that it has no value whatsoever, as the two forms of all-powerfulness, which have nothing but contempt for the world, indicate. It is in the end necessary that the infinite reason that gives an account of itself allows the actual without-reason (or actual existence) to appear—or that it liquidates itself in its disastrously interminable process.

One may assume that the problem of the apprehending of the world (of its absolute value) is posed in the following way: the world takes place, it happens, and everything seems as if we did not know how to apprehend it. It is our production and our alienation. It is not an accident if, since Marx, the “world” and the “worldly” [*le mondial*] have remained uncertain determinations, overly suspended between the finite and the infinite, between a new and former world, between this world and an other: in short, one may assume that the “world” has fallen short of what it should be, of what it can be, perhaps of what it already is, in some way that we have not yet determined. And it is probably due as well to the fact that “the world” has been secondary to the concept of a world “view” (it was no accident that a *Weltanschauung* played by accident a major political and ideological role in Nazism). It is as if there was an intimate connection between capitalistic development and the capitalization of views or pictures of the world (nature + history + progress + consciousness, etc.—all “views” gathered in a picture whose composition henceforth is blurred and runs on the canvas).

A world “viewed,” a represented world, is a world dependent on the gaze of a subject of the world [*sujet du monde*]. A subject of the world (that is to say as well a subject of history) cannot itself be within the world [*être dans le monde*]. Even without a religious representation, such a subject, implicit or explicit, perpetuates the position of the creating, organizing, and addressing God (if not the addressee) of the world.

And yet, remarkably, there is no need of a prolonged study to notice that, already in the most classical metaphysical representations of that God, nothing else was at stake, in the end, than the world itself, in itself and for itself. In more than one respect, it is legitimate to say that the great transcendent accounts of rationalism elaborated nothing else than the immanent relation of the world to itself: they questioned the being-world of the world. I only ask, in passing, that one reflect on the sense of “continual creation” in Descartes, on that of Spinoza’s *Deus sive natura*, on the “vision in God” in Malebranche or on the “monad of monads” with Leibniz. It would not be inaccurate to say that the question of the world—that is to say, the question of the necessity and meaning of the world—will have formed the self-deconstruction that undermines from within onto-theology.¹⁴ It is such a movement that made possible, after Kant who was the first to explicitly confront the world as such (and, in sum, did nothing else), not only the entry of the world into thought (as an object of vision), but its emergence as the place, the dimension and actuality, of thought: the space-time of meaning and truth. In this respect, Marx’s insistence on the world—an insistence that emphasizes both the “worldwide” (coexistence) and the “worldly” (immanence)—is itself a decisive advance of the self-deconstructive gesture. (In this respect, and however paradoxical it may seem, it is indeed in Husserl and Heidegger that it continued, and as well as, albeit differently, in Bergson and Wittgenstein.)

In any case, the decisive feature of the becoming-world of the world, as it were—or else, of the becoming-world of the whole that was formerly articulated and divided as the nature-world-God triad—is the feature through which the world resolutely and absolutely distances itself from any status as object in order to tend toward being itself the “subject” of its own “worldhood”—or “world-forming.” But being a subject in general means having to become oneself . . .

In order to grasp once more what is at stake in the question of the world as it presents itself to us in this way, let us consider the question of the concept in its simplest form: What is a world? Or what does “world” mean?

Briefly, I would say first: a world is a totality of meaning. If I speak of “Debussy’s world,” of “the hospital world,” or of the “fourth world,” one grasps immediately that one is speaking of a totality, to which a certain meaningful content or a certain value system properly belongs in the order of knowledge or thought as well as in that of affectivity and participation. Belonging to such a totality consists in sharing this content and this tonality in the sense of “being familiar with it,” as one says; that is to say, of apprehending its codes and texts, precisely when their reference points, signs, codes, and texts are neither explicit nor exposed as such. A world: one finds oneself in it [*s’y trouve*] and one is familiar with it [*s’y retrouve*]; one can be in it with “everyone” [*tout le monde*],

as we say in French. A world is precisely that in which there is room for everyone: but a genuine place, one in which things can genuinely *take place* (in this world). Otherwise, this is not a “world”: it is a “globe” or a “glome,” it is a “land of exile” and a “vale of tears.”

From this brief characterization a few implications follow.

First, a world is not a unity of the objective or external order: a world is never in front of me, or else it is not my world. But if it is absolutely other, I would not even know, or barely, that it is a world. (For instance, for me, a few fragments of Hittite art do not even suggest the *world* of that art.) As soon as a world appears to me as a world, I already share something of it: I share a part of its inner resonances. Perhaps this term *resonance* is capable of suggesting the issue at hand: a world is a space in which a certain tonality resonates. But that tonality is nothing other than the totality of resonances that the elements, the moments, and the places of this world echo, modulate, and modalize. This is how I can recognize a short passage from Bach or from Varese—but also a fragment from Proust, a drawing from Matisse, or a Chinese landscape.

(It can be noted, provisionally, that it is no accident that art provides the most telling examples: a world perhaps always, at least potentially, shares the unity proper to the work of art. That is, unless it is the opposite, or rather, unless the reciprocity between “world” and “art” is constitutive of both. This also concerns the Marxist’s “enjoyment” of universal humanity.)

It follows from this that a world is a world only for those who inhabit it. To inhabit is necessarily to inhabit a world, that is to say, to have there much more than a place of sojourn: its place, in the strong sense of the term, as that which allows something to properly take place. To take place is to properly arrive and happen [*arriver*]; it is not to “almost” arrive and happen and it is not only “an ordinary occurrence.” It is to arrive and happen as proper and to properly arrive and happen to a subject. What takes place takes place in a world and by way of that world. A world is the common place of a totality of places: of presences and dispositions for possible events.

Presence and disposition: sojourn and comportment, these are the senses of the two Greek words *ēthos* and *ethos*, which contaminate each other in the motif of a stand, a “self-standing” that is at the root of all ethics. In a different manner yet oddly analogous, the Latin terms *habitare* and *habitus* come from the same *habere*, which means first “standing” and “self-standing,” to occupy a place, and from this to possess and to have (*habitus* had meant a “manner of relating to . . .”). It is a having with a sense of being: it is a manner of being there and of standing in it. A world is an *ethos*, a *habitus* and an inhabiting: it is what holds to itself and in itself, following to its proper mode. It is a network of the self-reference of this stance. In this way it resembles a subject—and in a way, with-

out a doubt, what is called a subject is each time by itself a world. But the measure or the manner of a world is not that of a subject if the latter must presuppose itself as substance or as prior support of its self-reference. The world does not presuppose itself: it is only coextensive to its extension as world, to the spacing of its places between which its resonances reverberate. (If a subject supposes itself, it subjects itself to its supposition. It can thus only presuppose itself as not subjected to any supposition. It is still, no doubt, a presupposition: thus, precisely, we can say as well that the world presupposes itself as not subjected to anything other, and that is the destiny of the so-called "modern" world. We could thus say that it presupposes itself only, but necessarily, as its own *revolution*: the way it turns on itself and/or turns against itself.)

Thus, the meaning of the world does not occur as a reference to something external to the world. It seems that meaning always refers to something other than what it is a matter of giving a meaning to (as the meaning [*sens*]¹⁵ of the knife is in the cutting and not in the knife). But thought in terms of a world, meaning refers to nothing other than to the possibility of the meaning of this world, to the proper mode of its stance [*tenué*] insofar as it circulates between all those who stand in it [*s'y tiennent*], each time singular and singularly sharing a same possibility that none of them, any place or any God outside of this world, accomplishes.

The stance of a world is the experience it makes of itself. Experience (the *experiri*) consists in traversing to the end: a world is traversed from one edge to the other, and nothing else. It never crosses over these edges to occupy a place overlooking itself. Time has passed since one was able to represent the figure of a *cosmotheoros*, an observer of a world. And if this time has passed, it is because the world is no longer conceived of as a representation. A representation of the world, a worldview, means the assigning of a principle and an end to the world. This amounts to saying that a worldview is indeed the end of the world as viewed, digested, absorbed, and dissolved in this vision. The Nazi *Weltanschauung* attempted to answer to absence of a *cosmotheoros*. And this is also why Heidegger in 1938, turning against this Nazism, exposed the end of the age of the *Weltbilder*—images or pictures of the world.¹⁶

The world is thus outside representation, outside its representation and of a world of representation, and this is how, no doubt, one reaches the most contemporary determination of the world. Already with Marx, there was an exit from representation that was prescribed by the world as the unfolding of a production of men by themselves (even if, with Marx, this production retains features of representation).

A world outside of representation is above all a world without a God capable of being the subject of its representation (and thus of its fabrication, of its

maintenance and destination). But already, as I indicated, the God of metaphysics merged into a world. More precisely, the “God” of onto-theology was progressively stripped of the divine attributes of an independent existence and only retained those of the existence of the world considered in its immanence, that is to say, also in the undecidable amphibology of an existence as necessary as it is contingent. Let us recall, for instance, Spinoza’s God, the “immanent cause of the world,” or Leibniz’s God, which created “the best of all possible worlds,” that is to say, was limited to being a reason internal to the general order of things. The God of onto-theology has produced itself (or deconstructed itself) as subject of the world, that is, as world-subject. In so doing, it suppressed itself as God-Supreme-Being and transformed itself, losing itself therein, in the existence for-itself of the world without an outside (neither outside of the world nor a world from the outside). The speculative *Weltgeist* mocked by Marx becomes—and becomes with Marx himself—*Welt-Geist* or *Geist-Welt*: no longer “spirit of world” but rather world-spirit or spirit-world.

From this very fact, the existence of the world was at stake as absolute existence: its necessity or its contingency, its totality or incompleteness, became the inadequate terms of a problem, a problem that God’s disappearance transformed completely. Correlatively, being “in” [*dans*] the world could no longer follow a container topology, any more than the world itself was found “within” something other than itself. This is how being-within-the-world [*être-dans-le-monde*] has become being-in-the-world [*être-au-monde*]. This preposition *au* [in] represents, in French, what encapsulates the problem of the world.

To be more precise, one should add: “world-forming” [*mondialisation*] was preceded by a “world-becoming” [*mondanisation*]. This means that the “worldly” world of Christianity, the world as created and fallen, removed from salvation and called to self-transfiguration, had to become the site of being and/or beings as a whole, reducing the other world therein. But, as we will see, it is from the feature of “creation” that an inscription is thus transmitted to the global world—while the internal demand of a transfiguration is transferred to the “worldly” world. For the moment, we could say: world-becoming engages a displacement of value, and world-forming a displacement of production. But neither aspect of the process is a mere “secularization” of the theological: it is complete displacement of the stakes. The world does not replay the roles of the theological script for its own purpose: it displaces everything in another script, which precisely lacks a scene that is given or laid out in advance.¹⁷

This brief metaphysical excursus only has a very specific function here: that of showing that “the world,” in our philosophical tradition, has come to be identified firstly with the totality of beings that longer refers logically to any other being (to no other world: for a God distinct from the world would be

another world), and secondly, identified with the question, enigma or the mystery of the *raison d'être* of such a totality. If it is necessary without being the effect of a superior reason (or will), what is that necessity? But if it is not necessitated by anything, isn't it then contingent?—and in this case where does the fortuitous errancy of this existence go?

And if our world is neither necessary nor contingent, or if it is both at once, what does that mean? More generally, how does one disentangle oneself from this conceptual couple? Perhaps by considering a fact without referring it to a cause (neither efficient nor final). The world is such a fact: it may well be that it is the only fact of this kind (if it is the case that the other facts take place within the world). It is a fact without reason or end, and it is our fact. To think it, is to think this factuality, which implies not referring it to a meaning capable of appropriating it, but to placing in it, in its truth as a fact, all possible meaning.

Marx's text cited earlier can be replaced within the horizon of this problematics in several ways. It is first possible to see in these lines the reflection of a sort of inverted onto-theology, where the immanent cause of a world existing in itself eternally (like the matter of/from which it is made: one should look here at Marx's studies on Epicurean materialism) is the production of humanity itself represented as the final and total accomplishment of self-production (total man would almost be the accomplished self-production of matter as the condition and force of production). But it is also possible—and it is even in some respect necessary—to interpret it differently: indeed, if the production of total humanity—that is, global humanity, or the production of the humanized world—is nothing other than the production of the “sphere of freedom,” a freedom that has no other exercise than the “enjoyment of the multimorphic production of the entire world,” then this final production determines no genuine end, nor *telos* or *eschaton*. It is indeed not determined by the self-conception of humanity and of world, but rather by a beyond of production itself, here named “enjoyment.”

Enjoyment—in whatever way one wants to understand it, and whether one stresses a sexual connotation (by borrowing from a Lacanian problematic of the “real,” if you will, something I do not want to explore further here) or by stressing the Spinozist's joy, or mystical “union” (are these two senses that different? It is not certain . . .)—enjoyment, therefore, is what (if it “is” and if it is “something”)* maintains itself beyond either having or being in the same way that it unfolds beyond or before activity and passivity.

By identifying this enjoyment of the global production of humanity, Marx indicates an excess with respect to production as well as with respect to possession (and this is perhaps that very thing which he tried to call later “individual property,” once again, neither private nor collective). Note—a troubling

circumstance—that such an excess of enjoyment (and enjoyment is excessive or it is not enjoyment) constitutes something like the exact parallel of profit that is the law of capital, but a parallel that inverts the sign of surplus-production. This is the case in the sense that the extortion of surplus-value profits from the value created by the work to deposit it in the account of the accumulation in general equivalency (according to the law of an indefinite addition, the principle of which is also excessive, but an excess whose *raison d'être* is accumulation, the end/goal being to indefinitely reproduce the cycle of production and alienation). In that sense enjoyment would be shared appropriation—or appropriating sharing—of what cannot be accumulated or what is not equivalent, that is, of value itself (or of meaning) in the singularity of its creation. But sharing singularity (always plural) means to configure a world, a quantity of possible worlds in the world. This configuration (features, tones, modes, contacts, etc.) allows the singularities to expose themselves.

The extortion or the exposition of each to the others: the most important is not to say, “Here is the decisive alternative!” (which we already know). What matters is to be able to think how the proximity of the two “ex-,” or this twofold excess is produced, how the same world is divided in this way.

In a way, profit and enjoyment thus placed back to back behave like two sides of the infinite: on the one hand, the infinite that Hegel called “bad,” the infinite of the interminable growth of accumulation, the cycle of investment, of exploitation and reinvestment (one could say that it is the cycle of infinite wealth as it began when the world, becoming precapitalistic, came out of the order in which wealth was accumulated for its shine rather than for its reproduction),¹⁹ on the other hand the actual infinite, the one by which a finite existence accedes, as finite, to the infinite of a meaning or of a value that is its most proper meaning and value.

I do not at all find it unreasonable to say that this perspective, which can seem perfectly abstract or idealistic, distant from harsh reality, is precisely what would be capable of diagnosing that which secretly drives our world insofar as it seems surrendered to an infinitely unruly unleashing of appetites of enjoyment: some moved by the drive of exponential accumulation, others provoked by the strategies of production that are subjugated to this drive. Under the unruly unleashing of the bad infinite (an unruly unleashing rightly called “deregulation” in free-market thinking!) that regulates itself according to the indefinite as such, there is a secret desire for the actual infinite: a desire for absolute value. Now it is manifest—it is even what current times render each day more manifest—that no abstract value, no equivalence nor any given representation of human beings or of world (or of another world), can satisfy this expectation. One does not enjoy the human being of humanism, or, if you pre-

fer, the human being of humanism does not have joy: it is *par excellence* the human without joy, it does not even know tragic joy (let us say, in one word, the joy of knowing oneself to be finite) and it knows neither the mystical joy (that of effusion) nor the Spinozist and Nietzschean joy (let us say, the one of knowing oneself *hic et nunc* infinite and eternal).

How can this be considered in an actual relation with the world, or rather with what happens to us as a dissipation of the world in the bad infinite of a “globalization” in a centrifugal spiral behaving like the expanding universe described by astrophysics, all the while doing nothing else than circumscribing the earth more and more in a horizon without opening or exit? How are we to conceive of, precisely, a world where we only find a globe, an astral universe, or an earth without sky (or, to cite Rimbaud and reversing him, a sea without a sun)?

It at least supposes one founding condition. This condition is nothing else than the following: it is a matter of being able to take completely and seriously into account the determination of *world*, in a way that has perhaps never taken place in our history—but for which our history today would offer the possibility.

If the world, essentially, is not the representation of a universe (*cosmos*) nor that of a here below (a humiliated world, if not condemned by Christianity), but the excess—beyond any representation of an *ethos* or of a *habitus*—of a stance by which the world stands by itself, configures itself, and exposes itself in itself, relates to itself without referring to any given principle or to any determined end, then one must address the principle of such an absence of principle directly. This must be named the “without-reason” of the world, or its absence of ground. It is not a new idea to say that the world is “without reason” or that it is exclusively and entirely its own reason. We know quite well that it is found in Angelus Silesius (“the rose grows without reason”), but one does not always notice how it works within all the great formulations of the most classical rationalism, including and especially when they are trying to find and posit a “principle of reason” for all things.²⁰

If I say that this thought works within the consciousness and the unconscious of the West, I mean that it is indeed an actual work, transformative and productive of value—a value that capital is not able, in spite of everything, to commodify without remainder: the value of the world, or more precisely the value of “world,” the value of being-world and of being-in-the-world as significance or as a resonance without reason.

But if capital is not able to absorb all significance in the commodity, although it aims at nothing other, that is perhaps also because it does not entirely come from the commodity alone: what precedes capital is wealth as

glitter, the wealth that does not produce more wealth, but which produces its own splendor and its own opulence as the glow of a meaning in which the world is wrapped (but also blinded and suffocated by its glitter—at the same time that such glitter is captured by the hierarchy). Capital converts the glitter into an accumulation that produces a wealth that is defined by its own (re)productivity: in this way, it transforms the brilliance into the indefinite process of a meaning that is always to come or always lost, and synonymous with enrichment. One could say that wealth loses in power of meaning what it gains as power of accumulation. One should never forget that the word *wealth* originally designated the order of power and greatness, the order of magnificence in the noble sense of the term:²¹ the so-called grandeur of the soul, perhaps its glory and exaltation. One can also recall that it is no accident if the signs of this spiritual greatness, in the beginnings of the proto-capitalist West, shift from wealth to Christian or philosophical poverty.

In this inversion of signs and in the henceforth interminably ambivalent relation that the West maintains with money (and commerce, finance, etc.), it is not only the beginning of the capitalist transformation of society that is at stake. It is also the more secret, and tricky movement by which, in capital, a change in the nature of “wealth” is accompanied by placing grandeur in reserve (in secret), that is, by placing *value* in the “valorous” sense of the word. Value becomes both the remainder and the excess of capital, or the foreign body that weakens and undermines it from within, as the other of its “political economy,” like the super-economy or an-economy that must reveal its gap and its violent demand there. It is that absolute value of value,²² and nothing else, that erupts anew in Marx’s work.

(But this is also why, far from submitting history, culture and the humanity of human beings to an economic causality, and “superstructure” to “infrastructure,” Marx analyzes, on the contrary, the way in which the transformations of value—that is to say, the transformations of the evaluation of value (or of sense, or of truth)—make economic and social transformations possible, etc. In the transformations of the evaluation of value, which are the transformations of the production of the ways of life, the technological and cultural processes are inextricably joined and in reciprocal relation. Marx did not reverse the supposed “Hegelian” history from an ideal determination to a material determination: he suppressed all determinations except that of the production of humanity by itself, a production that is itself precisely determined by nothing other.)

Today, wealth as a quantity that can be capitalized is identical to the infinite poverty of the calculable quantities of the market. But that same market also produces a growing order of symbolic wealth—wealth of knowledge and

significance such as those which, despite their submission to commodities, made the greatest culture of modern times, and such as those which seem to be invented today as a giant productivity that disseminates sense (symbols, signs, modes, schemes, rhythms, figures, sketches, codes for all gains and losses, in all senses, if I may say so). It could well be that capital—and perhaps its own capital, its head and reserve, the primitive accumulation of its own sense—appears in its insignificance and disseminates in a novel significance, violently disseminating all signification in order to demand the forcing or breaching of a sense yet to be invented: the sense of a world that would become rich from itself, without any reason either sacred or cumulative.

Thus, we propose a hypothesis with respect to an internal displacement of technology and capital that would make an inversion of signs possible: the insignificant equivalence reversed into an egalitarian, singular, and common significance. The “production of value” becomes the “creation of meaning.” This hypothesis is fragile, but perhaps it is a matter of grasping it, not as an attempt at a description, but as a will to act. However, such an inversion of signs would not remain a simple formal inversion, if the “signs” were the indexes of an evaluation: it would be a matter of a general reevaluation, of an *Umwertung* on which Marx and Nietzsche would finally concur. On the other hand, such a possibility must not be the object of a programmatic and certain calculation. Such certainty of a prediction would immediately render the *Umwertung* sterile and would predetermine its projects, its representations and, why not, its party with its operatives. . . . It must be a possibility of the impossible (according to a logic used often by Derrida), it must know itself as such, that is to say, know that it happens also in the incalculable and the unassignable. This does not mean that the possibility of the impossible remains formal or constitutes a transcendental with no relevance to any experience. It must devote itself to being actual, but the aim of actuality must take into account, at the same time, a boundless leap outside of the calculable and controllable reality. After all, the transcendental is also, always, that which constitutes conditions of possibility of experience, while at the same time *rendering impossible the subject of that experience* as itself an empirical subject. Willing the world, but not willing a subject of the world (neither substance nor author nor master), is the only way to escape the un-world. And the materialism of actuality—of the concrete life of human beings—must here conceive of matter as impenetrable, namely as the impenetrability of the truth of the world, the “meaning of the world” being the passion of this truth.

It would thus be a matter of producing and/or of allowing for a wealth to be given that would be enriched only by the splendor of such a meaning and that, in this way, would also be “poverty,” if this word does indeed designate

since the beginning of the West—not by accident—not the misery resulting from spoliation, but the *ethos* (and also the *pathos*), the value of which does not derive from ownership (of something or of oneself) but in abandonment. Poverty, or the being-abandoned—in all the complex ambivalence of these two senses: abandoned *by* and abandoned *to*. (One could show the emergence of a triple figure of poverty in this sense: philosophical-Greek, Jewish, or Roman.)

The three aspects of wealth would be: glitter, capital, dissemination, and they would constitute three moments of the body: the glorious and hieratic body of the Gods, the working body subjugated to the speculative spirit, the body exposed to contact with all bodies: a world of bodies, a world of senses, a world of being-*in*-the-world. But it goes without saying that these moments do not simply succeed each other like so many stages of a process, or like the ages of the world. It is their coexistence and their conflict that needs to be thought.

What is most troubling about the modern enigma—for specifically this is what constitutes the modern and which makes it, for the last three centuries, an enigma for itself, which even defines the modern as such an enigma, without any need to speak of the “postmodern”—is that the without-reason could take the form both of capital and of the mystical rose that represents the absolute value of the “without-reason.” One could almost be tempted, even beyond the wildest imaginations of today’s free market capitalists, to present the rose as the ultimate revelation of the secret of capital—a revelation that projected, it is true, until the indefinable end of perpetual reinvestment. Others would be tempted—and we all are today, more or less—to reveal, on the contrary, that the secret of the rose and of capital together occurs like an unprecedented geopolitical, economic, and ecological catastrophe, globalization as the suppression of all world-forming of the world.

It is in all respects not only reasonable, but also required by the vigor and rigor of thought, to avoid recourse to representations: the future is precisely what exceeds representation. And we have learned that we must grasp the world once more outside of representation.

Now, in order to distance such thinking of the world from representation, there is no better way than this one: to grasp the “world” once more according to one of its constant motifs in the Western tradition—to the extent that it is also the tradition of monotheism—namely, the motif of creation.

To appropriate this motif, I must take a preliminary precaution, but in an elliptical manner. “Creation” is a motif, or a concept, that we must grasp outside of its theological context. Let me indicate how this can be done schematically: as I have previously suggested, it is theology itself that has stripped itself of a God distinct from the world. At the end of monotheism, there is world without God, that is to say, without another world, but we still need to reflect

on what this means, for we know nothing of it, no truth, neither “theistic” nor “atheistic”—let us say, provisionally, as an initial attempt, that it is *absentheistic*.²³

If “creation” means anything, it is the exact opposite of any form of production in the sense of a fabrication that supposes a given, a project, and a producer. The idea of creation, such as has been elaborated by the most diverse and at the same time most convergent thoughts, including the mystics of the three monotheisms but also the complex systems of all great metaphysics, is above all the idea of the *ex nihilo* (and I do not exempt Marx from this, to the contrary: while his understanding of Christian creation is only instrumental, for him value is precisely created . . .). The world is created from nothing: this does not mean fabricated with nothing by a particularly ingenious producer. It means instead that it is not fabricated, produced by no producer, and not even coming out of nothing (like a miraculous apparition), but in a quite strict manner and more challenging for thought: the nothing itself, if one can speak in this way, or rather *nothing* growing [*croissant*] as *something* (I say “growing” for it is the sense of *cresco*—to be born, to grow—from which comes *creo*: to make something merge and cultivate a growth). In creation, a growth grows from nothing and this nothing takes care of itself, cultivates its growth.

The *ex nihilo* is the genuine formulation of a radical materialism, that is to say, precisely, without roots.

Thus, we can now clarify what we said earlier: if the world-becoming (detheologization) displaces value—makes it inmanent—before world-forming displaces the production of value—making it universal—the two together displace “creation” into the “without-reason” of the world. And this displacement is not a transposition, a “secularization” of the onto-theological or metaphysical-Christian scheme: it is, rather, its deconstruction and emptying out, and it opens onto another space—of place and of risk—which we have just begun to enter.

If the world is the growth of/from nothing [*croissance de rien*]²⁴—an expression of a formidable ambiguity—it is because it only depends on itself, while this “self” is given from nowhere but from itself. But it is also because it is the growth of/from nothing other than nothing, a nothing that obviously is not a pure and simple nothingness, on the basis of which no growth could be conceived, but which is the without-reason [*rien de raison*] of the world. In this sense, the “creation” of the world is in no way a representation that is opposed to the representation of an eternity of the matter of the world. In truth, none of these things, creation or eternal matter, are representations, and this is why they are not opposites. The eternity of matter only means that there is nothing outside the world, no other world, and no space-time that would not be that of “our” world. This eternity is the eternity of space-time, absolutely. Creation

is the growth without reason of such a space-time. The two concepts correspond to each other at the exact limit of metaphysics and physics: and this limit is not one that separates two worlds, but one that shares out the indefiniteness of the universe (or the indefiniteness of its expansion, as contemporary cosmology has it) and the infinity of its meaning.

By writing that "the sense of the world must lie outside the world,"²⁴ Wittgenstein simultaneously stated two things: that the world in itself does not constitute an immanence of meaning, but that, since there is no other world, the "outside" of the world must be open "within it"—but open in a way that no other world could be posited there. This is also why Wittgenstein writes further: "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists" (TLP 6.44, 88).

The meaning of this *fact* is the meaning that the without-reason makes possible. Now, this means that it is meaning in the strongest and most active sense of the term: not a given signification (such as that of a creating God or that of an accomplished humanity), but meaning, absolutely, as possibility of transmission from one place to another, from the one who sends to the one who receives, and from one element to another, a reference that forms at the same time a direction, an address, a value, or a meaningful content. Such a content constitutes the stance of a world: its *ethos* and its *habitus*. Clearly, neither meaning as direction [*sens*] nor meaning [*sens*] as content is given. They are to be invented each time: we might as well say to be created, that is, to create from nothing and to bring forth that very without-reason that sustains, drives, and forms the statements that are genuinely creative of meaning, such as in science, politics, esthetics, and ethics: on all these registers, we are dealing with multiple aspects and styles of what we could call the *habitus* of the meaning of the world. (I limit myself to speaking of "statements" to remain close to the sphere where we situate meaning most commonly; one should also think of gestures, actions, passions, and formalities, etc. . . . Solidarity, love, music, cybernetics are also meaning in act.)

This does not at all mean that anything makes sense in just any way: that would be precisely the capitalist version of the without-reason, which establishes the general equivalence of all forms of meaning in an infinite uniformity. It signifies on the contrary that the creation of meaning, and with it the enjoyment of sense (which is not foreign, one should note, to the enjoyment of senses) requires its forms, its inventions of forms and the forms of its exchange. Worldhood, in this regard, is the form of forms that itself demands to be created, that is not only produced in the absence of any given, but held infinitely beyond any possible given: in a sense, then, it is never inscribed in a representation, and nonetheless always at work and in circulation in the forms that are being invented.

One could say that worldhood is the *symbolization* of the world, the way in which the world symbolizes in itself with itself, in which it articulates itself by making a circulation of meaning possible without reference to another world.

Our task today is nothing less than the task of creating a form or a symbolization of the world. This seems to us to be the greatest risk that humanity has had to confront. But it may well be that it has already done so several times, perhaps even that the world itself has already done so several times. This is neither an abstract nor purely a formal task—whether this word is taken esthetically or logically. It is the extremely concrete and determined task—a task that can only be a struggle—of posing the following question to each gesture, each conduct, each *habitus* and each *ethos*: How do you engage the world? How do you involve yourself with the enjoyment of the world as such, and not with the appropriation of a quantity of equivalence? How do you give form to a difference of values that would not be a difference of wealth in terms of general equivalence, but rather a difference of singularities in which alone the passage of a meaning in general and the putting into play of what we call a world can take place?

However, as I mentioned, this task is a struggle. In a sense, it is a struggle of the West against itself, of capital against itself. It is a struggle between two infinities, or between extortion and exposition. It is the struggle of thought, very precisely concrete and demanding, in which we are engaged by the disappearance of our representations of the abolishing or overcoming of capital. It demands that we open or discern in capital another type or another kind of a flaw than what we understood to be insurmountable contradictions, and that capital was able to overcome, thus overcoming also our representations. We must consider capital in terms of its height and power—in terms of its “wealth” and “fortune.”

The moment has come to expose capital to the absence of reason, for which capital provides the fullest development: and this moment comes from capital itself, but it is no longer a moment of a “crisis” that can be solved in the course of the process. It is a different kind of moment to which we must give thought.

But such thinking is not only theoretical: now as in the past, it is practically manifest and necessary—in the sense of the necessity and manifestedness of the world—that the struggle is straightaway and definitively a matter of concrete equality and actual justice. In this sense, Marx’s demand is not obsolete. The “thinking” of which we are speaking is necessarily involved both in the questioning of the “sense of the world”²⁵ and in immediate, political, economic, and symbolic acts. But the difference between Marx’s revolution and the one in which we are perhaps underway without our knowledge—and of which a

thousand revolts, a thousand rages, a thousand creations of signs are the flashing indicators—could be sketched provisionally in the following way: by conceiving of itself as a reversal of the relation of production, Marx's revolution presupposed that this reversal was equivalent to a conversion of the meaning of production (and the restitution of created value to its creator). What we have begun to learn is that it is also a matter of creating the meaning or the value of the reversal itself. Only perhaps this creation will have the power of the reversal.

Further, when Marx wrote that philosophers contented themselves with interpreting the world, and that it was henceforth a matter of changing it, he specified nothing with respect to the relations that the transformation enters into with the prevailing interpretations: Do the former suspend the latter? Do the latter determine, on the contrary, the former? Or else isn't it a matter of transforming the relation between them, and of understanding (that is to say, of enacting) that meaning is always in *praxis*, although no practice is limited to enacting a theory and although no theory is able to diminish practice? But the gap between the two is necessary to what is called *praxis*, that is to say, *meaning at work* [au travail], or even *truth in the work* [à l'œuvre].²⁶

This gap is not the gap between an interpretive philosophy and a transformative action, nor is it the gap between a regulative utopia and a resigned practice, nor the gap between a founding myth and the violence that sought to incarnate it. Indeed, under the three figures—interpretation, utopia, or myth—beneath their differences, the possibility of a correspondence of truth to a form, or of a coming into presence of an accomplished meaning remains presupposed. But the issue, on the contrary, is to be attentive to the gap of meaning with itself, a gap that constitutes it or that is its truth. Such a gap always places meaning in excess or in deficiency with respect to its own work.

In excess or in deficiency with respect to its work does not mean outside of all labor, but means a labor whose principle is not determined by a goal of mastery (domination, usefulness, appropriation), but exceeds all submission to an end—that is, also exposes itself to remaining without end. Here it is art that indicates the stakes: the work of art is always also a meaning at work beyond the work [à l'œuvre au-delà de l'œuvre], as well as a work working and opening beyond any meaning that is either given or to be given. But the opening without finality is never a work nor any product: it is the enjoyment of which Marx spoke, as enjoyment by human beings of what opens their humanity beyond all humanism. (This work is not without labor, any more than this enjoyment is without suffering.)

To create the world means: immediately, without delay, reopening each possible struggle for a world, that is, for what must form the contrary of a global injustice against the background of general equivalence. But this means to con-

duct this struggle precisely in the name of the fact that this *world* is coming out of nothing, that there is nothing before it and that it is without models, without principle and without given end, and that it is precisely *what* forms the justice and the meaning of a world.

Once again, to create as a struggle, which while struggling—consequently, by seeking power, by finding forces—does not seek the exercise of power—nor property—whether collective or individual, but seeks itself and its agitation, itself and the effervescence of its thought in act, itself and its creation of forms and signs, itself and its contagious communication as propagation of an enjoyment that, in turn, would not be a satisfaction acquired in a signification of the world, but the insatiable and infinitely finite exercise that is the being in act of meaning brought forth in the world [*mis au monde*].

II

Of Creation

The text that begins here, and which first was given as an homage to Lyotard, links up with the exchange that took place with him twenty years ago.¹ At the time, the issue was a question of judgment, and more precisely: a judgment about ends, consequently the secret or explicit decision that necessarily sub-tends a philosophical gesture, and which constitutes its *ethos*, the decision about what matters—for example “*a world*,” a world “worthy of the name”—cannot be a choice between possibilities, but only and each time a decision about what is neither real nor possible: a decision about what is in no way given in advance, but which constitutes the eruption of the new, that is unpredictable because it is without face, and thus the “beginning of a series of appearances” by which Kant defines freedom in its relation to the world.

Such a decision is about the neither-real-nor-possible, thus, neither given nor representable, but in some way necessary and imperious (like Kantian freedom in its relation to the law that it is itself), and consequently it is a violent decision without appeal, for it decides [*tranche*] between all and nothing—or more exactly it makes some thing be in place of nothing [*elle fait être quelque chose au lieu de rien*], and this some thing is everything, for freedom cannot be divided, as Kant knew as well, neither freedom nor its object or effect. The judgment about ends or about the end, about a destination, or about a meaning of the world, is the engagement of a philosophy (or about what one calls a “life”) ever since an end is not given: this is the birth certificate of philosophy and of our so-called “Western” or “modern” history. In this sense, it is the certificate of a day of wrath in which the tension and the decisiveness of a (first, last) judgment are unleashed, a judgment that only depends on itself. This is the *dies irae* of which Lyotard speaks in his *The Confession of Augustine*² and in terms of Augustine and Isaïe, as the day in which the heavens will be enveloped as in a *volumen*, folded upon the light of signs and opening to the dark opacity before creation or after its annihilation, or even withdrawn from the world as the precise moment and place of its creation and decision: space-time outside of space and time. And thus also *dies illa*: that day, that illustrious day, most remarkable because it is removed from all days, the day of end as the day of infinity.

We should derive the following from Lyotard's interest in what Kant calls "reflective" judgment, a judgment for which "the universal is not given"—Kant's proposition for what exceeds the limits of the mathematico-physical object of "determinant" judgment and of the transcendental schematism, which becomes for Lyotard the general proposition of "post-modernity": if the universal is not given, this does not mean that it needs to be dreamt or "mimicked" (the weak version of the philosophy of the "as if;" a more or less latent formulation of so-called "value" philosophies), it means that it is to be invented. In other words, it seems important not to simply pose a "judgment without criteria" (another expression from Lyotard), itself defined as a judgment "maximizing concepts outside of any knowledge of reality" (and thus in the first place the concept of final end or of destination of the world and of human beings). But one needs to understand also that knowledge is lacking here, not because of an intrinsic deficiency of human understanding (a finitude relative to the model of an *intellectus intuitivus*) but because of the absence, pure and simple, of "reality," which is effectively not given (the absolute finitude of a Dasein who puts into play nothing less than the—infinite—meaning of being).

In other words, the judgment without criteria is not only (or perhaps not at all) an analogical and approximate, symbolic and nonschematic mode of determinant judgment. It is neither its extension, nor its projection, nor its figuration. Perhaps even, in the end, the term *judgment* contains an ambiguity in its false symmetry or its apparent continuity. For whereas the first proceeds by construction, or schematic presentation, that is to say by the dependence of a concept on an intuition, which defines the conditions of a *possible* experience, the second is placed before—or provoked by—something that cannot be constructed, which corresponds to an absence of intuition. This absence of intuition forms the Kantian condition of the "absolute" object, the one that cannot be an object, that is, the subject of principles and ends ("God," or now man, in any case the rational subject, which becomes the precise term of the nonintuitable subject of sufficient reasons and final ends). The inconstructible of an absence of intuition—which moreover *produces* an absence of concept if those of "first cause" and "final end" are thereby weakened in their very structure—defines the necessity, not of constructing in the void (which has no meaning, except by simulacrum) but of letting a void emerge, or to make with this void what is at issue, namely *the end*, which is henceforth the issue of such a *praxis* rather than a strictly intellectual judgment.

To say it in a word: not to construct but to create.

(Here I allow myself a brief digression: to encounter the *inconstructible* in the Kantian sense, this is also and at the very least is what "to deconstruct" means, a word that is now too often used by the *doxa* to mean demolition and

nihilism. Yet, through Husserl, Heidegger, and Derrida, this word—originally *Abbau* and not *Zerstörung*—would have rather led us toward what is neither constructed nor constructible, but is set back from the structure, its empty space, and which makes it work, or even that which pervades it.

Lyotard stated at that time that the judgment about ends should be freed from Kant's unitary teleology, that of the reign of a "reasonable humanity." Aware of the fact that the substitution of plurality for unity alone simply risked displacing an unchanged structure toward the renewed content that he named "the horizon of a manifold or of a diversity," he rushed to add that the *final* plurality imposed with it the irreducibility of singularities—which he understood in the sense of the Wittgenstein's "language games"—and that the universal coming to supplement a "non given" universal could only be the prescription of "observing the singular justice of each game."

In other words, what is necessary is a world that would only be the world of singularities, without their plurality constructed as a unitotality. But what is thus necessary is *a world*.

An exigency appears here that will have constantly—we can be certain of it—inhabited our thoughts and that always accompanies in various ways a concern that in the end is common to our absence of community, perhaps to our refusal of community and of a communitarian destination: how to do justice, not only to the whole of existence, but to all existences, taken together but distinctly and in a discontinuous way, not as the totality of their differences, and differends—precisely not that—but as these differences together, coexisting or co-appearing, held together as multiple—and thus together in a multiple way, if one can put it this way, or as multiple together, if we can state it even less adequately . . .—and held by a *co-* that is not a principle, or that is a principle or archi-principle of spacing in the principle itself. (Twenty-five years ago, Lyotard already wrote: "We would love multiplicities of *principles* . . .")³

To do justice to the multiplicity and to the coexistence of singularities, to multiply thus, and infinitely singularize the ends, such is one of the concerns left to us by that time which as "post" could well be a first time, a time suspended in the preexistence of another time, another beginning and another end.

Justice rendered to the singular plural is not simply a demultiplied or diffracted justice. It is not a unique justice interpreted according to perspectives or subjectivities—and nonetheless it remains the same justice, equal for all although irreducible and insubstitutable from one to the other. (One of the secrets or one of the most powerful resources held in history for the last two centuries, or since Christianity is hidden here: the equality of persons in the incommensurability of singularities.) This justice is thus, to take up a theme that is also found in Augustine's *Confessions*, without common measure: but its

incommensurability is indeed the only unit with which we will have to measure the judgment about ends. This implies two conjoined considerations: on the one hand, the end or the ends will be incommensurable to any determinant aim of a goal, of an objective, of any accomplishment, and on the other hand, human "community" (perhaps also the being-together of all beings) will have no other common measure than that excess of the incommensurable. In other words, what Kant called "reasonable humanity," instead of being the tangential approximation of a given rationality (as, for instance, in utopias and their models of mechanical equilibrium), or instead of simply consisting in the conversion of this postulated unity into a diffraction of singularities, will have to conceive of its own rationality as the incommensurability of Reason in itself, or to itself.

Such a judgment about ends can neither be simply defined as a manner of extrapolation from the determinant judgment nor as an extension of concepts outside of the conditions of knowledge, under the Kantian condition of a "solely reflective" usage. At this point, it becomes no doubt necessary to think that whereas Kant understands this usage according to a strategic prudence toward the metaphysical *Schwärmerei*, we must think it also in terms of an active and productive invention of ends. We could also formulate this as follows: the Kantian order of *postulation* instead of constituting a simple supplement of representation to the harshness of the moral law that is superimposed on a finite knowledge, must constitute by itself the *praxis* of the relation to ends.

We can therefore think that the "maximization of concepts" of which Lyotard spoke must be taken beyond itself, while at the same time taken literally: the *maximum* carried to the extreme, but here precisely the extreme is not determinable and the *maximum* behaves like an infinite extension or an excess. In the movement of this excess, the "concept" that was "maximized" wavers and changes its nature or status: this is how the judgment of the sublime behaves when "the concept of the large number is transformed into the Idea of an absolute or actual infinite."⁴

The "Idea," to use this Kantian-Lyotardian lexicon, is no longer a concept used in an analogical or symbolic mode outside of the limits of possible experience or of given intuition. It is no longer a concept without intuition, handled by virtue of something that substitutes for a sensible given: it becomes itself the creation of its own scheme, that is to say, of a novel reality, which is the form/matter of a world of ends. At the same time, and according to the requirements mentioned beforehand, this scheme must be that of a multiple universal, namely, the scheme of a differend or of a general or absolute incommensurability.

(In parentheses, we shall note the following: the schematism of such a world of ends could very well correspond to what Kant calls "nature." Indeed,

if the concern of the first *Critique* is the reduction of the natural sensible multiplicity in favor of an objectivity of experience, the concern of the third *Critique* is to do justice, in a reflective mode, to that sensible excess with respect to the object that is constituted by the vertiginous and irreducible proliferation of the “empirical laws” of nature. Now, this proliferation, where the understanding risks losing itself, corresponds to nothing else than to the question of ends: To what end is there such a multiplicity of empirical principles? [A question that is specified especially in these: To what end the “formative force” of life? And to what end the production and progress of human culture?] *Nature*, with Kant, no longer constitutes a given order and becomes the order—or always possible disorder—of an enigma of ends. Between the first and the third *Critique*, the second will have formed the moral judgment—a judgment concerning action regulated by a formal universality—according to what could not for Kant have the constituting or constructive nature of a scheme, but which, under the name of *type*, nonetheless presents the analogical regulation of a *nature* [the moral reign as a second nature]. Through this entire reevaluation of nature, it is a matter of only this: How can we think the undiscoverable unity, the motion, intention, or destination of this order of things that carries naturally within it the nonnatural being of ends? The question of nature has thus indeed become that of a universe no longer sustained by the creative and organizing action of a Providence, and, consequently, that of a finality no longer guided by the agency or index of an end: neither of *one* end nor of an *end* in general . . .)

We thus need to look for a judgment ruled by such a schematism, once again, neither determinant (or presenting) nor reflective (or representing *as if*) and, in other words, neither mathematical nor aesthetic (in the first sense of term according to Kant) and consequently perhaps both ethical and aesthetic (in the second sense of the term), but then just as much neither ethical nor aesthetic in any usual sense of these terms.

To that end, we need to start again from that with which judging is concerned: the ends, but more precisely those ends that are distinct from both the mere absence of end (that is to say, mathematics) and the intentional end (the technological end, that is, that of art in general, even if “without ends”—to that extent, we need to stand outside of art itself, as art itself demands, which is never “artistic” *in the last analysis*). Perhaps we have, then, no other concept of “end” than those that I just mentioned, and perhaps our question engages a rupture with any kind of end as an end that is sought after, that is, also as an end represented and executed by the effect of this self-moving representation (namely, in Kant the end of a *Will*) and at the same time as an end produced from a cause and more broadly from the effect of a concurrence of causes: formal

cause, efficient cause, material cause, and final cause, this last one essentially encapsulating causality *per se*—which, we note in passing, also means for Aristotle the Good as final end.⁵ In this sense, our question is through and through the question of the Good in a world without end or without singular ends . . .

Reading Kant more closely, we can say that we find ourselves, in reality, dealing with an element already mentioned briefly, the “formative power” of nature that Kant describes as possessing an “impenetrable property,” and which “has nothing analogous to any causality known to us.” The reflective judgment can only add to it a “distant analogy” with our technological finality and causality. (One can certainly note that Kant speaks here of life, not of nature in general. But we could show that the first holds for the second: the Kantian distinction is not between an inorganic nature and an organic nature [then, on another level, a culture], but between an order of the conditions of the understanding and an order of the expectations of reason. With respect to the second order, “nature” is from the outset entirely regulated by an “internal finality” that life exposes and that humanity brings to a paroxysm.)

Now what can clearly be seen in this “formative power” with a unique causality is that the thesis of a creation of the world is rendered inadmissible by the destitution of a God-principle of the world, but at the same time revived or made more acute by contrast by the demand to think a world whose reason and end, provenance and destination, are no longer given; and yet, we need to think of it as world, that is, as a totality of meaning, at least hypothetical or asymptotic—or as a totality of a meaning that is in itself plural and always singular.

Such an end that would exclude the intentional end, or a final cause that would include the formal cause, or substance itself, and would tend to identify with the absence of end would amount in Aristotle’s thought to an empty tautology: “why a thing is itself.” But from the void of tautology since Kant, the reality of a new world, or a new reality of the world perhaps emerges. For the pure and simple absence of end conforms to the mathematical scheme, or to that of the constructible object. But here we are speaking of the inconstructible, that is to say, of *existence*, whose inconstructibility, indeterminacy, and nonobjectiveness ultimately constitute for Kant the definition of existence.⁶

Existence as such is precisely what cannot be presented as an object within the conditions of possible experience. As the first two “Analogies of Experience” demonstrate, the substance changes in time, but it is no more born there than it dies there. The *substantia phaenomenon* is clearly coextensive to time and space, which both form the unfolding of the phenomenon. Kant recalls the principle, *Gigni de nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil posse reverti*.⁷ This principle explicitly states the negation of a creation. And it is also this principle that, while

maintaining the object within the conditions of possible experience, that is, as mechanism, excludes in an impossible experience any consideration of the end of things as well as the provenance of their existence as such.

Our question thus becomes clearly the question of the impossible experience or the experience of the impossible: an experience removed from the conditions of possibility of a finite knowledge, and which is nevertheless an experience. The judgment about ends without given criteria—and which makes by itself, in act, the *ethos* and *praxis* of this “finality” in all respects singular—is the “experience” in question. In a sense, philosophy after Kant was continuously the thought of an experience of the impossible, that is, an experience of the *intuitus originarius*, or the originary penetration by which there is a world, existences, their “reasons,” and their “ends.” The problem was as follows: *Without giving up on the strict critical delimitation of metaphysics, how can we reopen and inaugurate anew the essence of the metaphysical capacity and demands, and therefore of the discerning of reasons and ends?*

On the other hand, what is “impossible” according to the Kantian context of a delimiting “possible,” tracing the circumference of the nonoriginary understanding (not creative of its object, or rather constructive of its object, but not creative of the thing, nor consequently of the provenance-and-end of the world), is also what has changed, since Descartes and especially since Leibniz, from the status of the real to the status of the possible, now understood not as delimiting, but rather as the unlimiting mode of openness and activity. The world is a possibility before being a reality, reversing the perspective from the given to the giving, from the result to the provenance (without forgetting, however, that there is no longer a giver). The “best of all possible worlds” is an expression that refers above all to the activity by which this world is drawn (or draws itself) from the immensity of possibilities.¹⁰ The thinking that inaugurates plural monadic singularity is the one that transforms (but with Descartes and Spinoza) the regime of thought of the provenance-and-end of the world: from creation as a result of an accomplished divine action, one shifts to creation as, in sum, an unceasing activity and actuality of this world in its singularity (singularity of singularities). One sense of the word (creation as a state of affairs of the given world) yields to another (creation as bringing forth [*mise au monde*] a world—an active sense that is nothing else than the first sense of *creatio*). Hence, even the *creature* that was the finite image of its creator” and consequently was bound to represent (interpret, figure) creation, itself becomes a potential *creator* as subject of possibilities and subject of ends, as being of distance and of its own distance, or still (or at the same time) confronts “creation”—origin and end—as the incommensurable and impossible of its experience.

But that very fact, that there is in the world either the agency or the power or at least the question and/or experience of its own creation, is henceforth given with the world and as its very worldliness—which, from created, becomes creative—even in the end as its worldhood. The current state of affairs is that there is in the world or even as the world (under the name “humanity” or under other words, “history,” “technology,” “art,” “existence”) a putting into play of its provenance and end, of its being-possible and thus of its being and of being in general, and that this putting into play itself be the entire discernible necessity in place of a being necessarily situated above and beyond the world.¹²

Consequently, what indirectly appears as a new problematic of “creation” is the question of a judgment about ends that would not be only a judgment extrapolated beyond the limits of the understanding, but also, or rather, the judgment of a reason to which is given in advance neither end(s) nor means, nor anything that constitutes whatever kind of “causality known to us.” The judgment about the “ends of all things” must be concerned with a condition of being that would not depend on causality or finality, nor consequently on mechanical consecution or subjective intention. By destituting the creating God and the *ens summum*—sufficient reason of the world—Kant also makes clear that the reason of the world pertains to a productive causality. He opens implicitly and outside of theology a new question of “creation” . . .

At the same time, a second guiding indication is given to us: what excludes the *ex nihilo* from the Kantian understanding is the necessary permanence of the unique phenomenal substance in which changes occur by way of causality. But the uniqueness of this substance is itself the correlation of the “principle of production” (second Analogy) of all phenomena. Now, what we have said thus far forces us to posit that the principle, not of all phenomena but of the *totality* of phenomena and of phenomenality itself, or the ontological principle of the phenomenality of the thing in itself, precisely cannot be a principle of production; it must be that which appears indirectly as a “creation,” that is to say, a provenance without production. It is neither procession nor providence, nor project, a provenance without a *pro*-, prototype, or promoter—or else a *pro*- that is *nihil* in the very property of *pro*-venance.

Consequently, and even if we still know nothing of such a “principle of creation,” it could well be that what production connects a priori as and in the uniqueness of a substance finds itself on the contrary dispersed by creation—and no less a priori—in an essential plurality of substances: in a multiplicity of existences whose singularity, each time, is precisely homologous to existence, if *existence* is indeed that which detaches itself or distinguishes itself absolutely (what stands out in *all* the senses of the expression), and not that which can be produced by something else.¹³

In this sense, an existence is necessarily a finite cut on (or in, or out of . . .) the indefinite (or infinite as interminable) permanence, in the same way that it is the nonphenomenal underneath (or in, or out of . . .) the phenomenal of the same permanence. But this finitude is precisely what constitutes the real and absolute infinite or the act of this existence: and in this infinite it engages its most proper end.

At least in two ways, conjoined and co-implicated—one that pertains to the provenance and destination of the world, and one that concerns the plurality of subjects—the Lyotardian question of a judgment about ends without given end and without teleological unity, the question of an end *ad infinitum* thus leads toward a question that it seems inevitable to call the question of “creation.”

2

However, this needs to be further clarified.

First, I only use the word *creation* here in a preliminary or provisional way, reserving the hope of being able to transform it. In the end, this word cannot suffice for it is overdetermined with and overused by monotheism, although it also indicates in this entire philosophical context the wearing out [*usure*] of monotheism itself (we will return to this), and even if, furthermore, I do not know what word could replace it, unless it is not a matter of replacing it but of allowing it to be erased in the existing of existence.

Through all the significations that are associated with it, the word *creation* refers, on the one hand, to monotheistic theologies,¹⁴ and, on the other hand, to the intellectual montage of the idea of a production from nothing, a montage so often and so vigorously denounced by the adversaries of monotheism.¹⁵ The nothing or nothingness used as a material cause supposes in fact a prodigious efficient cause (where theology seems to yield to magic), and supposes moreover that the agent of this efficiency is itself a preexisting subject, with its representation of a final cause and of a formal cause, unless the latter preexists, for its part, which would accentuate the contradictions. Stated in this way, in effect, that is, at least according to the most ordinary theological *doxa*, “creation” is the most disastrous of concepts. (Or else it is necessary to state that the *nilil* subsumes the four causes together, and with them their subject: it only remains then, according to all appearances, a word without a concept . . .)

Further, one could show that the intrinsic difficulties of this notion have led to the most powerful and most subtle theological and philosophical elaborations in all the great classical thoughts, in particular with respect to the free-

dom of the creator in relation to or in its creation, or else concerning its motive or absence of motive and certainly of its intention or of its expectation (glory, power, love . . .).

However, it happens, and certainly it is no accident, that the thinkers of the three monotheisms—particularly the Jewish, Christian and Islamic mystics¹⁶—have developed a thinking, or perhaps we should say an experience of thought that is quite different, and that one can find in the work of Hegel and Schelling among others, and also certainly, albeit secretly, in Heidegger, but one, as I have suggested, that was first implicit in Kant. Now in this grand tradition, which is also, if one considers it full scope, a thinking of Being (of the Being of beings as a whole) on the basis of a monotheism in all of its forms and ultimate consequences (the Greek thinking of Being on the basis of which there is *logos* of Being, along with the Jewish thinking of existence on the basis of which there is an experience of existence: a blending that forms the strange “with” of our Greek-Jew condition), one will find a twofold simultaneous movement:

- On the one hand, the creator necessarily disappears in the very midst of its act, and with this disappearance a decisive episode of the entire movement that I have sometimes named the “deconstruction of Christianity”¹⁷ occurs, a movement that is nothing but the most intrinsic and proper movement of monotheism as the integral absencing of God in the unity that reduces it in and where it dissolves;
- On the other hand, and correlatively, Being falls completely outside of any presupposed position and integrally displaces itself into a transitivity by which it is, and is only, in any existence, the infinitive of a “to exist,” and the conjugation of this verb (Being is not the basis the existent, or its cause, but it “is” it or it “exists” it).

In this twofold movement, on the one hand, the model of causal production according to given ends has been clearly delineated and classified in terms of the object, representation, intention and will. On the other hand, the non-model or model-less-ness of being without given—without universal given, without agent given and without presupposed or desired ends, that is to say, without or with nothing given, without or with no gift given—has revealed its incommensurable real and will have challenged the judgment that Kant, in fact, advanced in his way, implicitly inscribing the enigma of creation.

Being without given can only be understood with the active sense of the verb “to be,” indeed, a transitive sense:¹⁸ “to be,” not as a substance or as a substrate, even less as a result or product, nor as a state, nor as a property, even less, if it is

possible, with a simple function of a copula. This is the case because "the world is" forms a complete proposition without the attribute of its subject, but as an act, and thus equivalent to "a doing," although not conforming to any of the known modes of "doing" (neither as a producing nor engendering nor providing a model, nor founding, in sum, a "doing" neither done nor to be done . . .). A transitive "being," whose historical senses of the terms used for the idea of "creation" only give vague approximations (*bara*, the Hebrew term reserved for that divine act, *kitzo*, the Greek term that signifies "to plant," "draw from the wild state," "to establish," the Latin term *creo*, the transitive form of *cresco* "to grow," thus "to cultivate," to "care for").¹⁹

This *being* is incommensurable to any given as to any operation that supposes a given put into play (and an agent-operator). Its substance is equal to its operation, but its operation does not operate any more than it lets the . . . *nothing* be or make (itself), a nothing, that is, as we know, *res*, the thing itself. This being is not nothing, it *is* (transitively) *nothing*. *It transits nothing into something, or rather nothing transits itself into something.*

This theme cuts short any thought of whatever would remain buried at the heart of being or at the very bottom of it. There is nothing withdrawn in the innermost depths of the origin, *nothing but the nothing of origin*. Consequently, the origin cannot be lost or lacking, the world is lacking nothing, because the being of the world is the thing permeated by the nothing. Perhaps this should be decisively separated from any thought of the phenomenon (appearance/disappearance, presence/absence), without for that matter appropriating the secret of presence "in itself": there is no longer a thing in itself or a phenomenon but rather the transitivity of being-nothing.²⁰ Is this not, in the end, what Nietzsche had been the first one to understand?

The withdrawal of any given thus forms the heart of a thinking of creation. This is also what distinguishes it from myth, for which, in a general manner, there is something given, something primordial and which precedes it, which constitutes precedence itself, and the provenance from it. Monotheism is no longer the regime of the foundational myth, but one of a history of election and of destination: the unique God is absolutely not the reunion or the subsumption (nor the "spiritualization") of multiple Gods under a principle (a unique principle figures very often at the foundation of the mythological world).

One needs to state the following: "polytheism" and "monotheism" are not related to each other like a multiplicity to unity. In the first case, there are Gods, that is, presences of absence (because the absolutely general law of any presence is its multiplicity). In the second case, there is atheism, or the absenting of presence. The "Gods" are no longer anything but "places" where this absenting arrives (to be born, to die, to feel, to enjoy, to suffer, to think, to begin and end).

Mono-theism or a-theism is thus a complete metamorphosis of divinity and origin. Nothing is given any longer, except that alone which is still given (for the world of myth does not completely disappear, just as the Babylonian myths of the “creation of the world” infuse the “Book of Generation” or “Book of Genesis”). It is the gift offered by the unique God, but if this gift is still given from one side (this is creation as a state, the world received by man), it cannot be reduced to that state: it is more properly giving, it is the very act of gift and in this act the singular history according to which the human being—and with it all “creatures”—is a partner more than a simple recipient of divine action (for to receive the gift is part of the gift itself) is engaged.

In its profound truth, creation is thus nothing that pertains to a production or fashioning of the ground; it is through and through the mobilization of an act and this act is that of a relation between two actors or agents, God and his creature, consequently each of them singular. Creation “makes” with “nothing,” because it makes nothing that is the order of a substrate: what it “makes” is history and relation, and in this sense it is no thing nor comes from anything. It is thus not a question any longer of a “making” but of a “being,” but only in the sense that *this being is nothing but the meaning of history or of the relation in which it is engaged*.

This is why the most noted mystical version of creation, that of the *tsim-tsoum* of the Lurianic kabala²¹ states that the “nothing” of creation is the one that opens in God when God withdraws in it (and in sum *from* it) in the act of creating. God annihilates itself [*s’anéantit*] as a “self” or as a distinct being in order to “withdraw” in its act—which makes the opening of the world.

Creation forms, then, a nodal point in a “deconstruction of monotheism,” insofar as such a deconstruction proceeds from monotheism itself, and perhaps is its most active resource. The unique God, whose unicity is the correlate of the creating act, cannot precede its creation any more that it can subsist above it or apart from it in some way. It merges with it: merging with it, it withdraws in it, and withdrawing there it empties itself there, emptying itself it is nothing other than the opening of this void. Only the opening is divine, but the divine is nothing more than the opening.

The opening is neither the foundation nor the origin. Nor is the opening any longer a sort of receptacle or an extension prior to things of the world. The opening of the world is what opens along such things and among them, that which separates them in their profuse singularity and which relates them to each other in their coexistence. The open or the “nothing” weaves the co-appearance of existences without referring them to some other originary or foundational unity. As Gérard Granel writes, “The open needs the closed or even is a mode of the closed, a concrete expression of the essential finitude

that any form of being modulates . . . it is at the Closed that the Open itself opens, wounds itself, and only in this way *is* open.”²² But the “finitude” in question here must, in the same movement, be understood as the end in which or toward which the open infinitely opens itself: an end indefinitely multiplied by and in every existing thing in the world. The “world” itself is only the unassignable totality of meaning of all these ends that are open between themselves and the infinite.

The world of myth, and of polytheism, is the world of given presupposition. Onto-theology—the suspension of myth—is, on the contrary, the order of posited presupposition: actively posited as the affirmation of the unique God and/or as thesis of Being. Insofar as it is not given, but posited, the presupposition also contains the principle of its own deposition, since it cannot presuppose anything like a cause (nor thus therefore like an end) or like a production, without also extending, correlatively, the limits of the world. The presupposition becomes there infinite or null, and this simple statement contains the entire program of onto-theology with respect to the ground *and* with respect to the auto-deconstruction of this ground, that is, with respect to its access to the inconstructible. In other words, if nihilism corresponds to the accomplishment of onto-theology according to the logic of a “bad” infinite of presupposition, on the other hand, a thinking of “creation” constitutes the exact reverse of nihilism, conforming to the logic of a null presupposition (which is equivalent as well to a “good” infinite, or actual infinite).

The *ex nihilo* contains nothing more, but nothing less, than the *ex-* of existence that is neither produced nor constructed but only *existing* [*étante*] (or, if one prefers, *étée*, “made” from the making constituted by the transitivity of being). And this *ex nihilo* fractures the deepest core of nihilism from within.

Neither given nor posited, the world is only present: the present of the present of the day in which it exists, *dies illa*. That illustrious and infinitely distant day, that day of the end and of the judgment, is also the day of all days, the *today* of each here. This presence neither differs nor is derived from any other presupposed presence, any more than from an absence that would be the negative of a presence: *ex nihilo* means that it is the *nil* that opens and that disposes itself as the space of all presence (or even as one will see, of all *the* presences).

In a sense, this presence does differ at all (it differs from nothing and it does not differ from anything which is): the ontological difference is null, and this is certainly what the proposition, according to which Being is the Being of beings and nothing other, means. Being is: *that* the being exists. This is how, for example, Wittgenstein understands the meaning of “creation” when he says that the word describes the experience that I have when “*I wonder about the existence of the world.*”²³

"That the being is" can be understood as the *fiat* of creation. But this "that" conflates the indicative, the subjunctive, and the imperative: thus, the transitivity of the verb "to be" is modalized. The fact of being is identical to the desire for being and to the obligation of being; or being, by being, desires itself and obliges itself. But in the absence of any subject of a desire, or of an order, this means that the *fiat*—the fact of the *fiat*—erases in itself the difference of a necessity and of a contingency, as well as that of a possible and of a real. Since nothing produces the being, there is neither contingency nor necessity of its being, just as the question of the "freedom" of a "creator" disappears in the identity of freedom and of necessity required by creation *ex nihilo*. The nullity of the ontological difference is also the nullity of the difference between necessity and contingency and/or freedom or even between the "is" and the "ought" of being.

Derrida's *différance* is the articulation of the nullity of the ontological difference: it attempts to think that "being" is nothing other than the "ex" of existence. This articulation is thought as that of a self-presence that differs *itself*.³⁴ But the "self" resolves itself in *nilhil* as soon as the presupposition is deposed (and deposes itself . . .): the itself/self [*se/soi*] is the presupposition par excellence or absolutely, and it is nothing other (it is the presupposition with its obligatory corollary, the postposition of an end, of a final cause of the *world*). The *supposed* (or the *subject*) becomes thus null or infinite: it is itself the *nilhil* and the *ex-*; it is the *ex nihilo*. The entire being-to-self of the being of the world, and its presence consists in it. This presence is neither that of a given present [*Gegenwärtigkeit*, *Vorhandenheit*], nor that of a "self presenting." It is *praes-entia*, being—always-ahead-of-itself, *stepping out of itself ex-nihilo*. One should not understand *différance* as a sort of permanent flight of an asymptotic and unattainable self (a representation too frequent and too linked to a sort of desire exhausting itself in the infinite) but rather as the generating structure proper to the *ex nihilo*.

Nothing *presents itself*—which also means not even *a* nothing, nor *the* nothing present themselves: this is the end of negative theology as well as the end of a phenomenology in general, albeit that of the unapparent. The present does not present itself, and it is no less exposed. It is nothing other than that, and that is what it falls to us to think henceforth.

In the Being or in the presence of "creation," the infinite as nothing (infinite = no thing) passes into the finite. This is not an individuation or a singularization, it is not a process of production or of generation and it is not a dialectical mediation. The infinite *is* finite: it does not come out of itself *ad extra* it is rather hollowed "in itself" (in nothing) from its own withdrawal which also constitutes its opening in which finite singularities dispose themselves. This opening as nothing, which neither presents nor gives itself, is opened right at

the same level of [*à même*] the finite singularities as their being together or their being-with, and constitutes the disposition of the world.

As its name indicates, *dis*-position is a gap, and its model is more spatial than temporal. Rather than the infinite delay of a *différance* to itself in the sense of a differing from itself, or else as finitude itself—that is to say, the absolute-ness—of this delay (and *not* its finishing), it is the infinitely finite spacing of the singularities that constitute the event of Being or the event of “being.” But strictly speaking, there is neither being nor event: nothing comes from nor comes forth if nothing is presupposed. There are existences, their styles, their comings and goings . . .

According to this archi-spatiality of disposition, which is also the spaciousness of the opening, what is at stake is not a provenance of Being (nor a being of provenance or of origin), but a spacing of presences. These presences are necessarily plural. They do not come from the dispersion of a presence: they are existing, but less in the sense of an ekstasis from an immanent “self” (emanation, generation, expression, etc.) than as disposed together and exposed to each other. Their *co*existence is an essential dimension of their presences at the edges of which the opening opens. The *co*- is implicated in the *ex*-. nothing exists unless *with*, since, nothing exists unless *ex nihilo*. The first feature of the creation of the world is that it creates the *with* of all things: that is to say *the world*, namely, the *nilhil* as that which opens [*ouvre*] and forms [*œuvre*] the world.

Coexistence is neither given nor constructed. There is no schematizing subject and no prior gift.²⁵ Nor, consequently, is it “self-giving”: a unique presence, without doubt, would give itself (it would amount to the same thing, perhaps, being the cause of itself, to be *causa sui* like God). But coexistence is the gift *and* the holding back just as it is the subject and the thing, presence and absence, plenitude and void. Coexistence is that which coheres without being “one” and without being sustained by anything else, or rather by being sustained by nothing: by the *nothing* of the *co*- that is indeed nothing but the in-between or the with of the being-together of singularities. That nothing-with is the non-cause of the world, material, efficient, formal, and final. This means both that the world is simply there (it is or it permeates its “there,” its spacing) and that it is the coexistence that it does not contain but that on the contrary “makes” it.

That the world is there means that it is nowhere since it is the opening of space-time. That it is coexistence means that its opening opens it in all the senses, *partes extra partes*, spatio-temporal dis-positing dispersion, and between space and time just as the one in the other, a manner identical to its proper distention.²⁶ Such is the *Auseinandertreten* of which Heidegger speaks, and whose division or decision opens, in Heidegger’s vocabulary, the belongingness to Be-ing.²⁷

The separation, the stepping-out-of-one-another, is at the same time, *Entscheidung*, decision: it is to the decision of Being, the decision of nothing into being or to being, that responds, on the one hand, the disposition or the diffraction of the world that is (that makes) the world, and, on the other hand, the decision of existence by which a “subject” comes to the world. “Coming to the world” means birth and death, emerging from nothing and going to nothing, which are the relation to the world or the relation-world, the sharing of its meaning and the whole of existence as an ensemble or partition of singular decisions.

It is for us to decide for *ourselves*.

III

Creation as Denaturation: Metaphysical Technology

Philosophy begins from itself: this is a permanent axiom for it, which is implicit or explicit in the work of all philosophers, except, perhaps, for Marx—which remains to be determined—if we can assume Marx is indeed a philosopher, which also remains to be determined; in any case, the assertion holds, clearly, from Plato to Heidegger. Philosophy can represent to itself what precedes its own beginning as an early stage (an infancy, the very beginnings of reason), or else as simply an exteriority (a mythical world foreign to that of *logos*). In any case, this properly philosophical initiative belongs to philosophy itself. In a correlative and identical way, philosophy gives itself its own name: not only does it baptize itself, by inaugurating itself and in order to inaugurate itself, with the name *philo-sophia*, but it is philosophy itself that forges this word, the first of all the *termini technici* that it would forge in the course of history (and it tells itself the history, or the legend of this linguistic initiative).

Philosophy begins as the self-productive technology of its own name, its discourse, and its discipline. It engenders or it fabricates its own concept or its own Idea for itself at the same time that it invents or constructs these instrumental and ideal realities of the “concept” and the “Idea.” In this operation, the best known and most prominent feature is the differentiation of itself from what is called “sophistry”: with respect to this technology of *logos*, philosophy defines itself and constitutes itself as that *technē* that is at the same time different from any other *technē* because it speaks first, or finally, the truth about it. In that very way, it invents itself also in its difference from any other knowledge, any other discipline, or any other science. With respect to this major difference, its self-institution is the key.

In order to conceive of its own provenance, philosophy must choose one of the following alternatives: either it represents its provenance as the product of a continuous progression of humanity, or it represents it as an accident without conditions or reasons. In either case, philosophy is deficient or lacking with respect to its tasks. In the first case, it must retroactively project a scheme of growth or progress prior to the birth of philosophy that raises two difficulties:

first, something of philosophy must be presupposed prior to it, and in that case, philosophy would not have begun from itself; second, this scheme must also be extended ahead of it and as the scheme of both its own history and history in general, which has not failed to provoke, in the history of philosophy, well-known questions on the notion of “progress” in general (that is to say, in the final analysis concerning a supposed naturality and/or concerning its scientificity: thus concerning the constitution of its proper *technē*). But in the second case—with the thesis of the accident that considers the West to be an accident, according to the formulation so often repeated, and which can either refer to a happy accident, “the miracle of Greece,” or else an unhappy accident, a metaphysical decline from the fleeting dawn of the meaning of Being, while remaining subject to the same scheme of accident and contingency—in this case philosophy fails to confer the least necessity to its *technē*, and it can furthermore not tolerate an appeal to it, in a more or less explicit manner, to a category as inconsistent and as unphilosophical as what is previously designated by the expression “the miracle of Greece.” We will say that this expression is not philosophical but purely, and weakly, ideological. Still, it would be necessary to know what is meant by “ideology,” that is, how we distinguish it from philosophy: this leads us back to the first formulations of the problem.

By willing itself auto-initiating and thus auto-finite or auto-finalized—and by willing itself *auto-* in a general way, in being and in only being able to be the *will of the auto-* in the two meanings of the genitive—philosophy betrays and reveals the history of a same movement, if one can, at least, try to understand by “history” in a provisional way, the reality of a movement and of a temporality that would not be split between teleological necessity and blind accidentality and closed on its own discontinuity. (Isn’t the entire problem for history today to resolve this antinomy?)

Philosophy betrays history, because history, if it designates anything, designates above all nonbeginning and noncompletion by itself. If something such as a process-by-itself, speaking absolutely, is given somewhere or in some way, it excludes, in principle, any history: nothing can happen to it except its own reduction as a process into a result. (This is exactly the point around which one can debate the well-known model of “Hegelian history” indefinitely: the point is to know whether the process is absorbed in the result, or whether the result is not, rather and without reserve, the process itself without final result. One will say as much, and *a fortiori*, of a Marxist history leading to the activity of a “free labor,” the production of a result as an infinite production . . .)

History is the order of what locates the origin and the end elsewhere, in another time—that is to say, in time itself, since it is nothing but the alterity and the alteration of the same, or of the same altering itself. History is not “nature,”

if “nature” has its origin and end in itself (supposing that nature exists or rather that it *still exists* in a *history* that precisely locates elsewhere, without end, the very naturality of any nature: as if that history included henceforth the *natura naturans* of any *natura naturata* and, consequently also its *natura denaturans*). History is the infinite deferral of any nature, and this is why, from now on, the following question occurs to us: Was there ever “nature,” since there was history, and thus an indefinite deferral of any nature? Was there ever a “prehistory,” not only in the sense of a human prehistory, anterior to a history conceived and archived as such (the history contemporaneous with philosophy), but in the sense of a nonhuman prehistory, and even prior to life, a history of the world or of the Universe that had not already been always already historical in some way? This question leads to at least two others: that of knowing whether there can be some “posthistory,” in whatever sense, and second, that of knowing whether it is possible, in a parallel and basically coessential or codetermined manner, of designating a pre- and/or a post philosophy . . .

Without claiming to confront these questions as such, here and now, we will agree perhaps there cannot not be in some fashion a “history of the world,” if the world turns out not to have in itself its origin and its end, and that *even if, and especially if*, any “outside” of the world must be thought as *nothing*, and even if, and especially if, the meaning of the world is nothing other than the world itself in its originary and final relation with an infinite deferral of the origin and the end in that *nothing* of which it would be the expansion—that is to say, the growth or the creation (it is the same word) or even . . . the *history*.

There is thus a betrayal of the principle of history and of the world in the philosophical self-constitution and self-beginning. This betrayal reveals itself by the fact that philosophy must relinquish the task of thinking a history of the world if it is committed to a scheme of a proper emergence: for then it excludes thinking that the world outside of philosophy can be connected in any way to philosophical history. It is in a sense what, in the philosophical foundation, the division of *muthos* and *logos* signifies: this division [*partage*] is homologous, in the work of all the philosophers from Plato to Heidegger, with the scheme of self-constitution and its *aporias*, among which that of history is the most important.

But philosophy, at the same time (if it is the *same* time, if it is not an other time of another history that would remain to be written) reveals history. Indeed, the self-designation of philosophy as self-foundation, *self*-beginning, and *self*-completion, belongs to the same operation, which also consists in problematizing from the outset (and again at the *same* time) any structure and any process that is *auto*-constitutive and *auto*-referential. It is precisely by defining itself as an autonomous process and thus as history (philosophy *is* history and *makes* history as soon as Plato refers to its proper provenance in Anaxagoras,

Parmenides, and Socrates) that philosophy unveils the problematic order of an auto-constitution that must appropriate itself (that is to say, auto-constitute itself) through the mediation of its own temporal and genealogical difference along which the *auto-* alters itself primordially as much as it identifies itself. But, at the *same* time, it is outside of this history that the possibility of an auto-constitution was designated: in an order of *phusis* as the order of that which is for itself the gift and the immediate genesis of its own *nomos*, its own *technē*, and its own *logos*. But the *logos*, properly speaking, forms itself from that which it has to conquer, mediately, *dia-logically*, or *dia-lectically*, a *phusis* that is not given to it (or if one prefers a *phusis* that it gives itself only by immediately dividing from itself, *dia-lectically* and thus *historically*).

A remarkable chiasm occurs in which the “auto” and the “allo,” the “by itself” and the “by the other,” continuously exchange their places. This chiasm is the very emergence of philosophy, of the West, and of history. Instantaneously, and at the *same* time, two times are inaugurated: the *chronical* or *chronological* time of history and the *achronical* or *anachronical* time of an outside of history. But the first, the time of autochronic, in sum, is the time of difference or as difference, while the second as heterochronic (its time outside of time) will be the time (or the space) of given nondeferred identity. Philosophy constitutes this space-time as that of the *muthos*.

The following paradoxes result: at the same time the space-time of the *muthos* falls outside of history and becomes the first time or the prehistory of history, henceforth perfectly problematic since it is both inside and outside historicity. Now, this problem is nothing but the problem of the historicity of philosophy itself, and of the impossibility of thinking its own beginning: the proper beginning of the auto-beginning. In a parallel manner, by designating and instituting itself, philosophy designates an other—its other, its *proper* other—a regime of meaning and of truth: a regime of *allo*-constitution where the truth is given, but not to be conquered. In what philosophy baptizes as *muthos*, truth is given from an “outside” that is not a past and that is not the process of an (auto) production, which is immemorial and consequently always present, but is a presence, which escapes from the instantaneous instability of the philosophical present. Philosophy is the destabilization, the suspension, and the dissolution of the mythical present. This is why its obsessive fear becomes the present and the presence of time, or rather its absence, namely, *chronical* time. But in this way philosophy conceals its own presence, and its own coming to presence.

The withdrawal of the beginning belongs to the self-beginning. The beginning remains ungrounded.¹ The question opened by philosophy in its history and as history, the question opened by philosophical historicity as an

essentially auto-constitutive dimension of philosophy, is the following: Is it or is it not possible to assume the nonfoundation of the beginning as the reason—thus as the ground—of the historical process itself? But this question is obviously nothing other than the following: Is it possible or not to assume the nonfoundation of the West as the reason for its own history? And since this history becomes the history of the world: is it possible or not to assume the nonfoundation of the history of the world? This means: Is it possible to *make* history, to *begin again* a history—or History itself—on the basis of its nonfoundation? Is it possible to assume both the absence of the auto-constitution (thus a relation to the prephilosophical other than the entirely problematic relation to the lost and desired exteriority of *phusis* and *muthos*) and the absence of auto-completion (thus the end of teleologies, theologies, and messianisms)?

2

Such a question is that of metaphysics and technology. If metaphysics, as such, itself essentially historical, accomplishes itself in the form of technology, and if technology must be understood as the planetary domination of the absence of beginning and end, or of the withdrawal of any initial or final *given*—of any *phusis* or of any *muthos*—how can one conceive of this process and thus conceive of history except according to the exhausted themes of progress and/or of decline, of the fortunate and/or unfortunate accident?

The completion of metaphysics—its *end* and its *plenitude*—happens in history insofar as it is precisely the accomplishment of the historical possibility itself, or the accomplishment of the “meaning of history” as it has been recognized at least since Nietzsche, but perhaps also, in a more complex manner, since Hegel himself, and in the way in which Husserl and Heidegger have attempted to grasp it as problem and as resource at the same time.

The historical possibility, properly speaking, as it was produced in its course by philosophy (or metaphysics: the possibility of a metaphysical history and a metaphysics of history) is the possibility that a process would complete the realization of a reason, of a ground, and of a rationality. It is thus the possibility that the historical process functions as a natural process. Metaphysical history is history thought as *physis*: as a “natural history,” to use this old expression in which precisely “history” did not yet have the meaning of a process, but of a “collection.” The truth of this history was that in the end, it denied itself as history by becoming nature (again).

In this elaboration, that which is exhausted is the *bringing to completion*. Whether the term is named presence, subject, Supreme Being, or total humanity,

in each case the capacity of assumption and absorption of a *terminus ad quem* is exhausted. Very precisely, what is exhausted is nothing other than the exhausting itself in an end (*teleology*). Now, it is this exhaustion (accomplishment, maturation) that philosophy had constituted as a history after having remodeled according to Christian salvation, itself understood as a temporal process, the anamnestic movement of the Platonic u-topia or of the ec-topia. What is exhausted is thus the presence of a terminal present of history, a presence that would no longer be praesentia, being-ahead-of-itself, but only be equal to itself, in itself indifferent.

That the exhaustion is exhausted—that natural history breaks down and is *denatured*—is what is shown by the rupture that philosophy carries out by, in, or on itself: a historical rupture of its history, which Heidegger called the “end of philosophy” to indicate the depth and seriousness of that which in history thus happens to History, and by virtue of which a “history of being” or a “destinality” of its “sendings,” perhaps even the end of these sendings themselves, can only, at least, be *denatured*. But this *denaturation*² is what requires us to consider the extent to which, at what depth—properly without ground—history is not and cannot be auto-generating or *autotelic*, the extent to which, then, it cannot return to itself or in itself, or reabsorb itself in any “end of history.” It requires us, on the contrary, to see finally, as if before us, the difference and the alteration of the *auto* that metaphysics, while producing it, first endeavored to cover or deny.

Consequently, if our expectation of the future is henceforth deprived of anticipation, of representation, and of concept, it must no less, like a Kantian judgment without concept, form a postulation of truth (and/or of universal) as a non-given truth: “denaturation” must itself be postulated as the “reason” of the process, of that history whose form is also that of an errancy. Non-given, neither as seed nor as completion—which also means, always, non-mythological—truth is first, as such, open and open to itself: it is the structure and the substance of an encounter with itself, awaiting and/or loyalty toward itself, toward the self that is not given. In this sense, truth empties itself of all presentable contents (whether one thinks of it in a sacral mode or in mode of positive knowledge). But this void is the void of the exhaustion of which I have spoken: truth is empty or rather emptied of any “content,” of the plethora or the saturation of a completion, emptied of the plethora and therefore open in itself and on itself.

This means, above all, that it is open on the question of its own historicity. Truth—the truth of philosophy and of history—can do nothing else, henceforth, than open onto the abyss of its own beginning, or of its own absence of beginning, end and ground.

The historical gesture—that is, both the theoretical gesture with respect to “history,” of its concept, *and* the practical, active gesture in our time, in order to

appropriate this time, in order to *ereignen* another *story* [chronique] of the world—this gesture becomes then necessarily “deconstruction.” To “deconstruct” means to disassemble what has built upon the beginnings in order to expose that which burrows beneath them. It is therefore the same thing to destabilize (not destroy) the structure of the philosophical (or metaphysical) tradition and to destabilize the historical auto-positioning of that tradition. What was built, from what beginnings and how these beginnings are determined as such—and still and perhaps above all, as I would like to show, what is the provenance of these beginnings? “Deconstruction” perhaps means nothing other, ultimately, than the following: it happens henceforth that philosophy cannot understand itself apart from the question of its proper historicity—and no longer only in the sense of its internal historicity, but also in the sense of its *external* provenance, but also in a way such that the external provenance and internal production are inextricably tied. (This is why it can only involve edges, extremities, ends, or limits of philosophy without, clearly, any accomplishment or completion. What else is, ultimately, at issue with Heidegger and with Derrida [who, in part despite Heidegger, opens again this dimension of deconstruction] if not the following: that philosophy cannot return to itself nor in itself as its *autology* requires, except by exceeding its autonomy and thus its own history in every respect?)

The beginnings of philosophy: the word must be written as plural, for it is not possible to name only one, but neither is it possible to name none. (To designate only one beginning would no doubt already submit to the metaphysical denial of alteration).³ Philosophy certainly began as such and it stated that it began: no doubt it never stated *itself* without stating also that it begins and that it begins itself again. But the *subject*, which it wants to be, of this inauguration, undoes itself or destitutes itself, as we saw, in the very gesture of its inauguration. In this way, philosophy always institutes itself in a mixture of decision and indecision with respect to its own subject; and “deconstruction” in sum is congenital for it since it constructs itself on the understanding that it must be anterior to its edifice and even to its own plan.

This mixture of decision and indecision—or the decision of positing itself without a decision being reached about itself or about the immediately infinite mobilization of this decision—can be analyzed in a more precise manner. By beginning, philosophy prescribed to itself as its most proper law both an impossible *amanesis* (in the immemorial) of its own origin, and a blind perspective on the truth it awaits, to which it tends or seeks. On the one hand, philosophy presents itself as being without beginning or beginning by itself (who comes to free the prisoner from the cave?), and, on the other hand, truth absents itself in the obscurity or in the blinding light of what must come, insofar precisely as it

must come without ever arriving, like the last step, never reached or secured, which passes beyond the dialectical ascension, and which does not belong to the chronological time of succession and of accomplishment.

The double postulation of a return to the immemorial and an advance to what does not come designates what we call "metaphysics": a metaphysics that is said to be "ended," only in order to say that it exhausts that which claims to complete both its retrospection and prospection. Both must be incapable of ending: they must be the very incompleteness conforming to the essence of philosophy, which turns out also to be indissociable from its history, its extended immobility (metaphysics) into the absencing of its origin and its end.

It follows from these premises that two claims must be set forth in the same moment: metaphysics is without beginning or end, and metaphysics begins and ends. It perhaps does not cease to begin and to end, the "without-beginning-or-end." It is in this sense that it is *finite*, in the structural and nondiachronic sense: it is finite in that it articulates a *non-given* of meaning or of some meaning (a "non-given" that constitutes, no doubt, the "void" of its truth: ontological finitude is what opens on the void—but it is being that is opened by this very opening, being insofar as it is not but opens itself in/as space-time). Structural finitude deconstructs historical endings [*finitions*] (for example, such figures as rationalism, empiricism, or criticism, and the figure of onto-theology, or even the figurative figure labeled as "onto-typology" by Lacoue-Labarthe). Similarly, with an unlimited scope, metaphysics itself always begins, has begun, and begins again, as *Abbau* of what is *gebaut* (and that always has the character of being a temple or a palace, of a residence and of a monument, thus also an empire or enterprise).

From the outset, or even ahead of itself, in a history underway before its history—between the twelfth and nineteenth century before our era—philosophy was the deconstruction of the edifices of a world that shook the mytho-religious world of given meaning, and of full and present truth. The unsettling of this world was the condition, perhaps already the beginning, of philosophy, of history, and of the "Western accident": and if one looks back toward what made this accident possible, one will presumably have to think even more so that it was hardly an "accident" in the ordinary sense (and perhaps hardly "Western" in the ordinary sense—the "West" having already preceded itself, and having been dispersed in the anterior history of the world, just as, today, it succeeds itself, disseminated in a becoming-world [*devenir-monde*]).

In the world where philosophy is born, a world within which a number of determinate technologies were developed (iron, writing, commercial accounting—to which we will return), tragedy begins as forming both the last testimony of cult and of sacrifice, and as the first attestation of a flight of mean-

ing and of the abyss of truth: frankly, it is in this way that the terms or the concepts, or the questions of meaning and of truth are produced. The four conditions of philosophy identified by Badiou, which I mention here for their clarity, and whose names and notions are also produced in this moment—politics, science, art, and love—compose a four-part multiplication of this flight and of this opening. I will not dwell on the four dispositions of what one could call the inaugural *flight* [*échappée*] of the West: we see without difficulty how each is structured by this fleeing into *absens* (to borrow a word from Blanchot). Politics, science, love, and art are four structures of the impossible. At the same time, what the four have in common is another transversal dimension of the flight: namely, the incommensurability between the four “conditions” (an incommensurability that was unknown or, from the outset, reduced in a mythico-religious world). Philosophy is the common site of this incommensurability: it articulates flight or absence as the general regime of the incommensurable. What was later called metaphysics is thus produced as the articulation of that incommensurability: the very incommensurability of being in-itself, of being which *ex-ists* to itself, or that of the atelic and anarchic (this word in memory of Reiner Schürmann) principles and ends.

That metaphysics took place is not only a given fact (*de facto* in the history of a people, it takes place at a given moment, in the Mediterranean space and it is in this sense the *factum rationis empiricum* of philosophy—not without an Oriental *analogon*, which is given at the *same* time, constituted by Buddhism or Confucianism, an analogy that would need a long discussion) but still it is this very thing, this event that constitutes metaphysics. For it happened, it appeared as a flight, as a departure: namely, the flight of the Gods (a flight for which in the West monotheism is the first name, in itself already pregnant with the “death of God”—and one could add, what did Plato do if not weave together tragedy and monotheism just before Hellenistic Judaism, and then Christianity completed the work?). This flight is not simply an absenting, a leavetaking, or a suppression, neither is it an *Aufhebung* in the twofold Hegelian sense. It is above all a marking: a trace of an absence, a subtraction, to borrow from Badiou; a withdrawal, to borrow from Heidegger; an inscription, in the case of Derrida.

That is to say, the flight of the Gods traces or initiates an opening of an unprecedented meaning: in the same gesture, meaning is in flight as past and as to come—but *in the same stroke*, “meaning,” is precisely and absolutely, the idea or the question of meaning (and of a truth that responds to it).⁴

If metaphysics begins as a science of principles and ends, this is because principles and ends are *crossed out* [*barrés*], if I can use the amphibology allowed by slang, crossed out and gone [*rayés et partis*] (slang also suggests *split* [*taillés*]), or else, in a more elaborate manner, divided from and in themselves, and thus

“inscribed.” It is only from the moment they are *crossed out* that they appear as such as “principles” and as “ends”: subtracted from their very agency (from the foundation and realization of temples, empires, and lines of succession), open as questions of meaning.

3

Now, this subtraction—this subtraction/addition of meaning that constitutes philosophy from somewhere (in any case, it happens somewhere, in the contingency of a place and of a period, or of several places and several periods) or by some force (whose very occurrence is contingent: nothing determines the necessity of what takes place, although it does take place, potentially, at the scale of humanity and the world).

This force, in all respects, is that of *technology*. Behind what will become, in a very precise sense that we will need to analyze, *techno-logy*, there is a whole range of techniques, like that of iron followed by that of commerce (including both accounting and shipping), writing, and urban planning. With this moment in the history of technologies, there is a something like a threshold that is crossed. There is a movement that is contemporary to human beings—technology as human, quite simply *Homo faber*, producer and conceiver of *Homo sapiens*, technician of itself—a movement that from the outset proceeds by subtraction or by emptying out (from the loss of the *oestrus*, for example, until stone carving and wall painting) but which, until then, presents itself first as a mode of behavior and adaptation, as the management of subsistence conditions for an animal deficient in given conditions. This movement, which will always already have begun with “humans,” and which consequently through humans, in humans, and before humans comes from “nature” itself, this very movement takes on another form: instead of ensuring subsistence, it creates new conditions for humans, or even produces a strange “surplus-subsistence” [*sursistance*] in nature or outside of it. The production of means of subsistence distinguishes already the Neolithic epoch: now—between the tenth and seventh century before our era on the arc of Asia Minor—one could say that a *production of ends* appears as such. But how could we not see this production of ends emerge—silently, secretly—from production that is itself not produced from nature or from the world, or from the animal or from man within it.⁵ Consequently from what will we have to name history of the world?

With this becoming human, this movement appears to itself as its own principle and its own end. That is to say, properly without principle and without end since it proceeds from an initial detachment, which one can name

“human condition” and whose permanence involves an extreme instability and mutability of what has thus been detached (contingency forms thus the necessity of this “history”). And which is what we can call, feigning to believe that there would have been first a pure and stable “nature”: *denaturation*. And one could then say that “humanity” is the indexical name of the indefinite and infinite term of the human denaturation.

It is in denaturation that something like the representation of a “nature” can be produced or of an autotelic order and thus nontechnological order that poses then at the same time the extreme difficulty of conceiving how denaturation arises from nature and in nature (how the deficient animal can be possible, the animal without set conditions). It is thus also there that comes forth, on the one hand, a specific technology of interrogation *peri phuseos* or *de natura rerum* at the same time as a thinking of the nonnatural origin of nature in the form of a “*creation ex nihilo*.” In these different ways, metaphysics constitutes from the outset the questioning of denaturation as such, in other words, of the escape from principles and ends, or of Being as nothing that is.

Such a questioning is made possible, indeed inevitable, as soon as a denaturing event took place: such is the event that we name “technology,” with philosophy, which is itself the self-referential and self-reflective regime of that event. This event is part of a world, not only in the sense that the world, before any “history” has always already been its possibility (which therefore can be said to be neither necessary or contingent: any more or less that the world itself).

To say that there was something like a nature—*phusis* or *natura*, here one should not follow Heidegger’s distinction between these names, as if he were marking the distance of a more “natural” nature, one that would not have harbored the possibility of human technology—is only possible if one contrasts this nature with a non-nature. In other words the very motif of “nature” is by itself “denaturing.” The “physics” of the Presocratic Ionian is the technology of manipulation of the object “nature” that emerges when the mytho-religious order is disassembled: such a physics is a technology of crossed-out ends, and crossed-out principles.

The name of *metaphysics*, which appears then by accident, is in no way, in the end, accidental. It was already announced in the technological apparatus that produced “nature” as an object of both theoretical and practical manipulation, while seeing to it that “technology” clearly becomes a principle and an end for itself—as is the case in commerce, in writing or in the very production of principles and ends. This movement is necessarily a *becoming* since precisely what is at issue is what is not given and since technology in general is the know-how with respect to what is not already made: with technology, history is contrasted with nature. But it is just as necessary that this becoming not form

a *meaning*, either progressive or regressive. The obsession with meaning, which nonetheless will have determined an entire section of metaphysics, is only the recurrent effect of a mytho-religious “physics” seeking to reconquer itself in spite of metaphysics or through it. This is why metaphysics is continually in the radical ambivalence of an opening and of a closure or in the difficult topology that allows a closure by an opening and an opening by a closure.

If there is a “meaning” of the world according to technology, it can only be measured by an incommensurable standard of the non-necessity and of the nonnaturalness of the world (that is to say, of the totality of possible *signifyingness*), which also implies its nonhistoricity in the metaphysical and theo-teleological sense of the word *history*. Such a meaning, such an *absence* and such an “*absentism*” are quite precisely those of the technological event itself.

There is thus a precondition that makes the logical and philosophical conditions of the Western accident possible. This precondition is indissociably historical, technological, and transcendental—which also means necessary as the reason of philosophy as metaphysics, and nevertheless contingent because there is no sufficient reason of this reason—if not the general and congenital (con-natural) denaturation of nature that always already harbors, without necessity and without contingency, just as the universe itself is neither necessary nor contingent, the possibility of technological man.

(Rousseau, it seems, is the foremost thinker—therefore also the most problematic—of this infinitely twisted denaturing inscription in nature itself, which is also the inscription of the flight of the gods.) Politics, science, art, and love (a fourfold that, upon reflection, is very Rousseauian) each respond, with mutual incommensurability, to the technological condition in its state of metaphysical autonomization. Each is structured by the unassignable character of its own principle and end, each is a technology or a technological configuration, or rather each opens onto an indefinite chain of technological transformations. This fourfold is as conditioned as conditioning with respect to philosophy.

(One could also articulate each of the four by showing that each serves as an end for the other three, in a way that the structure remains always open and cannot be totalized and that, in addition, each “end” is incommensurable with the others while forming simultaneously the *telos* and the limits of the others.)

But this is also, or first, why philosophy as such *begins*: it begins as a *technology* of meaning and/or of truth. In this sense, it is not at all a prolongation of the mytho-religious world, nor its overcoming by progress, nor its *Aufhebung*, nor its decline or its loss: it is the technological reinscription of “nature” and of the “gods.” When meaning is denatured—or demythified—truth emerges as such: it is a matter of constructing meaning (the principle and end of Being as such) or else punctuating *absence* [absens] and, finally, with the two always impli-

cated in any metaphysical construction and deconstruction worthy of the name. It is not a surprise that sophistry, at a given moment, becomes the correlation and counterpoint of a technological complex (once again commerce, law, urban planning, city—in Asia Minor during the time of the pre-Socratics). It is not only a technology of *logos*, which is invented and organized along with other technologies. With the very concept of *logos*, reaching from the order of discourse to that of verifying autonomy, it is a technology that manages production, no longer of subsistence, nor even of a surplus subsistence, but of meaning itself. It is in this sense that I therefore name metaphysics a *tedno-logy*: the flight into a verifying autonomy of technology, or of “denaturation.” But this autonomy repeats in an infinite abyss, all of the constitutive aporias of the *auto-* in general.

One should thus wonder whether this explains why philosophy with Socrates was presented straightaway as a dialogue with technologies or their meta-technological interpellation: beginning with Sophistry, and modeling itself on mathematics, the arts of the cobbler, carpenter, or in general. Similarly one will recall that Aristotle considered that philosophy could only happen beyond the satisfaction of the necessity of subsistence: “as if it itself was the opening of another genre of satisfaction, but in a continuity or in an analogy of the technological posture. (We can also consider the *wonder* that Aristotle designates in the same passage [and after Plato] as the beginning of philosophy designates nothing other than the technology proper to a non-knowing: not ignorance waiting for a teacher, nor inexperience in the process of being initiated—which are both modalities of the mytho-religious world—but the knowledge that articulates itself, first, on its own abyss.)

One could also consider—and I cannot dwell on it as would be necessary—the possibility, indeed the necessity of determining the history of technologies up to our time without giving it another meaning in its fundamental contingency than the indefinite relation of technology to itself and to the escape of its denaturation. One would have to examine, in this respect, the succession of technologies of the immediate supplementation of the human body (tools, arms, clothing), of the production of subsistence (agriculture, animal husbandry), of exchange (money, writing), then, with another turn, of meaning and truth (sophistical, philosophical), of wealth as such, of production itself (capital, labor), of society (democracy) and finally, of nature itself, or of its complete denaturation, whether by mutation or by total destruction (biological, ecological, ethological engineering). But what would then give the tone and the direction of this series, its principle and its end, nonetheless without principle or end, would be the “architechnology,” the pro-duction of the pro-ducer, or the ex-position of the exposed, the “nature” of man as the denaturation in

him of the whole of “nature,” what we call today the “symbolic,” in other words, the opening of an empty space where the infinite “creation” of the world is (re)played—unless the possibility arises that the symbolic is barred there and disappears there and with it humanity itself.

The event of technology—that is to say, for us, for a long time, history and metaphysics as history—would thus have a meaning in a sense that would be neither directional nor significant: but in the sense that we say that “someone has business sense,” for example, or “a musical sense,” or in general when one “has a sense” of this or that technology, in that sense, then, this would be the sense of principles and ends (of being as such or of existence) there, where, quite precisely neither end, nor principles, nor being are given or available, and where existence exposes itself, lacking sense, making this lack its very truth. Metaphysics is the name of this sense: the *savoir-faire* of denaturation, or of the infinitization of ends. This implies above all not a knowledge, but an *ethos*: *logos* itself as *ethos*, that is to say, the technology or the art of *standing in and abiding* in the escape of the *absence*. The art of standing, or what permits in general having or maintaining a standing in, including, and especially, where there is no longer any support or firm basis for whatever stance there is.