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Thinking Situations. Situations of Thought

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Thinking Situations. Situations of Thought

Guest Editor:

Claudiu Gaiu

PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ
2025

CONTENTS

Argument … 7

Mihály gHORVÁTH, *Guy-Ernest Debord, the Promising Young Lettrist* … 15

Claudiu GAIU*, Dérive et pulsion* … 35

Attila SZIGETI, *La marchandise et son spectacle. Fétichisme réel et réflexivité chez Lukács et Debord* ... 63

Anamaria CADAR, *L'anatomie du faux. La société du spectacle* … 85

Radu TODERICI, *Notes on Guy Debord's Reception in Socialist Romania* … 101

Paula MARSÓ, *Cartographies transverses. Traduire la ville* ... 129

Mihai LUKÁCS, *Improvising the Situation: Jazz as a Repeated Joke* ... 141

Cristian IOAN, *Cosmodrom files: Investigations on (non)resistance* … 157

Varia

Sebastian PAVALACHE, *The Intermediacy of Judgment: The Architectonic of Teleology in Kant's Third Critique* … 173

Translations

DrKissRitaPanda & gHorváth Mihály, *PROLEGOMENA TO ANY FUTURE CINEMA by Guy-Ernest DEBORD* ... 199

DrKissRitaPanda & gHorváth Mihály, *HOWLS FOR SADE by Guy-Ernest DEBORD* … 201

Argument

The Situationists left a significant mark on the intellectual and artistic life of Western Europe as the cultural and political culmination of the avant-garde movements. Emerging from the Lettrist movement and bringing together the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus and the London Psychogeographical Committee, the Situationist movement provoked and transformed architecture and urban planning. In response to the functionalist housing unit proposed by Le Corbusier, they championed the *unit of ambiance* in urban space, built around a new perspective on leisure. Their quarrel with Surrealism reshuffled the deck around the concept of the unconscious, bringing into discussion interpretations of Freud's work and the practice of automatic writing.

But architecture – conceived by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc as the ultimate synthesis of humanity's spiritual and material concerns – was not the only total art form inherited from the 19th century and taken up by this circle of revolutionary artists. One could argue that the total artwork *par excellence*, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, was opera, as realized by Richard Wagner. Since cinema takes up the spectacular and political dimension of opera, this art form attracted the interest of the Lettrists, especially Marc'O, and Guy Debord, who exploded the passivity of the spectator.

Compared to other avant-garde movements, the Situationists proposed an alternative approach to the past, organized around the practice of *détournement*, which Gilles Ivain associated with psychoanalytic therapy. On these aesthetic foundations, and through a reinterpretation of Marx's thought on commodity and market fetishism, Debord built his theory of the *society of the spectacle*, interwoven with Baudrillard's developments on simulacra and simulation.

Our collection of articles is an invitation to reassess the philosophical and artistic legacy of the Situationist movement. We have welcomed contributions representing diverse philosophical, film-theoretical, architectural, political, and sociological perspectives, using various theoretical frameworks to engage in discourse around the construction of situations: the institutional and non-institutional situations of thought.

The dossier that follows the intellectual trajectory of Guy Debord opens with an article by Mihály g.Horváth, supported by two texts from the journal *ION* (1952), dedicated to cinema from the Lettrist period of the young avant-gardist. Horváth translates into English Debord's manifesto *Prolegomena to Any Future Cinema*. The early theoretical ideas of Debord on cinema are exemplified by the first version of the screenplay for his film *Howls for Sade* (*Hurlements en faveur de Sade*), also translated into English by Mihály g.Horváth and Dr.KissRitaPanda. While Debord's cinematic works still have a few specialists, the theoretical texts and polemics from his Lettrist period are less frequently read by audiences familiar with the director of *Howls for Sade*. One of the strengths of Horváth's article lies in its immersion into the debates of the time, offering a clear presentation of the political economy texts by Isidore Isou, Debord's first mentor and adversary, while integrating Debord's cinematic projects into the avant-garde currents that sought to disrupt the traditional passivity of the spectator.

The article by Claudiu Gaiu continues this inquiry, focusing on the concept of *dérive* ("drift"), invented by Guy Debord in the 1950s and later taken up by Jacques Lacan and Jean-François Lyotard to describe the life of drives. The text emphasizes the back-and-forth of this philosophical construct between urbanism and the psyche, between artistic revolution and the suppression of art in political revolution.

Attila Szigeti's article situates Guy Debord's philosophical writings within "a critical theory of capitalism grounded in the Marxian analysis of commodity fetishism". Influenced by Anselm Jappe's reading of Situationism, Szigeti offers an original emphasis on the absence of the critical subjectivity of the proletarian subject: this void is theorized by Debord as the central stage of the spectacle of the commodity. For our readers and authors – often interested in psychoanalysis – these interpretations of the texts of György Lukács or Guy Debord are particularly resonant, as they evoke the social pathologies and alienations produced by the very structure of society.

Anamaria Cadar explores a subject rarely addressed in Debordian bibliography: the body. The constitution of the body in modernity demands its real absence and its imaginary reconstruction through medical, artistic, or governmental discourses. For Cadar, the Situationist thinker grasped in the

1960s the culmination of this process of body invention through the unreal aspect of the commodity, which removes human life from its own content. The researcher revisits the solutions proposed by artists and thinkers like Debord, Vaneigem, Constant, and others, in their efforts to reclaim existence from the post-humanist rubble of late modernity.

Radu Toderici, for his part, examines the initial Romanian reception of Guy Debord's ideas. His study looks back at the mid-1960s rehabilitation of sociology in Romania – recently renamed the Socialist Republic. Toderici emphasizes the ideological struggles aimed at establishing the field of mass culture sociology, under the influence of Norbert Wiener's cybernetics and functionalist structuralism. The study highlights the efforts of sociologists Pavel Câmpeanu and Ștefana Steriade to introduce Debordian concepts such as the "spectacle" and the "passivity of the spectator" into the rigid framework of socio-cultural analysis imposed by Ceaușescu's increasingly authoritarian regime. It also examines their attempt to engage in dialogue with philosophers and sociologists from neighboring Hungary, who, paradoxically, despite a greater openness to intellectual debate, were more reluctant to embrace a radical critique of mass culture.

The second section of the dossier contains applied readings in aesthetics, sociology, and linguistics that put Situationist concepts to the test.

Thus, Paula Marsó continues the reflections of the previous contributions, offering a fresh take on Situationist psychogeography as a science of transitions between different libidinal atmospheres. In her case, it's more a kind of geographic translatology: for Marsó, the city is a living text defined by linguistic transactions; even architectural structures can be considered linguistic expressions, containing the languages of their elaboration and their successive cultural layers. The new art of urban translation becomes, for the author, a denunciation of the authoritarianism of the current Hungarian government, which imposes its own grammar of power on geographical realities and historical monuments.

Mihai Lukács applies Situationist theory on the construction of situations to account for improvisation in jazz. Drawing on the analysis of musician Lucian Ban, he presents jazz as a *détournement* of classical music. Using this interpretive framework, the author sketches a parallel history of

Romanian jazz and the reception of Debord in the Socialist Republic of Romania.

Cristian Ioan offers a surprising contribution—at once a scholarly article and a poetic performance—on "cosmic Situationism," which he considers to be the unspoken program of humanity since at least the Industrial Revolution. Russian Cosmism, recently revived through the studies of Boris Groys, is presented as the origin of science fiction literature and transhumanist thought. The parallel between science fiction and philosophical reflections on technology outlined by the author serves to trace two competing projects of the cosmic situation: machinic accelerationism and humanist utopianism.

***

Les situationnistes ont marqué la vie intellectuelle et artistique de l'Europe occidentale comme l'accomplissement culturel et politique des avant-gardes. Issu du mouvement lettriste et confédérant le Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus imagiste et le Comité Psychogéographique de Londres, le mouvement situationniste provoque et transforme l'architecture et l'urbanisme. À l'unité d'habitation fonctionnaliste proposée par Le Corbusier, ils opposent l'unité d'ambiance de l'espace urbain, construit autour d'un regard nouveau sur le loisir. Leur querelle avec le surréalisme rebat les cartes autour du concept d'inconscient, mettant en discussion les interprétations de l'œuvre de Freud et la pratique de l'écriture automatique. Mais l'architecture, pensée par Eugène Viollet-le-Duc comme synthèse absolue des préoccupations spirituelles et matérielles de l'homme, n'est pas le seul art total légué par le 19^{e} siècle et repris par ce cercle d'artistes révolutionnaires. On pourrait dire que l'œuvre d'art total, par excellence, *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a été l'opéra, réalisée par Richard Wagner. Parce que le cinéma reprend la dimension spectaculaire et politique de l'opéra, cet art intéresse les lettristes, notamment Marc'O et Guy Debord qui dynamitent la passivité du spectateur. Par rapport aux autres mouvements avant-gardistes, les situationnistes proposent une approche alternative du passé organisée autour de la pratique du détournement, associée par Gilles Ivain à la thérapie psychanalytique. Sur ces bases esthétiques et à partir d'une relecture de la

pensée de Marx sur la marchandise et le fétichisme du marché, Debord organise sa théorie de la société du spectacle qui entrecroise les développements de Baudrillard sur le simulacre et la simulation.

Notre recueil d'articles est une invitation à réévaluer l'héritage philosophique et artistique du mouvement situationniste. Nous avons accueilli des contributions représentant diverses perspectives philosophiques, filmologiques, architecturales, politiques et sociologiques, qui utilisent des cadres théoriques variés pour s'engager dans un discours sur la construction de situations : les situations institutionnelles et non-institutionnelles de la pensée.

Le dossier qui suit le parcours intellectuel de Guy Debord est ouvert par Mihály g.Horváth : un article soutenu par deux textes de la revue *ION* (1952), dédiés au cinéma, de la période lettriste du jeune avant-gardiste. gHorváth traduit en anglais le manifeste de Debord *Prolégomènes à tout cinéma future*. Les idées théoriques du premier Debord sur le cinéma sont exemplifié par la première version du scénario de son film *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*, transposé en anglais par le même par Mihály g.Horváth et DrKissRitaPanda. Si les œuvres cinématographiques de Debord trouvent encore quelques spécialistes, les textes théoriques et les polémiques de la période lettriste sont moins fréquentés par les lecteurs du réalisateur du film « Hurlements en faveur de Sade ». Un des mérites du texte de g.Horváth est l'immersion dans les débats de l'époque, dans une présentation limpide des textes d'économie politique du premier maître et adversaire de Guy Debord, Isidore Isou, et une intégration des projets cinématographiques debordiens dans le courants d'avant-garde qui tentaient d'abstraire le spectateur de sa passivité traditionnelle.

Le texte proposé par Claudiu Gaiu continue cette démarche insistant sur le concept de « dérive », inventé par Guy Debord dans les années '50, et repris plus tard par Jacques Lacan et Jean-François Lyotard pour décrire la vie des pulsions. Le texte insiste sur le va-et-vient de cette construction philosophique entre l'urbanisme et le psychisme, entre la révolution artistique et la suppression de l'art dans une révolution politique.

L'article d'Attila Szigeti inscrit les écrits philosophiques de Guy Debord dans « une théorie critique du capitalisme fondée sur l'analyse marxienne du fétichisme de la marchandise ». Influencé ainsi par la lecture

d'Anselm Jappe sur le situationnisme, Szigeti insiste avec originalité sur l'absence de la subjectivité critique du sujet prolétaire : ce vide est théorisé par Debord comme scène principale du spectacle de la marchandise. Pour nos lecteurs et auteurs, souvent intéressés par la psychanalyse, ces interprétations des textes de György Lukács ou de Guy Debord sont particulièrement parlantes car elles évoquent les pathologies sociales et les aliénations produites par la structures même de la société.

Anamaria Cadar découvre un objet rarement traité dans la bibliographie dédiée à Guy Debord : le corps. La constitution du corps dans la modernité exige son absence réelle et sa reconstitution imaginaire par des discours médicales, artistiques, ou gouvernementales. Pour Cadar, le penseur situationniste a saisi dans les années '60 l'accomplissement de ce mouvement de l'invention du corps à partir de l'aspect irréel de la marchandise qui élimine la vie humaine de son contenu propre. La chercheuse revient sur les solutions proposées par des artistes et des penseurs comme Debord, Vaneigem, Constant et d'autres, pour récupérer l'existence des décombres post-humanistes de la dernière modernité.

Radu Toderici, pour sa part, se penche sur la première réception roumaine des idées de Guy Debord. Son étude revient sur la réhabilitation, vers le milieu des années 1960, de la sociologie en Roumanie – tout recemment dénommée *République Socialiste* . Toderici insiste sur les luttes idéologiques visant à imposer le champ de la sociologie de la culture de masse, sous l'influence de la cybernétique de Norbert Wiener et du structuralisme fonctionnaliste. L'étude met en lumière les efforts des sociologues Pavel Câmpeanu et Ștefana Steriade pour introduire les concepts debordiens de « spectacle » et de « passivité du spectateur » dans le cadre rigide de l'analyse socio-culturelle imposée par le régime de plus en plus autoritaire de Ceaușescu. Elle analyse également leur tentative de dialoguer avec les philosophes et sociologues de la Hongrie voisine qui, paradoxalement, malgré une plus grande ouverture du débat intellectuel, se montraient plus réticents à l'égard d'une critique radicale de la culture de masse.

La seconde section du dossier contient quelques lectures appliquées d'esthétique, de sociologie et de linguistique qui mettent à l'épreuve les concepts situationnistes. Ainsi, Paula Marsó continue les méditations des

contributions antérieures en reprenant à nouveau frais la psychogéographie situationniste comme science des passages entres des atmosphères pulsionnelles différentes. Dans son cas, il s'agit plutôt d'une traductologie géographique : pour Marsó, la ville est un texte vivant défini par des transactions linguistiques ; même les structures architecturales peuvent être considérées comme des expressions linguistiques qui contiennent les langues de leurs élaborations et de leurs couches culturelles successives. L'art nouveau de la traduction urbain devient pour l'Autrice une dénonciation de l'autoritarisme de l'actuel gouvernement hongrois qui impose une sa propre grammaire du pouvoir aux réalités géographiques et aux monuments historiques.

Mihai Lukács met à l'œuvre la théorie situationniste de la construction des situations pour rendre compte de l'improvisation dans le jazz. Reprenant l'analyse du musicien Lucian Ban, il présent ce genre comme un « détournement » des musiques classiques. Par cette grille d'interprétation, l'auteur entreprend une histoire parallèle du jazz roumain et de la réception du Debord dans la République Socialiste de Roumanie.

Cristian Ioan propose une contribution surprenante, à la fois article scientifique et performance poétique, sur le « situationnisme cosmique », considérée comme le programme inavoué de l'humanité au moins depuis la Révolution Industrielle. Le cosmisme russe, remis en actualité par les études de Boris Groys, est soumis à notre attention comme origine de la littérature d'anticipation et de la pensée transhumaniste. La parallèle entre la littérature SF et la pensée sur la technique esquissée par l'auteur sert à retracer les deux projets concurrents de la situation cosmique : l'accélérationnisme machiniste ou l'utopisme humaniste.

Claudiu GAIU

Guy-Ernest Debord, the Promising Young Lettrist

Mihály gHORVÁTH*
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Abstract. A short preface to our translation of *Prolegomena to Any Future Cinema* (*Prolégomènes à tout cinéma futur*) and the original uncut film script of *Howls for Sade* (*Hurlements en faveur de Sade*). Intended to serve as a reader's guide to Guy Debord's early years and his first movement-related publications, it delves into the historical context and the subversive atmosphere of the *après-guerre* Saint-Germain-des-Prés, the then-center of bohemia. Presenting the avant-garde polemics of the time the preface revisits Debord's little-studied Lettrist period and introduces the translation of his earliest writings on cinema as decisive precursors to Situationist practices. Debord's Lettrist apprenticeship emerged as both formative and antagonistic. Influenced by his first mentor and adversary, Isidore Isou, leader of the Lettrist Movement, Debord's early writings in the magazine *ION* (1952) oscillate between youthful poeticism and militant negation, marking the passage from Lettrist disciple to usurper and renegade. Through the introduction of *Prolegomena to Any Future Cinema* and the original uncut film script of *Howls for Sade* the foreword reveals how Debord adopted Lettrist cinematic and political concepts into his programmatic rejection of representation and made them the very foundations for his complete *œuvre*.

Keywords: lettrism; Lettrist International; "pre-situationist" period; experimental cinema; Isidore Isou.

"Reminded of these memories,
I have destroyed the cinema,
because it was easier than killing the passers-by."
"Like lost children,
we live our unfinished adventures,
our adventures immeasurably small."

G.-E. DEBORD

* **Mihály gHORVÁTH** is a Budapest-based scholar committed to the intertwined and oppositional legacies of the Lettrists and the Situationists. Outside his research on the philosophy and history of the Parisian late-avant-garde, he enjoys playing around with moving-image based mixed media works and making noise. He currently studies at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design.

It is no exaggeration to say that Guy Debord has by now become one of the most popular – almost cultishly revered, or dogmatically detested – anti-heroes of contemporary leftist discourses in art theory and philosophy. Whichever group one belongs to, there is no doubt that in the French avant-garde folklore's hall of fame Debord takes a prominent place right alongside Marquis de Sade; Count Lautréamont; the bandit Lacenaire; the boxer Arthur Cravan and among other *enfant terribles*. Despite the widespread international reception of his *œuvre*, the early stage of his life has received little attention outside Paris. Debord's first cinematic works, as well as the historical and film-theoretical aspects of his earliest avant-garde period have been rarely discussed, despite the fact that Debord's first writings on the cinematic medium from his early movement-related activity serve as key documents which later defined the foundations of Situationist practices.

These little-discussed texts were written shortly after Debord joined the Lettrist movement (founded in 1945, by Isidore Isou and Gabriel Pomerand), the most significant post-war late-avant-garde group in Paris, and were published in *ION*[1] (1952), the single-issue magazine summarizing Lettrist cinema. Only a few months into his affiliation with the group, Debord concluded his Lettrist experiences with these works. The texts document both his breakup with the group and the first steps of his own organizational attempts. In the publications, the theoretical cornerstones of his later movements, as well as the evolution of his approach to art – as known from his *œuvre* – are already recognizable. They not only prefigure the politics of negation represented by the *Lettrist International* (1952–1957, hereafter IL), his lesser-known splinter group which he organized against the Lettrist movement, but even anticipate Debord's shift towards a "strategic"[2] handling

[1] The cultic significance of *ION* lies in the fact that it was the first Lettrist magazine devoted entirely to cinema, documenting the beginnings of their early filmic endeavors, which would later achieve international renown within the discourse of experimental cinema. Edited by the youngest lettrist at the time: Marc'O (signing his name *Marc, O.* in these years), the volume contains theoretical texts by the emerging Lettrists, along with scripts and plans of motion picture works that were then awaiting their premiere.

[2] Not a total negation of culture, but rather an "affirmative" treatment of art, based on the political instrumentalization of existing cultural and artistic elements – a practice that the young Debord, together with his Lettrist comrade Gil J Wolman (posing as Aragon and André Breton) theorized in 1956 under the concept of *détournement*. Cf. Guy Debord & Gil J Wolman: *Mode d'emploi du détournement,* Les Lèvres Nues, 1956, 8(1): 2–9.

of art, later known as the infamous approach of the *Situationist International* (1957–1972, hereafter IS).

What stands out the most at first glance is the unusual tone of these early texts. It is in sharp contrast with the austere style of Debord's more popular writings from the period of the IS, which are characterized by "ludic and warlike" register, and a stark intellectual tone. Following the collapse of the movement his writings became retrospective, often melancholic, and foreshadowing his suicide in 1994, increasingly sentimental. In comparison, these early texts – which are imbued with Lettrist salutes to Dadaism and Surrealism – are characterized by youthful, erratic poeticism and a feverish accumulation of enigmas. The passages that already show mature theoretical rigor are constantly interrupted by profane, everyday allusions and untraceable intertexts, framed by light, polemic humour, and a late-Romantic poeticism ironically balancing on the border of kitsch. Here Debord does not yet appear as the sovereign strategist of the IS, but rather as a twenty-year-old, self-willed Lettrist, attempting to pave the way towards radical iconoclasm and the egomaniac personalization of movement politics. These writings flowed from the pen of a Debord who had just quit his studies[3] and was barely entering his twenties, right after encountering the avant-garde for the first time at close quarters – an experience which has radically transformed his life.

We are in the early 1950s, after the Occupation, at the moment when Paris was brighter than at any other time in the century. It was a heroic age,

[3] He dropped out of school right after completing his secondary education (*diplôme de bac*, *lycée*), never attending university in France. After receiving his *baccalauréat*, he even sent out the funeral announcement to his friends, as if it were a catastrophe, his only concession to the system. The chiseled portrait we see in the periodical *ION*, is precisely from this "funeral announcement".

during which the ground seemed to tear open in Saint-Germain-des-Prés – the then-center of bohemia – and the infamous "cellar clubs"[4] erupted from the earth like ulcers of the quarter. As the gates of hell, they stood open from sunset to cockcrow to all who dared to step in. In the aftermath of the Occupation, these cellar clubs were thundering with jazz and blazing with existentialism amid clouds of hashish, where the forerunners of the *soixante-huitards* were debating with mice in their pockets, dancing until dawn, and were drifting from hotel to hotel, leaving without paying[5]. The battle between the great historic avant-gardes of the early century was still ongoing, especially between the late Surrealism and Dadaism, which by this time had ossified into artistic institutions (at least according to the emerging young avant-gardists whom both worshipped and despised their forefathers). The most radical "parricides" were claiming that Tzara had grown old, and his Dadaism, mired in self-repeating negation, had lost its political potential, and that André Breton, was busy preening himself at the *Deux Magots* and the *Café de Flore*, while Surrealism had degraded into a cherished decorative art for galleries and bourgeois homes. Positioned between two historical paradigms[6], the late-avant-gardes emerging in the mid-century were defined

[4] The notorious cellar clubs are long since eradicated. Their emptied remains have now become expensive boutique shops and real estate agencies, but once were the very cradles of counterculture.

[5] They had little money, so they hardly ate; instead, they drank prodigious quantities of white wine and practically lived out their daily lives in the cellar clubs – or in the surrounding cafés – thus earning the name "troglodytes". Cf. Boris Vian: *Manuel de Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, Chêne, 1974.

[6] The Parisian late-avant-gardists – above all the Lettrists and later the Situationists – are significant not only because of their historical position on the shifting boundary between the classical avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde but also because their activity (or at least its golden era) unfolded during a period of radical socio-economic restructuring that fundamentally shaped their political imagination and artistic toolkits. In Paris at the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, the ruins of war were still haunted by the ghosts of the dawn of the century: avant-garde strongholds echoed the promises of modernity, and operated within a society recovering from war. Chief among these strongholds was the neighborhood of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, which had taken over the title of the center of radical culture from Montparnasse during the Occupation. By the early 1950s, the quarter's streets were suffused with the infamous cellar clubs' haze of jazz and hashish. Its "psychogeographic currents", as the later Situationists would call them, swept youth into delirious whirlpools stretching into the mornings. Within its vortex philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty were engulfed together with penniless poets and

by these prepositions. Among the Parisian groups, Lettrism was the first to rise with unprecedented combativeness, provocative arrogance, and megalomaniac ambition. Both challenging Surrealism and mocking Dadaism, Lettrism became the disowned oppositional antecedent of the IS, which in its early heroic phase, exploded like a bomb onto the postwar avant-garde battlefield. Following scandal after scandal the Lettrists claimed a notoriety that made them simultaneously laughed at and feared in the salons of the Parisian literary elite. Their ill-fame resonated especially well with outcast youth, among them a certain Guy-Ernest Debord, who was at that time madly passionate about cinema and vandalism – which happened to be precisely the current specialties of Lettrism.

Debord first encountered Lettrism in 1951 at the 4th Cannes Film Festival, where Isidore Isou, the movement's leader, premiered his first film, *Treatise on Slime and Eternity* (*Traité de bave et d'éternité*). According to legend, its debut at the Vox cinema provoked a mass brawl – though in reality it just ignited public outrage with a bit of scuffling. Isou's film experimented with the process of "*discrépant* editing", a disjunction of image-and sound, as well as with the radical expansion of the medium itself. The idea behind was to push the audience's aesthetic, moral, and political tolerance to the breaking point, and to provoke spectators to seek beyond the film through

political refugees, outcast visual artists with writers and criminals. Memoirs from this period evoke a utopian, almost carnivalesque world, that not only existed outside of the soon-to-be irresistible imperative of leisure consumption but also organized around itself a now-inaccessible experience of time. (Cf. Boris Vian: *Manuel de Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, Chêne, 1974.; Gianni Menichetti: *Vali Myers – A Memoir*, Golda Foundation, 2007.; Ralph Rumney: *Le Consul*, Allia, 1999.; Jean-Michel Mension: *La Tribu*, Allia, 2001. etc.) With the cultural imports of the Marshall Plan, by the late 1940s the outlines of a new social order were already beginning to emerge: the existentialist lifestyle drew hordes of American and Scandinavian tourists, and – though regarded with suspicious disdain – Coca-Cola was already being served in the cafés. Yet the rise of the service sector, the radical gentrification of urban space, and early postmodern consumer culture only became exclusive by the late 1960s, omnipresent after the collapse of 1968. It is precisely along the fracture line between these two worlds – the echoes of the early 20th century and post-68' – that the Parisian late-avant-garde took shape. In an intermediate zone that inherited the deeply modernist, combative totalizing movement politics of the early century's classical avant-garde, while also prefiguring the transmedial, critical *modus operandi* of the neo-avant-garde within an emerging post-movement (and predominantly individualized) new technological configuration.

this transgression. Isou and his group literally turned Cannes upside-down. It was so bad, that the following year they were not even admitted to the festival. In a photograph taken of their first offensive of Cannes the Lettrist hooligans are shown celebrating the successful screening, parading through the city like street dogs, looking for cheap white wine or for a brawl. All eyes fixed on Isou, dressed head to toe in black, giving the impression of a corrupt priest. At the head of the group, slightly off to the left, the young Debord is joining in – one hand in his pocket, the other holding a book, smiling at Isou.

After the Cannes adventure Debord became a member of the Lettrist group and soon emerged as Isou's most promising disciple. In September 1951 he moved back to Paris and rented a room in the same cheap hotel where Isou was living. The promising young Lettrist gradually fought his way to higher positions within the Lettrist hierarchy: he was continuously given assignments, which included promoting Isou's film, intimidating critics, and writing pamphlets based on Lettrist principles (and temperament). As Lettrist apprentice, Debord carried out Isou's instructions flawlessly – as long as no serious physical confrontations were required[7] –

[7] Despite the fact that the future Situationist leader worked hard on cultivating his image of a gangster – of which the most popular document is a c.1951 photograph showing the twenty-year-old Debord lurking on the corner of a building and pointing a switchblade at the camera – in reality he was not especially robust, was often shying away from physical confrontation and by his own account was somewhat timid compared to other Lettrists such as the even younger Marc'O, who had fought against the occupiers as a French partisan before joining the group. The context here is that at the time, beyond his sharp skills as a pamphleteer, the talented young Lettrist could not really be relied upon for "dirty work" – acts of roughness against the enemies of the group. This is at least what the condemned

and proved himself to be the best at adopting Isou's cultural theory and his positions on art. He not only embraced the leader's political ideas, but treated Isou's allies, and even enemies as his own[8].

At that time, Lettrism was focusing on the construction of a new revolutionary subject based on the figure of the "outsider". This was theorized from a politico-economic standpoint through the concept of "externity" (*externité*) in the *Treatise on Nuclear Economics*[9] (*Traité d'économie nucléaire*) and in the many other manifestations[10] of the *Youth Uprising* (*Soulèvement de la jeunesse*). Parallelly, there were attempts to transpose these ideas to the field of cinema – in order to mark the beginning of a new cinematic culture and to expand the medium's boundaries to its

biographer Jean-Marie Apostolidès claims. Apostolidès cites an anecdote in which Isou tasked Debord with beating up a Saint-Germain pickpocket who had once robbed their fellow Lettrist Gabriel Pomerand – a task from which the ambitious young Debord apparently backed out of. It is worth devoting a sentence to Apostolidès' own work: in addition to writing extensively on and editing texts by authors such as Ivan Chtcheglov and Ted Kaczynski, he wrote two monographs on Debord over his lifetime. Nearly two decades after publishing *Les Tombeaux de Guy Debord – "Guy-Ernest en jeune libertin"* (Exils, 1999.), he released his second "negative" monograph, which on a global scale provoked the ire of the supporters of the Situationists. His *Debord: Le naufrageur* (Flammarion, 2016.) was one of those books that deliberately embraced sacrilege and undertook the task of dismantling the popular heroic myths that had solidified after the Situationist leader's suicide. Not long after its appearance, the negative monograph was torn apart by Situationist circles. Even Gianfranco Sanguinetti, the last Situationist, wrote a highly entertaining denunciation of it. In his text *Argent, Sexe et Pouvoir: à propos d'une fausse biographie de Guy Debord* (published January 15, 2016, on *Mediapart*: https://blogs.mediapart.fr/lechatetlasouris/blog/150116/argent-sexe-etpouvoir-propos-d-une-fausse-biographie-de-guy-debord), he shredded the book with the fervor and sharp humor of the most combative Situationists. At one of the critique's high points – after calling the professor a "vile slanderer", a "cowardly sophist", a "hypocritical and untrustworthy moralist shit-monger" – Sanguinetti writes the following of the monograph: "In reality, this is an explicitly pornographic book, cheap pornography, which sinks to the level of a sensationalist magazine – pornography that would have no place in my collection of erotic art, which, incidentally, contains truly beautiful porn". Sanguinetti's critique was almost immediately translated for the Anglophone reception by Debord's former right-hand man, Raoul Vaneigem. Cf. https://www.notbored.org/Apostolides.pdf

[8] Never acknowledged of course, but these would also serve as the principal references for the later IS.

[9] Isidore Isou: *Traité d'économie nucléaire I. – Le soulèvement de la jeunesse – Problème du bicaténage et de l'externité*, Escaliers de Lausanne, 1949.

[10] Groups, manifestos, periodicals, etc.

utmost limits. Through Isou's concept of *méca-esthétique*[11], and based on this, Maurice Lemaître's concept of *syncinéma*[12], early radical Lettrist films took over the Parisian avant-garde cinema scene in the '50s. Just as outsider youth sought to break in and take over dominant culture in their politico-economic theories, *externity* broke into cinema. These films echoing Youth Uprising were deeply intertwined with numerous scandals and provocations surrounding the group's public appearances. Exterior elements – whether artistic or political – came crashing into the *salle obscure,* characterizing early Lettrist cinema with the disruptive arrival of the outsider. Debord founded his *œuvre* on these very concepts, and soon (also inevitably) the aspiring young Lettrist became Lettrism's sharpest critic and Isou's most fierce enemy. This exact turning point is documented in these two texts published in the Lettrist cinematic magazine *ION*[13]*,* introduced here for the first time in English.

With the revised translation[14] of *Prolegomena to Any Future Cinema*, one of Debord's earliest radical film-theoretical texts is finally presented

[11] An idea that aimed to supersede the traditional categories of aesthetic support by radically expanding the instruments of artistic exploration. Cf. Isidore Isou: *Esthétique du cinéma*, In Marc'O (ed.): *Ion*, 1952, 9–153, 115–122. Elaborated later in Isidore Isou: *L'art infinitésimal – L'art supertemporel suivi de Le poly-automatisme dans la méca-esthétique*, Escaliers de Lausanne, 1960. *Méca-esthétique* was not just one of the key ideas of early Lettrist cinema but also the foundation of their artistic practices in general. I am examining this concept in detail in my forthcoming study *Misfit Mediality and Externity – Totalizing Practices in Early Lettrist Experimental Cinema*.

[12] Or *filmséance*. Elaborating on Isou's idea this concept aimed to incorporate the spectators' corporal relations, and their surroundings into the expanded screenings. Cf. Maurice Lemaître: *Le film est déjà commencé ?*, Éditions André Bonne, 1952.

[13] The distancing from the Lettrist group and the approaching break with Isou is foreshadowed as well in the funeral portrait placed before the texts, reproduced above. The photograph taken after his successful *baccalauréat*, was later reworked by the young Lettrist into a chiseled print. By Marc'O's suggestion, the image was rephotographed on expired film: in the smeared emulsion – later dried, cracked, and in places scratched – a young delinquent appears, wearing a sports jacket and white shirt, leaning casually against the backdrop. With this act of mutilation, Debord sought not only to declare war on the medium of film itself, but the portrait soon became one of the earliest imprints of the Lettrist group's offensive too.

[14] English versions of the text did appear in print before, in the translations of Sarah Clift, and Scott MacKenzie. Cf. Jeffrey Shaw & Peter Weibel (ed.): Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film, The MIT Press, 2003., Scott MacKenzie (ed.): Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures – A Critical Anthology, University of California

together with the screenplay of the film that constitutes both its subject and its primary context. This concise yet playfully over-composed text is one of the programmatic manifestos of early Lettrist cinema, and also lays down the basis of Debord's first film and his entire *œuvre*. As one of the most concentrated articulations of the counter-tendencies within early Lettrism, it defines new aims for filmmaking and breaks with the Lettrist tradition – all in the context of announcing the author's own film, *Howls for Sade*. The tone of *Prolegomena* is defined by the self-satisfaction of a disciple surpassing his master, and by a distant yet exalted arrogance. The distance is discernible in the temporality of the text: the author looks back on an already outgrown phase – when Lettrism still meant everything for him, when speaking of love still carried validity: "[w]hen I made this film (…)" which "will take its place among the most important works of the history of cinema's reductional hypostasis".

Debord defines the timeframe of his Lettrist activities, demonstrating – through the deliberate destabilization of narration and the formal destitution of the image – his mastering of Isou's cinematic system before proceeding to surpass it: "(…) I arrive at the very death of *discrépant* cinema". By mastering the separation of image and sound, he drives them to their total trivialization, and finally to the complete repudiation of representation – thereby situating the text in the present: beyond Lettrism, beyond an obscure era of his past. "But all this belongs to a vanishing epoch, which no longer interests me." In revolutionary times, just as one cannot speak of love, one cannot make art either – argues the young radical, with late-Romantic fervor, preparing for parricide. For there will be revolution only when everyday life can be lived as art. This anticipates the later Situationist concept of revolution, in which neither love nor art is needed, since in the permanent revolution of everlasting play, life itself is identical with love and art. "The arts of the future will be the overturning of situations, or nothing." – thus, for the first time in his *œuvre*, the concept of constructing situations is articulated. And here we find its direct Lettrist precursor: "[t]he

Press, 2014. While these translations made the text accessible, the latter unfortunately includes a number of mistranslations, and in both instances the text is published without any historical context, separated from the film scenario it was meant to preface, without which the text has little meaning on its own.

values of creation shift toward the conditioning of the spectator, which I call three-dimensional psychology, just like Marc'O's nuclear cinema, which marks the beginning of a new amplic phase"[15].

In the course of translation, particular care had to be taken to preserve Debord's characteristically Lettrist stylistic elements: the disruptive, often tautological construction; the defiant incoherence; and the paradoxical rhetoric that simultaneously embodies world-redeeming fervor and ironic self-deprecation. *Prolegomena to Any Future Cinema* should be read as the down-to-the-marrow Lettrist preface to Situationist film. At its core stand the break with the Lettrist movement, the maximization of its techniques, and the surpassing of a "vanishing era". When reading the manuscript, Isou and

[15] The "conditioning of the spectator" just as "the surpassing of the image" refer to the program initiated by Isou's *Treatise on Slime and Eternity*. The most ambitious works which arose from the program's appeal included Maurice Lemaître's grandiose "*film séance*" *Has the Film Already Started?* (*Le film est déjà commencé ?*) and Marc'O's plans for his *nuclear cinema* (*cinéma nucléaire*). Cf. Maurice Lemaître: *Le film est déjà commencé ?*, Éditions André Bonne, 1952.; Marc'O: *Première manifestation d'un cinéma nucléaire*, In: Marc'O (ed.): ION, 1952, 235–284. Following Isou's lead, Lemaître inaugurated an expanded visual tradition that, by continuously overextending the boundaries of the artwork, laid the foundations of an event-based moving image culture. In *Has the Film Already Started?* spectators became active participants of the projection and with the use of "professional spectators" and extra-diegetic elements, the film's focus shifted towards the pragmatic layers of reception, the viewer's active bodily participation and their corporeal possibilities and experiences. However, Lemaître was Isou's right-hand man, and with his uncritical, often servile attitude, he amplified the Lettrist leader's megalomaniac outbursts – outbursts from which the soon to be Lettrist "left wing" was already beginning to distance itself, with figures such as Gil J Wolman, Serge Berna, Guy-Ernest Debord, and Marc'O. The latter was on such poor terms with Lemaître that (apart from reproducing the film's flyer) he denied him space to publish in *ION* – in response to which Lemaître, a few months earlier, had already published his film script. Furthermore, Lemaître is not even listed among Marc'O's references, despite the fact that Marc'O was clearly influenced by the concept of the *film séance* in elaborating his nuclear cinema. From Marc'O's project one can discern a feverish, almost dystopian film culture that focused exclusively on the radical restructuring of the economy of reception – on aesthetic, political, and psycho-biological levels alike. These emergents of "a new amplic phase" are precisely what resurfaces a few years later in the foundational concepts of the IS – concepts of which the first articulations are formulated here. Marc'O, the always traversing rogue late-avantgardist was a leading figure in the early years of Lettrism. After the split he distanced himself both from Isou's and Debord's circle and created his own movement called *les externalistes*, which focused solely on radical political action. Marc'O has recently passed away at the age of 98, for a brief commemoration, see: Éric Monsinjon: *Marc'O, au commencement était le lettrisme*, https://blogs.mediapart.fr/eric-monsinjon/blog/110725/marc-o-au-commencement-etait-le-lettrisme.

his circle could only have understood these pronouncements as frivolous rhetorical figures, as avant-garde stylistic flourishes – whereas in fact they were the first steps of an organized attack against the Lettrist movement, which lead to its splintering, as we know from both the genesis of the screenplay *Howls for Sade* and its immediate movement-political context[16].

Howls for Sade and the trajectory of its development provide an even more direct glimpse into Debord's early thinking on motion picture as well as into his strategies of building an avantgarde movement. The screenplay is peculiar in that the film, in this form, was never realized: the initial image track was never seen, and until now the original screenplay had never been translated to English[17]. From the image track, one can imagine an early montage practice that in certain aspects surpassed the image handling of Debord's later essay films. For whereas in his later *œuvre*[18] his montages were motivated and built on the theory of *détournement* – responding to the hegemony of the image by tactical subversion, by hijacking the ruling mode of production's own apparatus of domination, infusing them with radical political content, serving pedagogical and/or propagandistic narrative aims – the focus of *Howls* is precisely the total negation of representation. In the spirit of radical iconoclasm, and of rejecting Isou's Lettrist practices of art production, Debord gradually neglects the image track, deliberately renders it ever more insignificant, and finally abolishes it altogether. The peculiarity

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[16] Cf.: François Bovier, *Lettrisme et cinéma – De la lettre au photogramme*, Paris expérimental, 2023, 67–97; Kaira M. Cabañas, *Off-Screen Cinema – Isidore Isou and the Lettrist Avant-Garde*, University of Chicago Press, 2014, 97–123; Frédérique Devaux, *Le Cinéma Lettriste (1951 – 1991)*, Paris expérimental, 1992, 96–124; Andrew V. Uroskie, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art*, University of Chicago Press, 2014, 53–82; Fabien Danesi, *Le cinéma de Guy Debord (1952 – 1994)*, Paris expérimental, 2011, 29–65; Mihály G. Horváth, *The Realised Situation – Hurlements en faveur de Sade (Guy-Ernest Debord, 1952) and the history of its political impact*, Replika, 2023, (130): 149–180.

[17] In its previous translations, international scholarship has relied on the version of the screenplay from the *Œuvres Cinématographiques Complètes* – published by Éditions Champ Libre and later reissued by Éditions Gallimard. This version contained the scenario revised by Debord, with the image track removed and the sound track re-edited to frame the action of breaking with the Lettrists. What had never been translated into foreign language until now was the original *ION* version of the script, containing Debord's montages.

[18] *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (1959), *Critique de la séparation* (1961), *La societé du spectacle* (1973), *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978).

of this waning image track is that it underscores how closely Lettrism (at least in the later, IL-splinter form) remained connected to its paramount predecessor: Dadaism[19]. Just as the Dadaists cut up words and drew them randomly from their hats to create "sense-resistant" asemic sentences, so the young Lettrist Debord would have spliced together his scavenged, scratched scraps of film without principle or motivation, most likely assembling them (not from a hat, but) from a jumbled heap, indiscriminately, in linear order as the strips happened to come to hand.

"The rest of the film consists of the succession of absolutely insignificant images; without any intention of humor, montage, or provocation". Through the use of contradictory juxtapositions and antitheses and with this consciously instrumentalized insignificance, the structure of the image track sketched in the screenplay sought to confront Lettrist approaches to art, contemporary moving-image based practices, and, more broadly, a regime of representation that the author would later theorize as the *spectacle*. One can detect a combination of Lettrist ludic innovation and the negationist politics of Dadaism here, exactly prefiguring the approach of Debord's later movements[20]. Thus, in his film script he gradually abandons his images, reducing their significance ever further through overheard, vanishing quotations and alternating unmodulated sound strips,

[19] Although primarily as stylistic devices, both Isou and Lemaître employed randomness in their programmatic Lettrist films. Both *Treatise on Slime and Eternity* and *Has the Film Already Started?* are closely built on found footage, scavenged from the dustbins of film archives. While the former relies mainly on material representing relations of power – shots depicting police forces, workers, emigrants etc. – the latter makes use of a far broader spectrum of footage, its montages are linked by recurring forms, representations of movement, and treatments of color, bound together and disrupted by playful associative connections. What the two foundational Lettrist films share is that their montage sequences are both marked by a certain element of chance. This can evoke a certain resemblance with Dadaist collage and Surrealist automatism, but it must be highlighted here, that chance is but a residual trace of Dadaism and Surrealism, not the heart of ("isouian") Lettrist works. In contrast, the screenplay of *Howls* fully embraces this legacy and is based entirely on tactical contingency: beyond a certain point its sequences are paired with total randomness, generating arbitrary and utterly insignificant connections within the constellation of images as well as between image and sound. Then, at the premiere Debord radicalized this randomness still further, as shown below.

[20] While Lettrism could be understood as the *surpassing* of Dada – representing the retour of a new creative artistic epoch – the LI and SI were, in a certain sense, the radical *fulfillment* of Dada, as their very premise was the death of art. That after Joyce and Malevich no creative artistic epoch is possible, only but an epoch of radical political action.

until the work is immersed in a total and tactile insignificance. And when finally, the soundtrack itself falls completely silent, and the work of art is left behind, the auditorium erupts in howls: "[a] short silence, then very violent cries in the dark"[21].

The goal of the translation was not only to strictly follow the structure of the document, but also to convey the intertextual performativity that characterizes this iconoclastic film. It creates a polemic between the uncritical celebration of a youthful, bohemian, heroic age, and its abrupt relativization and relegation to insignificance. The same effect is also produced by the soundtrack's ironic proclamations and the almost nihilist torrent of text woven from humorous, self-ironic, banal, or at times dead serious fragments which evoke the other "detested"[22] forefather of Lettrism: Surrealism. In the original soundtrack of *Howls* we would have heard a rather contradictory relation to the other predecessor, as it was overloaded with dreamy allusions and obscure fragments – both critical and playful –, which conjured up Surrealism's atmosphere and gestures. It is very clear, that the rogue Lettrist Debord fully embraced Surrealism here, above all its militant linguistic strategies aimed at the repossession of language and the radical

[21] In this way, attention is redirected from the artwork back to the spectator as the potential revolutionary subject. The foregrounding of the spectator was at this time one of the central concerns of Lettrist cinema. Building on Isou's concept of *méca-esthetics* – which aimed to surpass traditional aesthetic supports and radically expand the toolkit of artistic practices – Lettrist works were already claiming in the early 1950s that it was possible to integrate every domain of creation, as well as the totality of everyday life into art. And in this integration, the spectator stood at the forefront. In *ION* one finds numerous examples that, alongside extended uses of media, were based on the radical integration of the spectator. The premiere of Isou's film was a great avant-garde scandal that simultaneously heralded the dawn of a new cinema and took aim at the Cannes film-enthusiasts; in Lemaître's "cinema of cruelty" (Cf. François Bovier: *Lettrisme et cinéma – De la lettre au photogramme*, Paris expérimental, 2023, 56.), the viewer was subjected to a multitude of performative experiments. And while Gil J Wolman sought to establish a raw corporeal aesthetic experience, Marc'O dreamed outright of creating a film culture that never existed before and a new "species" of spectators. Debord's work also belongs to this spectator-centered program, but in his case what we encounter is a critical variant: one that is in many respects iconoclastic and radically politicized, aiming at the political emancipation of the viewer.

[22] As Michèle Bernstein said regarding the early years of the IL: "[e]veryone is the son of many fathers. There was the father we hated, which was surrealism. And there was the father we loved, which was dada. We were the children of both." Cf. Greil Marcus: *Lipstick Traces – The Secret History of the 20th Century*, London: Picador, 1997, 181.

interiorization of the external world[23]. The numerous dreamy fragments written onto the soundtrack of *Howls*, reminiscent of early Surrealist poetry, therefore not only serve combative intentions, but should also be understood as invocations. They consciously call upon poetry, more precisely the liberty-practices of early Surrealist poetry to make use of a totalizing linguistic arsenal that can be utilized to revolt against society[24]. Yet Debord's critique of Surrealism is already expressed in the soundtrack through the ironic overexaggeration of Surrealist stylistic elements which are continually undercut by Dadaist juxtapositions of insignificance and anticlimaxes, alongside the inserts of Lettrist poems, various improvisations composed for howls, cries, rattles etc., all aiming to take shots at Breton's circle[25].

Within the dream-like torrent of *Howls*' overflowing text, late-Romantic outbursts drift together with Dadaist-Surrealist allusions, and cheap maxims from Hollywood genre films. The reveries of love-struck youth intertwine with mythological scenes, insider references, local avant-garde fables, and theoretical passages that are mixed with Lettrist poetry,

[23] For Surrealist poetry, having freed language and the world from the constraints of reality and reason, was able to totally transform its surroundings in complete liberty according to the poet's eruptive imagination – serving, thereby, as an authentic counter-strategy against the existing "ethical order". This disposition was necessarily a precursor to the Lettrists – seeking the total creative transformation of the world – and to Debord's later movements, which continuing this legacy strived to become adventurers of the utopian labyrinth of their own desires.

[24] It is no accident that references to the "realization of poetry", remain predominant labels for Debord's own activities from his Lettrist period all the way to the early years of the IS.

[25] Among the many dreamy-fragmentary Surrealist dissonances, the following seems to be the most representational of Debord's contradictory relation to the "detested father": Right after hearing some of the earliest theoretical sketches of the foundational concepts later termed "constructed situaton" and "unitary urbanism" we would have seen scenes of riots, accompanied by the sentence: "[l]ike a strangled Argonaut, the Andalusian Dog enclosed itself in the house of dreams. (…)" – followed by a torrent of fragmented evocations, dream-like scenarios and unclear sentences reminiscent of an obscure and cloudy poem: "[t]he amount of indulgences, and the victory of Kosovo – the secret wounds. On the corner of the night sailors wage wars; and the ships in the bottles all sail for you, who once loved them. (…)" His montage is motivated: he aligns images representing revolt, insurrection, and revolution – i.e. active political intervention – with the negative counterpoint of the yielding Surrealist movement, represented by the "andalusian dog" which like a "strangled Argonaut" locks himself in the "house of dreams". He underscores what he sees as the late Surrealist movement's passive, navel-gazing, Freudophile degeneration, confined to self-scrutiny, which falls back on what he argued the true vocation of poetry and of the avant-garde meant: the total transformation of everyday life.

legal clauses and gangster formulas; the intoxicated tones of drugs, rape, and outlaw masculinity which are then suddenly cut off: "[y]ou know, none of this really matters". To this torrent, Debord gradually begins to align seemingly functionless and entirely unmotivated montages, associating distant or altogether unrelated semantic relations – thereby further intensifying the deliberate trivialization of the Left Bank's postwar epic (or at least a chapter of it). It is in this gesture that we can discern the politics of negation that guarantees the film's relevance in avant-garde movement history: the repudiation of image, narration, and aesthetic conventions; the repudiation of cinema as a cultural institution; and, together with all of these, the programmatic rejection of the Lettrist group itself. It is this context of realization that makes *Howls* particularly important.

"A science of situations must be established, appropriating elements from psychology, statistics, urbanism, and ethics. These elements must strive for an entirely new objective: the conscious creation of situations". This is the motto of the program that marks his *œuvre*, which would have been accompanied by images of riots. Yet at the film's first notorious screening, instead of the work anticipated by the Lettrist screenplay, Debord preserved nothing at all of the image track. The accumulation of insignificant images – which could have been understood as continuation of the Lettrist program, as another great Lettrist work within "the history of cinema's reductional hypostasis" – was altogether cut out by Debord. In its place, as a refusal of Isou's aesthetic system and a repudiation of the Lettrist movement, he demonstratively used no images whatsoever. Instead of the sequences indicated in the script, the screening employed black and white blanks, leaving viewers alternately in silent darkness or listening to a reedited second soundtrack before the blankly illuminated screen. Debord used the film's premiere as the occasion to organize what would soon be proclaimed as the IL, publicly breaking with Isou's system and, in the process, physically attacking the old Lettrist "right wing" with his comrades during the projection[26]. Behind this action stood the alliance of dissatisfied young leftist

[26] This was a "semi-symbolic" clash, in the sense that there truly was screaming, throwing objects (flour) and playful arguments, followed then by a sharp exchange of letters, but not yet the kind of formal split that would later result from the "Chaplin scandal". At the time,

radicals inside the Lettrist group – Serge Berna, Jean-Louis Brau, Gil J Wolman, Debord, and others – who preferred planning political actions over making art and advocated for the critical politicization of Lettrist artistic tactics[27]. Assembled around the event of the screening, the splinter group soon declared the formation of the IL, which shortly thereafter seized the initiative on the late-avant-garde battlefield, and after a few years – with many exclusions of course – transformed into the IS. Thus the film's premiere became not only a symbolic rejection of representation, but also a late-avant-garde event of movement politics: a film-situation[28], a "*coup d'Lettrisme*", in which Debord sought simultaneously to abolish the institution of cinema, abolish art in general, and to break with the Lettrist group in order to form his own. This is how Debord's first film became the inaugural articulation of the program of iconoclasm that would accompany him throughout his life in all his subsequent movements. A program grounded in the subordination of art in the service of active political action[29] which on the occasion of its founding, became the very announcement of the birth of a new revolutionary avant-garde.

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the event must have seemed more like an avant-garde enclave's still playful internal feud. The significance of the screening can be grasped rather in the fact that it was at this moment that the cohesion of the dissident circle within the group became conspicuously visible, which Debord and his comrades would later proclaim as the IL, and which indeed posed a serious threat to Lettrism.

[27] As models for this were such Lettrist actions as the storming of *Notre Dame* or the rescue operation at the *Bon Pastor* orphanage. All these manifestations built on Isou's key politico-economic concept of *externité*. Isou argued that the agent of radical transformation was the "outsider", and above all the most peripheral layer of outsiders: youth. Youth became in his theories the challenger of the existing order and the new revolutionary subject. Drawing in part on his own experience as a Jewish *émigré* from Eastern Europe, Isou systematized twenty years before the student uprisings the instrumentalization of the experience of economic, socio-cultural, and political marginality through the image of youth as the radical political subject ready to set the world ablaze. Yet this project, above all because of the political pressure weighing on Isou (prison sentences, fear of deportation, shock therapy, etc.), as well as because of his late-Romantic conception of art, could never truly be fulfilled. It was this role that the splinter Lettrists and then the later Situationists undertook.

[28] *Filmséance* (Lemaître) gives way to filmsituation. The Lettrist spectator-centered expanded film practices take on a critical, politicized variant, culminating not in the creation of a new artwork, but in the birth of a political phenomenon – such as the proclamation of a radical avant-garde movement.

[29] This naturally also had a historical trajectory, which cannot be presented here within the scope of this foreword.

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Dérive et pulsion

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Abstract. The concept of drive (*dérive*) was developed in the post-war years by the latest artistic and political avant-gardes. Psychoanalysts and philosophers seized on the reflections and artistic performances developed around the concept of the drive to translate the life of *pulsions* (drives). The city is the workshop of modern life and an image of people's *passional* constitution. Ivan Chtcheglov was the first thinker to imagine a city whose districts represented states of mind. This city is an externalisation of passions, complemented by Guy Debord's theory of dérive as a tool for investigating urban life. For Debord, an interpreter of Marx, the city is the first complete image of artisanal humanity. The artisanal environment is man's way of constructing and inhabiting a world of passions.

Keywords: drive; drift; pulsion; urbanism; Triebe; Guy Debord; Ivan Chtcheglov; situationism; psychoheograpgy; psychoanalysis.

1. Circulation d'un concept

Dans les années '50-'70 du siècle passé, la *dérive* était un concept central de la pensée philosophique et de la réflexion artistique sur la transformation révolutionnaire des cadres de la vie. Inspirés par un certain Ivan Vladimirovitch Chtcheglov, des créateurs comme Guy Debord, Asger

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Jorn[1], Constant[2] ou Ralph Rumney proposaient une cartographie pulsionnelle de la ville. *La dérive*, proposée par les dernières avant-gardes, représentait une pratique de connaissance et de redéfinition de la ville. Issu d'une réflexion sur l'urbanisme, le concept de *dérive* tombe en oubli après la dissolution de l'organisation politique et artistique nommée l'Internationale Situationniste (1972).

Au moment de la disparition du mouvement, le concept est repris par Jean-François Lyotard, qui se sépare, *en dérivant*, du structuralisme lacanien. Avant lui, dès les premiers manifestes situationnistes, Jacques Lacan avait remarqué les possibilités du concept à traduire la force et le dynamisme des énergies psychiques que les artistes voulaient mettre au service de la révolution sociale par la récréation des milieux urbaines. Finalement, semble dire Lacan, les pulsions en tant que *dérives* ont par elles-mêmes une nature révolutionnaire qui ne se contente jamais des satisfactions passagères offertes par les thérapies politiquement réformistes. Les fragments de Lyotard viennent certifier l'analyse de Guy Debord qui voyait sa propre aventure hors de la possibilité d'une débâcle ou d'un triomphe. L'aventure d'une vie et d'une génération comme une dérive :

> …personne ne me fait la grâce de penser que je n'ai pas réussi dans les affaires du monde. Mais fort heureusement, personne ne pourra dire non plus que j'y ai réussi. Il faut donc admettre qu'il n'y avait pas de succès ou d'échec pour Guy Debord, et ses prétentions démesurées[3].

Notre essai étudie ce passage entre l'architecture urbaine et l'appareille psychique, lieu de la dérive, pratique qui implique un univers préindividuel de l'homme dissolu dans un environnement qu'il peut à tout moment réinvestir.

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[1] Ruth Baumeister, Paul Larkin (éds.), *Fraternité avant tout. Asger Jorn's writings on art and architecture, 1938-1958*, 010Publ., Rotterdam, 2011.
[2] Catherine de Zegher, Mark Wigley (éds.), *Drawing Papers. Another City for Another Life*: *Constant's New Babilon*, MITT Press, Cambridge, 2001.
[3] Guy Debord*, In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*. Edition critique (1990, 1999), in Guy Debord, Œuvres, Gallimard, 2006, p. 1788-1789.

2. D’une idée artistique…

Asger Jorn a été un des premiers membres de l’Internationale Situationniste, étant déjà en rapport avec Guy Debord depuis 1954, du temps de l’Internationale Lettriste (1952-1957) et de la revue *Potlatch*[4]. Dans le tome second du *Panégyrique* (1997), Guy Debord lui dédie plusieurs pages *iconographiques*, avec ses portraits[5] et leurs travaux communs[6]. Ensemble, les deux auteurs, à l’aide des imprimeurs Otto Permild et Bjørn Rosengreen, réalisent deux livres-objets. Le premier ouvrage, *Fin de Copenhague,* est une collection d’images touristiques, publicitaires et cartographiques, réunies sous la signature de Jorg, Debord étant « conseiller technique pour le détournement[7] ». Les images sont réunies par des taches colorées, par lesquelles Asger Jorn tourne en dérision la *drip technique* (la peinture au goutte-à-goutte) de Jackson Polock, promu à l’époque comme image du génie américain, modèle de l’accomplissement artistique et économique. C’était une époque où les artistes pouvaient remplir le rôle social attribué de nos jours aux entrepreneurs comme le feu Steve Jobs, ou plus récemment, Elon Musk. Dans cette reprise ironique des méthodes de Polock, nous pouvons également reconnaître la critique debordienne du hasard en art et contre ses résultats médiocres et stéréotypes. Les taches de couleurs réunies renvoient abstraitement aux cartographies situationnistes des *dérives,* ces promenades destinées à identifier des unités d’affects à travers les quartiers modernes. Les deux artistes réalisent un second ouvrage, *Mémoires,* techniquement plus ambitieux et plus nuisible pour les presses des imprimeurs, car les feuilles sont enveloppées en papier sablé, solution de compromis après le rejet de l’idée de Jorn de s’en servir de papier goudronné, comme pour les toits des bâtiments. Cette fois l’auteur principal est Guy Debord, qui ramasse des citations et des images « préfabriquées » et décide de leur distribution sur la page, pendant que Asger Jorn est responsable de la réalisation des « structures portantes », c’est-à-dire les traces de couleurs,

[4] Karen Kuczynski, *The Art and Politics of Asger Jorn. The Avan-Guard Won’t Give Up,* Routledge, 2020, p. 147.
[5] Guy Debord, *Panégyrique*. *Tome second* (1997), in Guy Debord, Œuvre, Gallimard, 2006, pp. 1717-1719.
[6] *Ibid*., pp.1697-1701.
[7] Asger Jorn, *Fin de Copehague,* Editée par le Bauhus Imagiste, [Copenhague, 1957].

réalisées en lithographie[8], ayant le rôle de relier les « éléments » sélectionnés. Si la *Fin de Copenhague* était la présentation par des images d'une ville située à la périphérie de l'Europe, les *Mémoires* s'attaque à la temporalité comme synthèse collective des clichés repris de la dérive d'un lecteur des livres et des enseignes commerciales. La collaboration entre Debord et Jorn cesse de manière spectaculaire par l'exclusion du dernier de l'Internationale Situationniste, en 1961, sur le fond des désaccords concernant la possibilité de créer encore des œuvres d'art.

Guy Debord quitte peu à peu le monde des artistes pour développer une réflexion toujours plus poussée sur le monde comme production du spectacle, alors que Asger Jorn croit toujours dans les potentialités révolutionnaires de l'art populaire et du vandalisme créateur[9]. Parmi les « alter-situationnistes » qui sont restés fidèles aux principes de l'art, on peut aussi évoquer la figure de l'artiste hollandais Constant Nieuwenhuis qui, dans le cadre de son projet *New Babylon*, continue, pendant plus d'une décennie, à créer des esquisses et des maquettes des agglomérations urbaines futures, suspendues et labyrinthiques qui encourageraient la créativité collective[10].

Fig. 1. La dernière page des Mémoires.

[8] Guy-Ernest Debord, *Mémoires,* Edité par l'Internationale Situationniste, [Copenhague], 1959.
[9] Peter Shield, *Comparative Vandalisme. Asger Jorn and the artistic attitude to life. A study of Asger Jorn's attempt to formulate 'the first complete revision of the existing philosophical system ' from the standpoint of the artist in the period 1961-67*, Routldege, London, 1998.
[10] Constant Nieuwenhuis, Mark Wigley, *Constant's New Babilon. The Hyper-arhitecture of desire*, Rotterdam, 1998.

2.1. … à un concept philosophique

Dans les années '60, parlant du *Trieb* freudien, Jacques Lacan insiste sur la barbarie de la traduction française par *pulsion* et affirme qu'il préfèrerait l'anglais *drive*, qui en français donnerait *la dérive*. La première trace de cette remarque, qui revient souvent dans la bouche du psychanalyste, se trouve dans un texte adressé aux philosophes, intitulé *Subversions du sujet et dialectique du désir dans l'inconscient freudien*[11]. Cette précision terminologique est introduite à l'occasion d'une comparaison entre le sujet hégélien et le sujet freudien. Le sujet dans « la doctrine de Freud » serait ce qui s'efface dans le discours, ce qu'on croit entrevoit « là où ce fut », « là où c'était » :

> Là où c'était à l'instant même, là où c'était pour un peu, entre cette extinction qui luit encore et cette éclosion qui achoppe, Je peux venir à l'être de disparaître de mon dit.
> Enonciation qui se dénonce, énoncé qui se renonce, ignorance qui se dissipe, occasion qui se perd, qu'est-ce qui reste ici sinon la trace de ce qu'il faut bien qui soit pour choir de l'être ?[12]

A cette existence spectrale, Lacan oppose le sujet de Hegel qui tient le discours absolu sur l'histoire subissant ainsi la « la tentation de la folie[13] ». Chez Hegel, insiste Lacan, c'est au désir d'assurer le rapport entre le sujet et la vérité du savoir. Le sujet sait dès l'origine ce qu'il veut, comme le prouve la ruse de la raison. Alors que pour Freud le désir est toujours noué au désir de l'Autre qui offre un gîte au désir du savoir. Les pulsions sont donc les énergies qui meuvent (qui font dériver) le sujet dans son désir. Cette méconnaissance de son but ou, dans le langage de Lacan, ce « savoir sans la moindre connaissance[14] » ouvre le sujet à la mobilité et à la possibilité historique des révolutions.

Jean-François Lyotard, par ses *Dérives à partir de Marx et Freud* (1973), chantier qui sera complété par *Des dispositifs pulsionnels* (1973) et

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[11] Jacques Lacan *Ecrits* II, Seuil, 1971, texte présenté aux « Colloques philosophiques internationaux », tenus à Royaumont du 19 au 23 septembre, 1960.
[12] *Ibid*. pp. 160-161.
[13] *Ibid*. p. 161.
[14] *Ibid*. p. 163.

L'Economie libidinale (1974), reprend encore une fois le concept. Lyotard profite pleinement du déplacement lacanien de la *dérive* de l'espace de l'urbanisme vers l'univers affectif. Chez lui, la *dérive* n'est jamais singulière, mais toujours plurielle : des *dérives*, illustrées par la *Nef des fous* de Jérôme Bosch et par l'écriture d'*Ulysse* de James Joyce. Comme le navire du peintre hollandais, *les dérives* sont « une collection des fous » partis dans un voyage sans fin, chacun de ces fous représentant une pulsion animée plus que les autres par les paysages rencontrés. Comme chez l'écrivain irlandais, cette embarcation habitée par une population polymorphe n'arrive jamais à Ithaque : il n'y a pas de retour chez soi sur un modèle dialectique hégélien mis en œuvre par les révolutions bourgeoises et socialistes, fondatrices des Etats nouveaux[15]. Lyotard oppose *la dérive* à l'efficacité du pouvoir. Pour lui, les groupuscules qui ont préparé Mai '68 – à cette époque le philosophe se trouvait dans la rédaction de la revue *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, où Guy Debord avait également fait une courte escale – manquaient de l'efficience, principale qualité estimée par le pouvoir gouvernemental, par le management économique ou par la direction stalinienne du Parti Communiste Français.

Par la dérive des révolutionnaires, ceux-ci se sont montrés inefficaces, suivant « les grands courants, les grands *Triebe*, les flux majeurs », modifiant ainsi les dispositifs politico-affectifs[16]. La dérive lyotardienne s'oppose également à la critique. L'opération de la critique est de sélecter un nombre de positions du pouvoir et d'exhiber leur insuffisance. Par rapport au désir de l'universalité de la critique, tous ses objets seront imparfaits. La critique ne s'applique pas seulement aux princes modernes, mais également à ses propres sujets et à ses alliés : le professeur est toujours mécontent de ses élèves, la direction du syndicat est insatisfaite de ses adhérents. En conséquence, les puissants du jour sont des *naufrageurs* qui font miroiter un avenir radieux et attirent la nef vers des rochers dangereux ; les critiques les accompagnent par leur indécision réformiste. Les marins de haute mer assument les risques de l'autarchie et savent que les rives ont souvent des sables mouvants[17]. Les mouvements révolutionnaires s'arrêtent souvent dans

[15] Jean-François Lyotard, *Dérives à partir de Marx et Freud*, Editions Galilée, Paris, 1994, p. 14.
[16] *Ibid*., p. 16.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 21.

un blocage critique ou dans la fascination du pouvoir qui incarne l'irréductibilité du désir à la connaissance et au commandement. L'image de la nef de Bosch sera reprise dans l'*Economie libidinale* pour exemplifier le caractère non *dérivé* de l'entreprise moderne coloniale : le Jésuite, le Commerçant, l'Explorateur et le Militaire ne seraient pas aux yeux d'Africains et des Japonais que des organes et des pulsions d'un corps nommé *Humanité* ou *Création*[18].

Nous nous proposons dans les pages suivantes de revenir à la racine de cette pensée d'un mouvement qui précède les organes et décide la disposition des corps. C'est une réflexion qui naît à partir de la critique de la géographie urbaine d'après la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale et les transformations des grandes villes des Etats-Unis et de l'Europe Occidentale, un espace de décisions lourdes en conséquences pour la Planète entière.

3. La dérive et la ville

Le concept artistique et politique de *dérive* est produit par la rencontre de deux penseurs de la vie urbaine : le célèbre, mais pas toujours lu au-delà de son traité sur *La Société du spectacle*, Guy Debord, et un marginal entre les marginaux, l'oublié de l'histoire, Gilles Ivain. Ce dernier, un personnage mystérieux, dont la biographie fragmentaire a été ramassée par Jean-Marie Apostolidès et de Boris Donné[19], a un passage météorique, mais décisif, dans le groupuscule mené par Debord dans des combats d'avant-garde.

Les textes classiques de la *dérive* situationniste sont :

1) le *Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau*, rédigé par Gilles Ivain entre 1952 et 1953, adopté par l'Internationale Lettriste et publié par la revue de l'Internationale Situationniste en 1958, avec des légères modifications ; et
2) *La Théorie de la Dérive*, écrite par Guy Debord et publiée par la revue bruxelloise *Les lèvres nues*, le 9 novembre 1956.

[18] Jean-François Lyotard, *Economie libidinale,* Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1974, p. 59.
[19] Jean-Marie Apostolidès et Boris Donné, *Ivan Chtcheglov, profil perdu*, Alia, Paris, 2006.

3.1. Gilles Ivain, le Prince Vaillant

Dans le film de Guy Debord, *In girum imus noctae et consumimur igni* (1978), Gilles Ivain, de son vrai nom Ivan Chtcheglov, est évoqué à trois reprises, sa remémoration étant illustrée par l'image du Prince Vaillant, personnage de la bande dessiné homonyme crée par Hal Foster, inspiré par les légendes du roi Arthur. Ce compagnon est présenté comme le plus perspicace des révolutionnaires de la vie et de l'urbanisme, celui avec lequel Debord s'est engagé dans des interminables errances urbaines :

> Mais puis-je oublier celui que je vois partout dans le plus grand moment de nos aventures. Celui qui en ces jours incertains, ouvrit une route nouvelle et y avança si vite, choisissant ceux qui viendraient ; car personne d'autre le valait, cette année-là ? On eût dit qu'en regardant seulement la ville et la vie, il les changeait. Il découvrit en un an des sujets de revendications pour un siècle. Les profondeurs et les mystères de l'espace urbain furent sa conquête. Les pouvoirs actuels, avec leur pauvre information falsifiée, qui égare eux-mêmes presque autant qu'elle étourdit leurs administrés n'ont pas peut encore mesurer ce que leur a coûté le passage rapide de cet homme. Mais qu'importe ? Les naufrageurs n'écrivent leur nom que sur l'eau.
>
> La formule pour renverser le monde, nous ne l'avons pas cherchée dans les livres, mais en errant. C'était une dérive à grandes journées, où rien ne ressemblait à la veille. Et qui ne s'arrêtait jamais ? Surprenantes rencontres, obstacles remarquables, grandioses trahisons, enchantements périlleux, rien ne manqua dans cette poursuite d'un autre Graal néfaste, dont personne n'avait voulu ? Et même, un jour malheureux, le plus beau joueur parmi nous se perdit dans les forêts de la folie. Il n'y a pas de folie plus grande que l'organisation présente de la vie[20].

La chute dans la folie de Gilles Ivain est de nouveau remémorée vers la fin du film, dans une séquence plus courte :

[20] *In girum imus nocte …* in Guy Debord, *Oeuvres*, Gallimard, 2006, pp. 1376-1378.

> Où sont les gracieux galants – que je suivais au temps jadis ? Ceux-là sont morts. Un autre a vécu encore plus vite, jusqu'à ce que se referment les grilles de la démence[21].

Le commentaire du film, énoncé d'une voix solennelle et monotone par Guy Debord, construit deux moments d'irrésolution. Primo, qui sont les naufrageurs ? L'homme qui a mis en péril les pouvoirs politico-administratifs ou les potentats qui représentent ces pouvoirs ? Deuxio, qui est le plus fou : le camarade psychotique ou ceux qui acceptent l'hallucination spectaculaire de l'organisation sociale capitaliste ? Dans chacun des cas les deux réponses restent valables, car le texte contient deux régimes de lecture : l'évocation d'une rébellion échouée et la critique sociale d'une société *en dérive*.

3.2. *Le formulaire*

Sous son titre bureaucratique de *Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau,* ce *beau joueur*, Gilles Ivain, rédige un manifeste artistique qui oriente les recherches des avant-gardes lettriste et situationniste en quête d'une nouvelle vie sociale. Le texte énonce la fin de l'art comme préoccupation supérieure ou illusion compensatrice. La force *influencielle* de l'art – pour reprendre le langage situationniste – a été transférée dans la rue, sous les enseignes commerciales entrevues au cours des *dérives : « Zoo Notre-Dame », « Scierie Main-d'or », « Rue des Volontaires Prolongée », « Alimentation des Martyrs[22] »,* etc. Ses flâneries d'un genre nouveau, qui frôlent le danger, finissaient souvent dans des tavernes. L'alcool a été le l'anxiolytique préféré de ces camarades de Chtcheglov, comme le rappelle Guy Debord ; reprenant une chanson de Robert Louis Stevenson : « Le suicide en emportait beaucoup. *La boisson et le diable ont expédié les autres*[23] ».

Cette dérive particulière qui a valeur d'exemple pour la théorie esquissée dans le *Formulaire* finit donc dans *Les Caves Rouges* d'une rue

[21] Ibid., p. 1397.
[22] Internationale Situationiste, nº 1, 1958, p. 15.
[23] Ibid., p. 1369.

parisienne, la rue de Pali-Kao, en rêvant, sous l'influence du vin, à des bâtiments qui doivent être construits pour une vie qui vaut être vécue.

La dérive a une dimension d'étude historique, investiguant les couches géologiques des mémoires des villes. Ce sont des vestiges des autres époques qui ont inspiré les mystères folkloriques et le lyrisme des surréalistes. Mais les déambulations lettristes proposent délibérément une nouvelle perspective qui visent l'intégration de ces reliquats dans la vie moderne. Le propre de la vie moderne est donné par la présence des machines et leur influence sur l'environnement quotidien. Selon notre révolutionnaire péripatéticien, la mentalité rétrograde des théoriciens et des praticiens des arts les a égarés dans l'interprétation des exigences imposées à l'existence par les machines. Ces réalisations techniques ont imposé la domination de l'abstraction dans les arts, qui a eu pour conséquence une architecture terne que Gilles Ivain se propose de substituer par ce qu'il appelle, par une expression empruntée à la scénographie théâtrale, « des décors vivants ». La présence de la machine peut transformer la vie dans des protocoles mathématiques, mais elle peut également l'intégrer aux arts du spectacle. Seulement après l'échec de sa révolution (ou l'accomplissement de sa révolution négative ?), Guy Debord constatera que le capitalisme a le pouvoir de synthétiser les deux voies exposées par son ami de jeunesse.

Mais qui sont ces personnages qui ternissent la vie moderne ? Gilles Ivain n'a pas la force d'imprécation de Guy Debord, pour lequel Le Corbusier était « le protestant modulor, Le Corbusier-Sing-Sing, le barbouilleur de croûtes néo-cubistes [qui] fait fonctionner la *machine à habiter* pour la plus grande gloire du Dieu qui a fait à son image les charognes et le corbusiers [24] ». Gilles Ivain voit dans les conceptions « hideuses » de l'architecte suisse un monde immobile, centré autour des hôpitaux, des usines et des églises. Au maître du fonctionnalisme et de l'*espace indicible*, les lettristes opposent une architecture volage où les progrès techniques sont mis à la disposition des désirs humains, faisant des maisons mobiles qui changent de paysage et qui par leurs murs transparents sont en contact avec la nuit cosmique et le jour terrestre.

[24] Guy Debord, « Les gratte-ciels par la racine » in *Potlach*, no 5, juillet 1954, in Guy Debord, *Œuvres,* ed. cit., p. 143.

Art complet, l'architecture ne peut connaître un renouveau que par la naissance d'une nouvelle civilisation. Pour Gilles Ivain, l'humanité a tenté depuis des siècles des différentes expériences, la plupart vouées à l'échec à cause de l'absences de ces trois principes civilisationnels : l'espace, le temps et le comportement. Jusqu'au XX^{e} siècle, le capitalisme n'a pas réussi à offrir une pensée unitaire sur ces trois dimensions et les nouveaux pays socialistes ne font qu'emboiter le pas de leurs ennemis déclarés. Il y a pourtant, constate notre auteur, des formes tâtonnantes qui annoncerait un nouveau monde et une nouvelle vie. Ces essais sont caractérisés par le relativisme, la souplesse, l'amusement. Contrairement à ces balbutiements encourageants, la dégénérescence dominante ne se manifeste pas seulement dans le succès de Le Corbusier, mais plus amplement dans l'extension de la banalisation qui pervertit les possibilités ouvertes par le progrès des techniques. Les commodités de la vie, apportés par la machine-à-laver, le vide-ordure et la salle de bain auraient tué les passions amoureuses de la jeunesse, ajoute Chtcheglov, sans penser trop aux aisances apportées aux quartiers prolétaires par ces mécanismes la vie commune. Néanmoins, il anticipe une critique écologiste d'une dépense technologique qui impose toujours plus d'individualisation et qui remplace l'insalubrité par la pollution.

3.3. Situations

L'urbanisme de Gilles Ivain met au centre le concept debordien de *construction des situations* comme fondement d'une nouvelle pensée sur l'architecture, sur le temps et sur l'espace, les trois axes de la nouvelle civilisation exigée par le *Formulaire*. L'architecture est un art, donc une *praxis* humaine qui produit simultanément une réflexion théorique et des œuvres matérielles. Sa poïétique est l'expression d'une *ambiance*, concept par lequel les situationnistes traduisent dans leurs programmes et dans leurs œuvres certaines conceptions de l'*Umwelt*, de l'environnement, d'un espace d'échange entre l'homme est son milieu :

> Notre idée centrale est celle de la construction de situations, c'est-à-dire la construction concrète d'ambiances momentanées de la vie, et leur transformation en une qualité passionnelle supérieure. Nous devons mettre au point une intervention ordonnée sur les facteurs complexes de deux

grandes composantes en perpétuelle interaction : le décor matériel de la vie ; les comportements qu'il entraîne et qui le bouleversent[25].

La situation est appelée à remplacer la notion moderne de *spectacle* qui requiert un spectateur non impliqué[26]. La vie deviendra un *art intégral,* concept qui est l'héritier critique de l'œuvre d'art totale du XIX[e] siècle, dont l'une de ses formes, l'architecture, est étendue au niveau de l'urbanisme[27]. Ainsi, l'architecture n'est plus statique et ne peut plus être réduite à la maison comme unité élémentaire, mais à l'unité urbaine. A cette forme élémentaire nouvelle, on doit le nom d'*urbanisme unitaire* qui se propose de créer des ambiances et de régler les passages entre des environnements affectifs divers.

Dans le *Rapport sur la construction des situations,* proposé par Debord, l'influence de Chtcheglov est reconnue dans l'évocation des propositions du *Formulaire* :

> Un de nos camarades a avancé une théorie des quartiers états d'âme, suivant laquelle chaque quartier d'une ville devrait tendre à provoquer un sentiment simple, auquel le sujet s'exposerait en connaissance de cause. Il semble qu'un tel projet tire d'opportunes conclusions d'un mouvement de dépréciation des sentiments primaires accidentels, et que sa réalisation puisse contribuer à accélérer ce mouvement[28].

La théorie des quartiers états d'âme est une des premières ébauches de performance artistique et politique typiquement situationniste. L'acte de l'artiste révolutionnaire peut être une reconstruction théâtrale des faubourgs disparus ou des paysages étranges évoqués dans des tableaux ou des romans populaires. Pour Gilles Ivain, la peinture joue un rôle de premier rang, non pas pour le simple plaisir esthétique, mais pour les suggestions architecturales des certains paysagistes. A cet égard, pour lui, l'artiste visionnaire par excellence est Giorgio de Chirico, parce qu'il s'intéresse au jeu des présences et des absences dans la création de l'espace et du temps

[25] Guy Debord, *Rapport sur la construction des situations* (1957), in in Guy Debord, *Œuvres,* ed. cit., p. 322.
[26] *Ibid*., p. 327.
[27] *Ibid*., p. 323.
[28] Ibid.

picturaux. Le jeune Chtcheglov nous invite à analyser les toiles de l'artiste gréco-italien en partant d'une remarque psychologique, mise au jour par les neurologues et surexploitée par le marketing : une partie de la perception reste toujours inconsciente. Mais, insiste l'auteur, si nous reproduisons l'image sans les éléments inconsciemment perçus, le sujet entre en alerte et ressent inexplicablement un registre de sentiments des plus variés allant du soulagement à l'effroi, en fonction du rapport qu'il entretient avec ces absences. Chez Chirico, les larges places urbaines se vident encore plus par la présence des sculptures spectrales ou des personnages éloignés avec des ombres prolongées. Ces espaces abandonnées provoquent un afflux du temps ou avec l'expression plus exacte d'Apollinaire, « une politique du temps[29] ». Le poète français avait déjà anticipé les observations du *Formulaire* présentant les tableaux de Giorgio de Chirico, ce « peintre inhabile et très doué », comme de « curieux paysages pleins d'intentions nouvelles, d'une forte architecture et d'une grande sensibilité[30] ». Les intentions architecturales de Chirico, écrit Chtcheglov, auraient dû être éloignées de « prétendus musées » et mises à l'œuvre dans l'organisation des jardins publiques parisiens, si les édiles de la Capitale n'auraient pas osé le charger de la réhabilitation des principales places de la ville. Une réinterprétation de l'histoire de l'art offre à l'auteur du *Formulaire* une vision de l'espace-temps qui, soutenue par des pratiques nouvelles, pourrait offrir le fondement d'une civilisation révolutionnaire : « un élargissement rationnel des anciens systèmes religieux, des vieux contes et surtout de la psychanalyse au bénéfice de l'architecture se fait plus urgent chaque jour, à mesure que disparaissent les raisons de se passionner[31] ».

On croirait lire une nouvelle version du « plus ancien programme systématique de l'idéalisme allemand », texte fondamental de la philosophie moderne où l'acte esthétique est appelé à accomplir la pensée philosophique. Sauf que dans ces pages ce n'est pas la philosophie qui joue le rôle de « mythologie de la raison[32] », mais l'architecture. Dans *Le plus ancien*

[29] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Chroniques d'art (1902-1918)*, textes réunis par L. C. Breunig, Gallimard, Paris, 1960, p. 350.
[30] ibid, p. 340.
[31] *Internationale Situationniste*, nº 1, 1958, pp. 18-19.
[32] Hölderlin, *Œuvres*. Paris, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 1967, p. 1157-1158 ; les responsables de cette édition ont attribué la paternité du texte à Hölderlin.

programme systèmatique…, la synthèse entre le « monothéisme de la raison et du cœur et le polythéisme de l'imagination et de l'art », l'auteur présumé (Hegel, Schelling ou même Hölderlin) met l'accent sur l'intellect, alors que dans la ville projetée par le *Formulaire* et évoquée dans le manifeste situationniste, Gilles Ivain et Guy Debord réalisent une performance polythéiste et imaginative. Dans cette localité, *Situationopolis*, pour lui donner un nom, les maisons nouvelles émanent la poésie des châteaux médiévaux et les jardins créent des espaces de vie sans les entraves des parcs actuels. La comparaison avec le manifeste de l'idéalisme allemand mérite d'être prolongée. Dans une synthèse dialectique sur la position des situationnistes par rapport aux avant-gardes participantes à la culture dominante, l'éditorialiste de revue de l'*Internationale Situationniste* (Guy Debord ?) inscrit l'activité de la rédaction dans la descendance de l'art et de la philosophie qui ont précédé la société du spectacle. Récupérés par le spectacle, les arts et la philosophie, deux cadavres, ont pris à la place de la religion : exercer l'autorité spirituelle sur le monde devenue monde de l'économie. La pensée situationniste les remplace reprenant le flambeau moderne de la critique de la religion.

> L'IS s'est nettement placée dans une alternative à la culture dominante, et particulièrement à ses formes dites d'avant-garde. Les situationnistes estiment qu'il leur faut hériter de l'art qui est mort – ou de la réflexion philosophique séparée, dont personne, malgré les efforts actuels, n'arrivera à « restituer » le cadavre – parce que le spectacle qui remplace cet art et cette pensée est, lui, l'héritier de la religion. Et comme l'a été « la critique de la religion » (critique que la gauche actuelle a abandonnée, en même temps qu'elle abandonnait toute pensée et toute action), la critique du spectacle est aujourd'hui la condition première de toute critique[33].

Les quartiers état d'âme, projetés dans le *Formulaire* de Chtcheglov et évoqués par Debord, sont le Quartier Bizarre, le Quartier Heureux, le Quartier Historique, le Quartier Utile, le Quartier de la Mort ou encore la Quartier Sinistre construit autour de la Place du Mobil Epouvantable et le style de vie des habitants est donné par leurs trajets affectifs. Le

[33] *Internationale Socialiste*, nº 9, 1964, p. 4.

comportement nouveau cherché par Gilles Ivain pour soutenir une nouvelle ontologie a déjà un nom connu pour nous : « L'activité principale des habitants sera la DERIVE CONTINUE. Le changement de paysage d'heure en heure sera responsable du dépaysement complet[34] ».

Cette pratique est déjà expérimentée par certains groupes, surtout celui que Ivain appelle « un certain Saint-Germain-des-Près », c'est-à-dire les membres de l'Internationale Lettriste, Guy Debord et Henry de Béarn, et, même s'ils ne sont pas nommés dans le texte du *Formulaire*, Patrick Straram et Michèle Bernstein[35]. Eux, ils sont les héros et les prêtres d'une nouvelle vie fondée sur le comportement ludique, qui dépassera par son rayonnement Monaco et Las Vegas, où seulement la plus vulgaire forme de jeu est mise en valeur.

3.4. Théorie de la dérive

Ce manifeste anti-utilitariste de Gilles Ivain marque les positions situationnistes sur l'urbanisme. Debord procèdera à l'amplification stratégique de cette tentative de réaliser l'art totale de la vie, après la déchéance de l'art comme domaine séparé et compensatoire de l'existence. *La dérive* est définie par Guy Debord comme un « procédé situationniste » consistant dans « le passage hâtif à travers des ambiances variées[36] ». C'est l'instrument principal d'une science recherchée par les situationnistes, *la psychogéographie.* Ces artistes poursuivent la constitution d'un nouveau mode de vie et ces passages entre des climats architecturaux divergents produisent des émotions qui composent « un comportement ludique-constructif[37]» étranger aux pratiques péripatéticiennes antérieures qui forment la littérature des voyages et des promenades. Le nom de la nouvelle discipline aurait été donné par « un Kabyle illettré », expression par laquelle Debord a peut-être désigné un des membres algériens de sa tribu révolutionnaire, Mohamed Dahou ou Abdelhafid Khatib. Le dernier est entré

[34] *Internationale Socialiste*, nº 1, 1958, p. 19.
[35] Xavier Martel, *Le Parcours de Patrick Straram et son inscription dans le roman* La faim de l'énigme, Université de Quebec, Montréal, 2009, pp. 26-40.
[36] Guy Debord, *Théorie de la dérive,* Les Lèvres nues, nº 9, novembre 1956, in Guy Debord, *Œuvres*, Gallimard, 2006, p. 251.
[37] *Ibid*.

dans le groupe plus tard[38], mais ses préoccupations pour la psychogéographie sont plus manifestes, comme le prouve son article de 1956 sur le quartier parisien des Halles[39]. Un an plutôt, Guy Debord offrait une définition presque scientifique de cette discipline : « La *psychogéographie* se proposerait l'étude des lois exactes et des effets précis du milieu géographique, consciemment aménagé ou non, agissant directement sur le comportement affectif des individus[40] ».

Le caractère quasi scientifique de cette définition représente un progrès, au moins stylistique, par rapport à ce poème répétitif tenté par Debord en 1954, dans l'*Exercice de la psychogéographie* :

> Piranèse est psychogéographique dans l'escalier.
> Claude Lorrain est psychogéographique dans la mise en présence d'un quartier de palais et de la mer.
> Le facteur Cheval est psychogéographique dans l'architecture.
> Arthur Cravan est psychogéographique dans la dérive pressée.
> Jacques Vaché est psychogéographique dans l'habillement.
> Louis II de Bavière est psychogéographique dans la royauté.
> Jack l'Eventreur est probablement psychogéographique dans l'amour.
> Saint-Juste est un peu psychogéographique dans la politique (Note de bas-page : La Terreur est dépaysante).
> André Breton est naïvement psychogéographique dans la rencontre.
> Madeleine Reineri est psychogéographique dans le suicide. (…)[41]

Le numéro de *Potlatch* où Guy Debord publie cette énumération poétique fait date. Il contient également une autre liste, celle des lettristes exclus du groupe. Parodiant les épurations staliniennes, les deux *Internationales* animées par Debord (I.L., I.S.) mettent souvent en scène des exclusions spectaculaires. Celle de novembre 1952 est la première et la plus retentissante, car Isidore Isou, le père fondateur du courant littéraire lettriste,

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[38] Maurice Fréchuret, *Exile et engagement : petite étude de quatre parcours au sein de l'Internationale Situationniste*, *Homme et* migrations, 1338, 2022, pp. 45-55.
[39] Abdelhafid Khatib, *Essai de déscription psychogéographique des Halles*, International Situationniste, nº 2, Décembre 1956, pp. 13-17.
[40] Guy Debord, *Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine*, Les Lèvres nues, no 6, Septembre, 1955, in in Guy Debord, *Œuvres*, Gallimard, 2006, p. 204.
[41] Guy Debord, *Potlatch*, nº 2, 29 juin, 1954, in Guy Debord, *Œuvres,* pp. 136-137.

se voit débarqué, considéré coupable « d'ambitions limitées » et d'une « morale rétrograde ». La liste de ceux qui sont mis « A LA PORTE » (c'est le titre de l'annonce) finit avec « IVAN CHTCHEGLOFF alias GILLES IVAIN » coupable de « mythomanie, délire d'interprétation – manque de conscience révolutionnaire[42] ».

Dès le début, le jeune Debord attire immédiatement l'attention que la *dérive* ne doit pas être confondue avec le voyage ou la promenade. C'est une pratique solitaire ou de groupe qui réfute la littérature transformée en tourisme par l'intermédiaire des agences de voyage et des actes législatives stipulant les congés payés. D'un point de vue de préoccupations politiques des situationnistes, les promenades relèvent d'une pratique contemplative qui par sa passivité peut être apparentée à la soumission au spectacle. La promenade n'est qu'une pause dans le rythme quotidien. A l'opposé, la passivité de la dérive est le renoncement seulement aux déplacements imposés du dehors par les nécessités sociales. La dérive est active, car c'est une connaissance non pas de soi-même par les vagabondages des pensées qui rythmes les pas, mais du territoire urbain avec « des courants constants, des points fixes et des tourbillons qui rend l'accès ou la sortie de certaines zones fortes malaisés[43] ».

La postérité a retenue surtout l'apparence bohème de cet exercice, oubliant les intérêts stratégiques présents dans toutes les actions debordiennes. L'intention des écrits théoriques et des descriptions psychogéographiques est de fonder une nouvelle science, bien que ses axiomes et corolaires ne sont pas encore mises à jour. La psychogéographie entre en conflit et en dialogue avec une direction de recherche sociologique, l'écologie urbaine, représentée en France par Chombart de Lauwe, et initiée aux Etats-Unis par l'Ecole sociologique de Chicago des année 1920. Les leçons de la sociologie américaine représentaient une direction d'étude empirique, basée sur l'observation et la conversation, allant à l'encontre des études théoriques dominantes. Robert E. Park et Ernest W. Burgess s'inspirent des modèles darwiniens pour proposer une description des villes comme des habitats quasi naturels où vive l'espèce humaine moderne. Dans

[42] *A LA PORTE*, *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[43] « Théorie de la dérive » (1956), in Guy Debord, *Œuvres,* op. cit., p. 251.

leur livre *The City* (1925)[44], ils analysent pour la première fois l'expansion d'une cité au XX e siècle selon une carte des cercles concentriques qui définissent des manières de vivre différentes :

I. Le centre-ville contenant le monde des grandes affaires et les centres administratifs ;
II. La zone de transition qui entoure le centre : les petites affaires et l'industrie légère ;
III. La zone de travailleurs qui veulent avoir accès facile dans la zone perdue pour leur habitation (zone II)
IV. La zone des quartiers des appartements et des maisons individuelles de la haute bourgeoisie
V. Les banlieues pauvres[45].

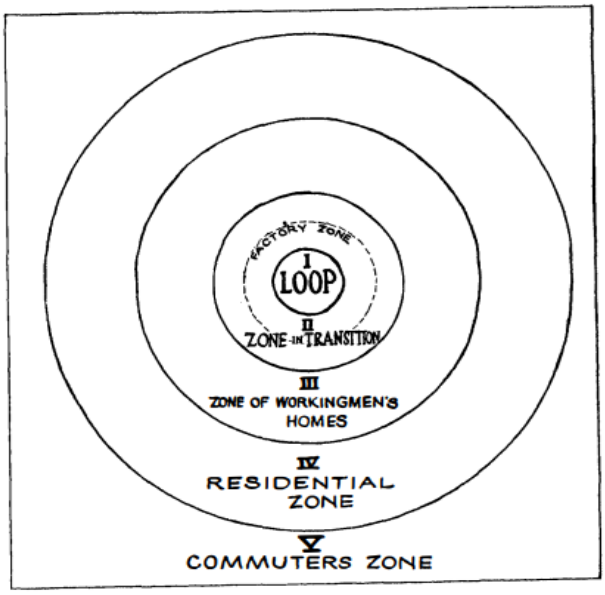

CHART I. The Growth of the City

Fig. 2. La carte des zones sociologiques de Chicago, selon Park et Burgess.

[44] Rober E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, *The City. Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment*, University of Chicago Press, 1967.
[45] Ibid. pp. 50-51.

Les situationnistes suivent avec intérêt les recherches de Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, ancien pilote militaire et pionnier de la sociologie urbaine en France. Il signe en 1952 une des premières publications du Centre d'Etudes de Sociologie *: Paris et l'agglomération parisienne*, dans laquelle il reprend ce modèle concentrique proposé par l'Ecole de Chicago. Formé dans le milieu intellectuel du personnalisme et du catholicisme de gauche d'entre-deux-guerres, fort influencé par la philosophie spirituelle de Teilhard de Chardin, il ajoute aux méthodes importées d'outre Atlantique une empathie spéciale pour la classe ouvrière, traduite dans des nombreuses recommandations faites aux autorités et aux entreprises d'urbanisme[46]. Il définira plus tard sa recherche comme l'ébauche « d'une anthropologie dans laquelle seraient définies les aspirations des hommes d'aujourd'hui en fonction de l'avenir qui s'impose à eux, en fonction des valeurs auxquelles ils sont attachés, des croyances, des symboles, des mythes qui orientent leur pensée [47] ».

Le rôle de la psychogéographie est de compléter ces descriptions par une cartographie du « terrain passionnel objectif ». L'artiste en dérive ne doit pas se laisser gagner ni par « la poésie moderne » de l'indignation devant l'étroitesse de l'espace sociale accordée aux individus dans les grandes villes, ni par la tentation scientifique de confirmer le caractère défini des activités sociales correspondantes à chaque zone concentrique.

Le *dérivationiste* ne peut pas accepter des schémas préétablis : s'il accorde une grande place à la contingence des rencontres et des trajets, c'est par ce que sa science cherche encore son chemin. L'acceptation non questionnée du hasard mène vers des nouvelles fixations du sujet. Debord cite le cas des quatre surréalistes qui, après avoir tiré au sorts le nom d'une ville, ils sont partis dans une tournée dans la rase campagne déprimante, sans résultats littéraires remarquables. Le situationniste les compare aux têtards mis par un chercheur dans un bol en verre pour étudier leur autonomie. La dérive est exclusivement liée aux grandes villes, car c'est une activité orientée par cette phrase que Debord a trouvé dans les œuvres de Karl Marx : « Les hommes ne peuvent rien voir autour d'eux qui ne soit leur visage, tout

[46] Eric Le Breton, « Paul-Henri Chaumbart de Lauwe, sociologue urbain, chrétien, intellectuel et expert », in *Chrétiens et Société*, 21/2014, pp. 15-31.
[47] P.-H. Chaumbart de Lauwe, *Des Hommes et des villes,* Payot, Paris, 1970, p. 73.

leur parle d'eux même. Leur paysage même est animé[48] ». La psychogéographie est une science du passage qui se propose de connaître les paysages anthropiques de l'aliénation capitaliste et de proposer leur détournement par des trajets imprévus.

Le texte continue par les précis techniques de la dérive. La constitution d'un groupe de deux-trois personnes assure une certaine objectivité des observations. Un nombre plus important annulerait l'homogénéité de l'association et disperserait l'action dans plusieurs dérives solitaires simultanées. D'habitude, la durée est fixée entre deux sommeils, mais il y a des dérives intenses qui se poursuivent pour plusieurs journées et il y a aussi des successions des dérives qui changent complètement les comportements des participants. Le terrain doit être délimité à l'espace d'une ville et de ses banlieues, mais il a y des recherches plus sédentaires sur les flux affectifs d'une gare, par exemple. Les détails pratiques sont foisonnants : sur l'usages des taxis, les rendez-vous, les conditions météo, etc.

Les leçons de la dérive sont l'établissement des articulations psychogéographiques des villes modernes : leurs unités d'ambiance, formées selon les principes des quartiers état d'âme de Gilles Ivain et les passages qui les relient. Tous ces réalités pulsionnelles sont transposables dans des cartes qui ont pour but de changer l'architecture et l'urbanisme, donc de parier sur un changement anthropologique radical. Guy Debord entrevoit dans certaines expérimentations architecturales, surtout aux Etats-Unis, des ensembles urbains consacrés à la dérive :

> Tout porte à croire que l'avenir précipitera le changement irréversible du comportement et du décor de la société actuelle. Un jour, on construira des villes pour dériver. On peut utiliser, avec des retouches relativement légères, certaines zones qui existent déjà. On peut utiliser certains personnes qui existent déjà[49].

3.5. La dérive comme analyse

En 1964, Ivan Chtcheglov se trouve depuis cinq ans dans une clinique psychiatrique. Malgré son exclusion de 1952, il a maintenu le contact avec

[48] *Théorie de la Derive*, op. cit., p. 253.
[49] *Ibid.,* p. 257.

ses anciens camarades par des lettres. Quelques extraits de cette correspondance ont été publié par l'*Internationale Situationniste* sous le titre révélateur pour la condition de leur ami « Lettres de loin[50] ». Chtcheglov revient ici sur la pratique de la dérive, qu'il compare à une psychanalyse à cette exception qu'elle concerne toutes les formes de l'expression humaine, ne privilégiant pas le langage.

> La *dérive* (au fil des actes, avec ses gestes, sa promenade, ses rencontres) était exactement *à la totalité* ce que la psychanalyse (la bonne) est au langage. Laissez-vous aller au fil des mots, dit l'analyste. Il écoute, jusqu'au moment où il dénonce ou modifie (on peut dire *détourne)* un mot, une expression ou une définition. La dérive est bien une technique, et presque une thérapeutique. Mais comme l'analyse sans rien d'autre est presque toujours *contre-indiquée,* de même la dérive continuelle est un danger dans la mesure où l'individu avancé trop loin (non pas sans bases, mais ...) sans protections, est menacé d'éclatement, de dissolution, de dissociation, de désintégration. Et c'est la retombée dans ce que l'on nomme « la vie courante », c'est-à-dire en clair « la vie pétrifiée ». Dans cette mesure, je dénonce maintenant la propagande pour une *continuelle dérive* du Formulaire. Oui, continuelle, comme le jeu de poker à Las Vegas, mais continuelle pour un temps, réservée au dimanche pour les uns, à une semaine en bonne moyenne ; un mois, c'est beaucoup. Nous avons pratiqué, en 1953-1954, trois ou quatre mois ; c'est la limite extrême, le point critique. C'est miracle si nous n'en sommes pas morts. Nous possédions une mauvaise santé de fer[51].

Nous apprenons ainsi que malgré l'épuration de 1952, les deux jeunes amis ont continué leurs déambulations. Que cette activité brûle les nerfs jusqu'à pousser Gilles Ivain dans la schizophrénie et Guy Debord dans l'alcoolisme[52]. Regrettant son état, celui qui a payé le plus cher, Chtcheglov, pense aux précautions qu'ils auraient dû prendre. La dérive continuelle est

[50] *Internationale Situationniste*, nº 9, 1964, pp. 38-40.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[52] Une ample étude sur l'addiction de Debord et ses conséquences philosophique et médicales: Anna Trespeuch-Berthelot, *Guy Debord ou l'ivresse mélancolique*, Le Manuscrit, Paris, 2017.

un suicide lent comme celui que s'impose un joueur qui ne quitte plus les casinos. Avec son humour cruel, Debord ne perd pas l'occasion d'accompagner ce numéro de la revue d'une photo de son camarade à la clinique – malheureusement, l'image est très mauvaise – sous le titre *Ivan Chtcheglov, en joueur de poker*[53]. Après l'apparition des inédits de Guy Debord dans la collection Quarto de Gallimard, cette image peut également être considéré comme un éloge, car il tenait en grand estime ce jeu des cartes qui contenait secrètement *la vérité la plus vraie de la vie* : « que certains joueurs sont essentiellement meilleurs que d'autres[54] ». Enfin, il a été peut-être moins cruel que le journaliste qui, quelques années plus tard, a enregistré sept minutes d'un discours incohérent énoncé par un Chtcheglov brisé, le regard perdu, vêtu d'un pull troué. Les « lettres de loin » publiées par *l'Internationale Situationniste* sont une sélection des morceaux lucides, et un hommage rendu par Michèle Bernstein et Guy Debord à leur camarade en souffrance. Dans ces lettres, l'auteur du *Formulaire* évoque son internement de 1959 – à l'aide des 24 policiers, se vante-il – et il continue à s'intéresser aux affaires de leur organisation. Toujours préoccupé par l'influence affective de l'architecture, il observe la détérioration de l'état de patients après le transfert des « pensionnaires » d'un ancien château reconditionné dans une clinique moderne où ils sont des « malades ». Dans cette nouvelle situation, il perd toute espoir de sortir guéri.

4. Situation et ambiance

La dérive précède la *situation*. Elle construit une situation ou une série situationnelle passant en revue les éléments donnés par l'architecture et par la géographie. Par cette prise de connaissance de l'état des lieux, la dérive pousse jusqu'à l'épuisement les possibilités de vie pulsionnelle dans un milieu historiquement créé. Son but est la destruction des modes de vie imposés par une organisation sociale pour accéder aux vécus d'une « qualité passionnelle supérieure ». Les situationnistes proposent de court-circuiter la préoccupation (*das Besorgen*) identifiée par Heidegger comme manière

[53] *Internationale Situationniste*, nº 9, 1964, pp. 36.
[54] Guy Debord, *Notes sur le poker* (20 octobre 1990), in Guy Debord, *Œuvres,* Gallimard, 2006, p. 1791.

d'être-au-monde spécifique du *Dasein*[55]. Ce n'est pas seulement une préoccupation déficiente comme l'abstention, l'omission ou le renoncement, car la dérive et la construction des situations sont de formes d'action à la fois destructives et affirmatives. La destruction est la sortie de la vie non thématisée de l'ouvrier, du patron et du bureaucrate. L'affirmation tient à l'aspect performatif de la vie situationniste qui mène son existence entière comme une dérive, dans laquelle on est à tout moment conscient de l'ambiance qu'on essaye constamment de décomposer et de recomposer.

Heidegger parlait à son tour des modes de préoccupation qui font ressortir « la mondialité de l'intramondain », c'est-à-dire des disfonctionnements dans la fonction instrumentale des objets qui nous entourent et qui mettent en lumière le caractère fonctionnel de notre rapport aux choses et de l'entier *atelier* [*Werkstatt*][56], qui nous entoure. Ce caractère artisanal du monde ambiant échappe souvent à une critique plus intéressée par la différence entre l'homme et l'animal chez Heidegger. Alors que le caractère artisanal du monde ambiant est introduit par Heidegger dès le debout de son analyse sur « la mondialité » :

> L'ouvrage à chaque fois produit par la préoccupation n'est pas seulement à-portée-de-la-main dans le monde domestique – celui de l'atelier, par exemple –, mais dans le monde public. Avec celui-ci est découverte et accessible à toute la nature du monde ambiant. Dans les voies, les routes, les ponts, les édifices, la nature est découverte d'une certaine manière grâce à la préoccupation. Un quai de gare couvert témoigne du mauvais temps, les éclairages publics de l'obscurité, c'est-à-dire du change spécifique de la présence et de l'absence du jour — de la « position du soleil »[57].

Le concept de l'homme comme artisan du monde [*weltbildent*] est proposé par Heidegger un peu plus tard dans ses cours donnés à Fribourg dans les années de la Grande Crise (1929-1930) par opposition à la pierre qui est sans monde [*weltlos*] et à l'animal qui est pauvre en monde [*weltarm*]. L'idée de l'homme créateur de monde sera développée par Heidegger plus

[55] Martin Heidegger, *Être et temps*, trad. Emmanuel Martineau, Authentica, Paris, 1985, pp. 64-65, [56-57].
[56] *Ibid*., p. 78, [75].
[57] *Ibid*., pp. 75-76 [71] .

tard dans l'*Origine de l'œuvre d'art* [1935] et dans des textes concernant la poésie.

Au-delà du monde des renvois, l'atelier du monde, il y a les dispositions fondamentales qui nous donnent le monde d'une manière antéprédicative, avant la constitution des objets et du sujet qui s'opposent. Cette stratification est mise en discussion par le situationnisme. Il n'y pas de possibilité d'interpréter le monde des pulsions (des dispositions affectives, *Stimmung*) comme une « réalité » plus profonde. Il est donné par l'usage : nos trajets, nos projets, nos rejets. A l'analyse temporelle heideggérienne correspond une *praxis* spatiale qui définit les territoires anthropiques, où la méditation du penseur allemand rencontrerait les pratiques des jeunes situationnistes.

L'analyse temporelle et la méthodologie d'une phénoménologie généalogique qui cherche des couches de la perception conduisent Heidegger à une régression vers l'enfance et vers une réalité préurbaine : *Le Chemin de campagne* (*Der Feldweg*, 1949)[58]. C'est une méditation où la parole appartient à un penseur qui revient vers sa terre natale, un village nommé Ehnried, dans un décor rustique qui ne semble pas avoir connu la guerre : le portail d'un château, un chêne, l'image des Alpes. Cette reconstitution aurait soutenu le penseur dans ses méditations les plus ardus. Contrairement à ce montage, la scène situationniste est toujours la grande ville. *L'atelier du monde* est toujours bruyant, à la recherche des nouveaux amusements d'un nietzschéisme prolétaire qui détient le secret du gai savoir :

> C'était à Paris, une ville qui était alors si belle que bien des gens ont préféré y être pauvres, plutôt que riches n'importe où ailleurs. (…) Paris alors, dans les limites de ses vingt arrondissements, ne dormait jamais tout entier, et permettait à la débauche de changer trois fois de quartier dans chaque nuit. On n'en avait pas encore chassé et dispersé les habitants. Il y restait un peuple, qui avait dix fois barricadé ses rues et mis en fuite des rois. (…) Il y avait alors, sur la rive gauche du fleuve – on ne peut pas descendre deux fois

[58] Martin Heidegger, *Questions III et IV*, trad. Jean Beaufret, François Fédier, Julien Hervier, Jean Lauxerois, Roger Munier, André Préau, Claude Roëls, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p.15.

dans le même fleuve, ni toucher deux fois une substance périssable dans le même état –, un quartier où le négatif tenait sa cour[59].

Dans les années '30, les élans de la pensée heideggériennes partaient de l'idée d'une fin de l'ère métaphysico-technique et l'apparition d'une nouvelle civilisation. Le philosophe allemand partageait ainsi les grands principes des mouvements d'avant-gardes. Plusieurs pages de *Beiträge zur Philosophie*[60] annoncent une nouvelle poésie et un nouvel art, soutenus par une méditation post-métaphysique et une nouvelle organisation sociale. Or déjà à l'époque du lettrisme, Guy Debord et ses compagnons reprochait l'illusion de ce *renouveau*, nourrie aussi par leur premier maître, Isidore Isou : ce renouveau pouvait être simplement un retour contrefait. Dans le cas de Heidegger, c'est la recréation d'une espace imaginaire située temporairement entre le passé et l'éternité, qui soutenait la pensée. Dans leur radicalité, les situationnistes s'imposent de ne plus parler de l'art, de la poésie, du cinéma ou des systèmes politiques avant leur dissolution dans une forme de vie qu'on ne peut qu'entrevoir. Chez la première génération des lettristes, il y une idée de refonder la poésie et la musique autour d'un purisme de la technique artistique constituée autour de l'unité élémentaire de la lettre[61]. La poésie pure du passé chez Heidegger, après la catastrophe politique de l'Allemagne, ou de l'avenir chez Isou, imposée par une dictature artistique, sont hantées par l'illusion d'une appréhension directe de l'antéprédicatif. La dérive situationniste est une stratégie de *desengano*: la déconvenue provoquée par rapport à toute séparation intellectuelle et politique fondée sur la supposition d'un accès immédiat aux principes de la construction des langages poétiques ou architecturaux. La technique mise au point par Gilles Ivain et Guy Debord identifiait les ruptures d'atmosphère affective dans les trajets quotidiens. La dérive permettait d'échapper ainsi à la captation de l'homme par le spectacle de la production capitaliste et de la consommation de masse.

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[59] Guy Debord*, In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*. Edition critique (1990, 1999), in Guy Debord, Œuvres, Gallimard, 2006, p. 1770-1772.
[60] Martin Heidegger, *Apports à la philosophie*, trad. François Fedier, Gallimard, 2013.
[61] *«Les principes poétiques et musicaux du mouvement lettriste»,* La Dictature Lettriste. Cahiers d'un nouveau régime artistique*,* no 1, 1946, pp. 5-21.

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La marchandise et son spectacle. Fétichisme réel et réflexivité chez Lukács et Debord

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Abstract. The first aim of this article is to propose a philosophical interpretation of *The Society of the Spectacle* by explaining two theoretical influences that were decisive for its conception: firstly, the Marxian analysis of commodity fetishism (interpreted here mainly from the point of view of the Critique of Value School); secondly, the reinterpretation of commodity fetishism by György Lukács, as the social pathology of the generalized contemplative attitude of a reified society. The other aim of this article is to show, through a comparative analysis, the radically different role played by the reflexivity of the commodity-form in Lukács and Debord. Our thesis here is that while in Lukács it is this reflexivity of the commodity-form or labour that enables the subjectivation of the subject that transcends reification, in Debord, in the absence of a philosophically convincing reflexive subjectivation of the subject of history, it is the spectacle itself that becomes a reflexive abstraction of the commodity-form.

Keywords: society of spectacle; commodity fetishism; contemplative attitude; reflexivity; Guy Debord; Karl Marx; György Lukács.

Selon une mésinterprétation encore assez courante dans la popularisation du concept de *spectacle*, on aurait à faire avec le concept-clef

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d'une critique des médias ou de la culture visuelle contemporaine en général. Pourtant, à plusieurs reprises dans le texte de *La société du spectacle*, Debord nous avertit explicitement contre cette vulgarisation : le spectacle « ne peut être compris comme […] le produit des techniques de diffusion massive des images » (*SdS*, 5) ; les « moyens de communication de masse » ne sont que l'un des contenus techniques possibles choisis par la forme du spectacle, un « aspect restreint » du spectacle, de plus, « sa manifestation superficielle la plus écrasante » (*SdS*, 24). Certes, le livre abonde en commentaires critiques envers le capitalisme des images représenté par la propagande ou la publicité, ou envers la pseudo-vie spectaculaire crée par la consommation, l'urbanisme moderne ou le tourisme etc. Mais le mass-média et toutes les images de la pseudo-vie spectaculaire ne sont que des effets superficiels, des images concrètes d'une dimension plus abstraite – mais aussi plus réelle, comme nous le verrons – celle de l'économie et de la société capitaliste aliénée. Le spectacle est en fait « l'image de l'économie régnante ». (*SdS*, 14) A quoi il faut ajouter une autre piste essentielle pour l'interprétation : « C'est le principe du fétichisme de la marchandise […] qui s'accomplit absolument dans le spectacle […] » (SdS, 36).

C'est tout d'abord dans la lignée de la théorie critique du capitalisme fondée sur l'analyse marxienne du fétichisme de la marchandise, qu'il faut donc lire *La société du spectacle*. Une autre influence importante exercée sur la pensée de Debord est celle de l'*Histoire et conscience de classe* de György Lukács, avec sa réinterprétation du fétichisme de la marchandise comme la pathologie sociale de l'attitude contemplative généralisé d'une société réifiée. Le premier but de cet article est de proposer une interprétation philosophique de *La société du spectacle* à travers la démonstration et l'explication de ces deux influences décisives. La référence principale d'une telle hypothèse de lecture demeure le *Guy Debord* d'Anselm Jappe, publié pour la première fois en Italie en 1992 (Jappe, 1999), interprétation qui a certainement marquée la mienne, tout en espérant que j'ai débouché aussi sur des conclusions propres. L'autre but de cet article est de montrer, à travers une analyse comparative, le rôle radicalement différent joué par la réflexivité de la forme-marchandise chez Lukács et Debord. Notre thèse sur ce point est que si chez Lukács c'est cette réflexivité de la forme-marchandise ou du travail qui permet la subjectivation du sujet qui transcende la réification, chez

Debord, en l'absence d'une subjectivation réflexive philosophiquement convaincante du sujet prolétaire, c'est le spectacle lui-même qui devient une abstraction réflexive de la forme-marchandise.

Dans ce qui suit je vais présenter, dans un premier temps, l'analyse marxienne du fétichisme de la marchandise, qui constitue le noyau théorique de la conception lukacsienne de la réification, ainsi que de la pensée debordienne de la société du spectacle. (Je vais m'appuyer ici sur l'interprétation du fétichisme proposée par le mouvement de la « critique de la valeur », car, conformément à l'hypothèse de lecture utilisée, la description du spectacle est très proche sur plusieurs points – comme le fétichisme réel des abstractions réelles, le « sujet automate » de la valeur etc. – de cette interprétation). Ensuite, après l'analyse de l'essai lukacsien sur la réification présentée dans la deuxième partie, je vais à la fin procéder à l'interprétation de *La société du spectacle*, en insistant plutôt sur l'analyse comparative de Lukács avec Debord.

1. Marx : fétichisme de la marchandise

Prenons comme point de départ – à l'instar de Marx lui-même dans le premier chapitre du premier volume du *Capital* – la description à la première vue assez banale de la marchandise. Toute marchandise est une chose qui a deux aspects. D'un côté, une utilité pratique : elle est susceptible de satisfaire un besoin humain par sa valeur *d'usage.* D'autre côté, dans la mesure où elle est échangée avec d'autres objets, la marchandise possède aussi une *valeur d'échange*. Afin d'échanger deux ou plusieurs marchandises – leurs valeurs d'usage étant incommensurables – il faut que leurs différentes valeurs d'échange aient une substance commune qui permet de les mesurer entre elles. Cette substance, la *valeur* commune des marchandises est le *travail abstrait* : la réduction de toutes sortes de travaux concrets et qualitativement différentes à *la quantité abstraite du temps* dépensé dans la production d'une marchandise. Il ne s'agit pas du temps individuel effectivement nécessaire pour produire tel ou tel marchandise, mais du « temps de travail socialement nécessaire », c'est-à-dire du temps qui – dans une certaine société et à un certain degré du développement des forces productives – est moyennement nécessaire pour produire la marchandise en question. Ce côté purement temporel, abstrait du travail est objectivé dans la

valeur d'une marchandise, en définitif dans la quantité d'argent correspondant. Bref, différentes marchandises possèdent ainsi la même valeur si elles contiennent la même quantité de travail abstrait ou du temps abstrait (e. g. : 3 litres de champagne = 200 grammes de caviar = 8 heures de travail socialement nécessaire = 200 Euro).

Passons maintenant, et citons le fameux passage sur le fétichisme de la marchandise :

> Ce qu'il y a de mystérieux dans la forme marchandise consiste donc simplement en ceci qu'elle renvoie aux hommes l'image des caractères sociaux de leur propre travail comme des caractères objectifs des produits du travail eux-mêmes, comme des *qualités sociales que les choses possèderaient par nature* : elle leur renvoie ainsi l'image du rapport social des producteurs au travail global, comme un rapport social existant en dehors d'eux, entre objets. C'est ce quiproquo qui fait que les produits du travail deviennent des marchandises, *des choses sensibles suprasensibles, des choses sociales*. [...] *C'est seulement le rapport social déterminé des hommes eux-mêmes qui prend ici pour eux la forme fantasmagorique d'un rapport entre choses*. (Marx, 1993, pp. 82-83. C'est moi qui souligne)

C'est donc une véritable inversion du rapport entre le concret sensible et l'abstrait suprasensible qui est à l'œuvre à chaque occasion que nous attribuons – et on le fait tout le temps, même si de manière inconsciente – à une marchandise quelconque d'avoir telle ou telle valeur ou « qualité sociale ». La *chose concrète, sensible* de la marchandise (sa valeur d'usage) nous apparaît effectivement comme la forme phénoménale de son contraire, de sa *valeur abstraite*, *suprasensible*, *sociale* (c'est-à-dire, du travail abstrait objectivé dans cette marchandise, donc de la quantité du temps abstrait dépensé pour sa production, ou, en fin d'analyse, de la quantité d'argent correspondant). Quant au terme « fétichisme » – emprunté par Marx à l'ethnologie et à la critique de la religion – il s'agit de l'analogie suivante : pareillement aux soi-disant « primitifs » d'une collectivité fétichiste, les membres de la société marchande projettent leurs relations et pouvoirs sociaux sur des objets inanimés (les marchandises, l'argent, le capital), dont ils croient ensuite dépendre.

Il est important de souligner que le fétichisme ne signifie pas, chez Marx, une simple représentation inversée ou illusoire – la fausse conscience – de la réalité sociale (par exemple l'inégalité économique représentée idéologiquement comme égalité de droit), mais une inversion qui est dans le même temps tout à fait réelle. Dans une autre formulation fameuse, juste après le passage qu'on vient de citer, Marx écrit que :

> […] les relations sociales qu'entretiennent leurs travaux privés *apparaissent aux producteurs pour ce qu'elles sont*, c'est-à-dire, non pas comme des rapports immédiatement sociaux entre les personnes dans leur travail même, mais au contraire comme *rapports de chose entre des personnes* et *rapports sociaux entre des choses* (Marx, 1993, pp. 83-84. Traduction modifiée, c'est moi qui souligne).

Si la marchandise nous apparaît comme une « chose sociale », c'est à cause d'une inversion réelle : derrière les « rapports sociaux » des marchandises (leur valeur) on trouve effectivement des « rapports de chose entre personnes » (le travail abstrait). La marchandise, le capital, l'argent (les objectivations du travail abstrait) sont – dans l'acception de la tradition hégéliano-marxiste de la théorie critique classique, de Lukács à Adorno, incluant Debord – des *formes de médiation sociale à la fois objectives et subjectives* : des choses économiques objectives qui s'imposent comme *immédiates*, mais qui sont en fait *médiatisées* par des rapports (inter)subjectives spécifiques de production. La forme de médiation historico-sociale spécifiquement capitaliste représente une forme de médiation contradictoire, une *forme sociale non-sociale* : « les rapports de chose entre des personnes » se réfèrent aux producteurs séparés entre eux, qui sont mis en rapport – et dont le travail acquiert un caractère social – exclusivement par la médiation ultérieure de la sphère anonyme de l'échange. Ainsi ils échangent entre eux les choses spécifiques qui sont les marchandises (y compris la marchandise de la force de travail) – en échangeant donc, au bout du compte, des quantités du temps de travail abstrait vidées de toute qualité sociale concrète. (Rappelons que le travail abstrait est déjà dépourvu de toute contenu qualitative et de toute finalité sociale concrète.) Finalement, les objectivations de ces rapports *chosiques* entre personnes, la valeur du travail abstrait objectivée dans les marchandises

nous apparaît comme une qualité inhérente, sociale par nature des marchandises, comme des « rapports sociaux des choses ».

Ces formes de médiation sociale, le travail abstrait, la valeur, la marchandise apparaissent donc « pour ce qu'elles sont » en réalité : les relations sociales réelles de la société capitaliste. (En utilisant la conceptualité hégélienne, on peut dire que ce sont des apparitions nécessaires de l'essence de la société capitaliste). La praxis sociale fétichiste n'est pas seulement une représentation inversée de la réalité, mais une « *inversion même de la réalité* » (Jappe, 2003, p. 38) : dans la société capitaliste, la réalité sociale elle-même est structurée par ces objectivations du travail abstrait, par les soi-disant *abstractions réelles* de la valeur, du capital, de l'argent. On a à faire ici avec des abstractions qui sont réelles – en reprenant ici l'argument d'Alfred Sohn-Rethel, l'auteur de cet hybride conceptuel – dans deux sens : d'abord parce que les processus d'abstraction dont elles émergent, ne sont pas effectués par la pensée conceptuelle (par une généralisation mentale), mais par les pratiques sociales effectives, matériels du travail abstrait ou de l'échange des marchandises (Sohn-Rethel, 1978, pp. 22-34) ; ensuite, parce que ces abstractions ne sont pas des illusions de la conscience sociale, mais ils organisent d'une manière réelle la société capitaliste – le fétichisme étant donc, dans ce sens, un *fétichisme réel, objectif*.

Dans le capitalisme, c'est paradoxalement cette forme non-sociale de la valeur qui devient la forme de médiation sociale totale, le principe du « synthèse sociale » (Sohn-Rethel, 1978, p. 35) de la société : les individus entrent dans des rapports sociaux exclusivement grâce à la médiation de l'échange des quantités abstraites et vides du temps de travail (qui s'incorporent dans les marchandises et dans l'argent). La valeur devient le seul lien social, ce qui veut dire aussi que – et cela deviendra un motif central tant chez Lukács que chez Debord – la forme-marchandise, la valeur, structure non seulement de l'économie, mais la totalité de la vie sociale. C'est ainsi que l'argent – dans laquelle l'abstraction sociale devient effectivement une réalité empirique, une abstraction visible et palpable – apparaît aux individus comme la « *matérialisation de leur propre connexion sociale* » (Marx, 1977, p. 223 ; c'est moi qui souligne).

De surcroît, la forme sociale non-sociale de la valeur devient également le médium de l'*aliénation* de la socialité. Les abstractions réelles

économiques (la marchandise, la valeur, le capital etc.) deviennent *autonomes* par rapport aux individus : ceux-ci sont désormais dominés non pas par d'autres personnes, mais par leur propres rapports *chosiques* aliénés, par les abstractions impersonnelles qu'ils ont créé et qu'ils continuent de faire fonctionner – même si d'une manière non-conscient, selon la formule célèbre de Marx : « ils ne le savent pas, mais il le font » (Marx, 1993, p. 85) – par leurs pratiques sociales matérielles d'abstraction (travail et échange abstrait). Les individus deviennent ainsi – en anticipant les termes introduits par Debord et Lukács – des simples « spectateurs » passifs « contemplant » les abstractions économiques aliénées, qu'ils ne contrôlent plus. Au contraire, par une inversion spécifique de la relation sujet-objet, ils sont eux-mêmes contrôlés désormais, comme des objets passifs, par ces abstractions devenues les vrais sujets des dynamiques sociales. Le vrai sujet ou l'agent des interactions sociales entre les individus devient la valeur même comme « sujet automate ».

Le terme *sujet automate* est introduit par Marx dans le contexte d'analyse de la formule générale du capital *A-M-A'* (argent – marchandise – plus d'argent), dans le 4ème chapitre du premier livre du *Capital* (intitulé : Transformation de l'argent en capital). Il y décrit la valeur par une analogie avec l'automouvement de la substance chez Hegel, comme « une substance en procès, une substance qui se met en mouvement par elle-même » et devient un « sujet automate » qui « modifie sa grandeur elle-même, se détache en tant que survaleur d'elle-même en tant que valeur initiale, se valorise elle-même » (Marx, 1993, pp. 173-174). L'automouvement de la valeur comme sujet automate est donc une *« autovalorisation » réflexive et tautologique* (la marchandise et la monnaie n'étant que des simples formes de l'autovalorisation de la valeur comme survaleur). Il faut mentionner, sur ce point, que ce terme de Marx a fait carrière surtout dans le mouvement de la critique de la valeur: les tenants de cette théorie considèrent l'autovalorisation automatique de la valeur comme le vrai sujet de la valorisation du capital et des relations sociales, au détriment de la relation antagonique d'exploitation entre travail et capital, ainsi que les sujets de cette relation, les classes (relation antagonique qui constitue, dans l'acception du « marxisme traditionnelle » la vraie cause du dynamique de la valorisation). Comme il n'est pas l'objet de cet article d'entrer dans ou de trancher ce débat,

notons seulement qu'on insiste ici sur l'autovalorisation parce que conformément à notre hypothèse de lecture, la conception du spectacle de Debord se rapproche au concept du sujet automate.

L'inversion dans le fétichisme de la marchandise va donc bien au-delà d'une simple inversion entre le concret sensible et l'abstraction réelle de la valeur : en aliénant leurs relations sociales dans l'abstraction réelle de la valeur, leur propre socialité apparaît aux individus comme soumise à l'automouvement tautologique de la valeur. Il s'agit d'un processus tautologique dans le sens où la production de la valeur n'a pas comme but une finalité sociale (la satisfaction des besoins sociaux), mais la production de la (sur)valeur elle-même – la valeur comme sujet automate s'intéresse uniquement à l'augmentation de sa propre quantité, à son auto-valorisation. La valeur d'usage, l'utilité individuelle ou collective de la marchandise (les conséquences sociales, environnementales etc. de sa production) se subordonnent à l'accumulation infinie de la survaleur.

2. Lukács : réification et contemplation

Déjà la première phrase de l'essai sur *La réification et la conscience du prolétariat* définit « l'essence de la structure marchande » en évoquant les formulations marxiennes du fétichisme de la marchandise qu'on vient d'analyser : c'est « un rapport, une relation entre personnes prend le caractère d'une chose et, de cette façon, d'une « objectivité illusoire » qui […] dissimule toute trace de son essence fondamentale – la relation entre hommes » (Lukács, 1960, p. 110).

Tout comme chez Marx, la marchandise n'est pas une simple catégorie économique, mais la « catégorie universelle de l'être social total », qui doit « pénétrer l'ensemble des manifestations vitales de la société et les transformer à son image » (Lukács, 1960, pp. 112-113). Pour Lukács, la forme-marchandise, comme forme de médiation sociale, structure – et explique – tant les aspects objectifs que subjectifs des sociétés modernes capitalistes, c'est-à-dire tant la *rationalisation* des toutes les sphères de vie et des institutions modernes (thème d'inspiration wébérienne), que la *réification* de la vie sociale qui les accompagne. Conséquence de l'abstraction à l'œuvre dans les abstractions réelles du travail abstrait et de l'échange marchand, ainsi que de la rationalisation du travail industriel (mais

aussi de la rationalisation analogue du droit formel et de l'État bureaucratique etc.), la réification devient, dans la société capitaliste, notre « seconde nature », une *attitude contemplative* généralisée à toutes les sphères de la vie sociale, qui nous incite à percevoir nous-mêmes, les autres, et même la société entière, comme réduits à l'état de choses.

Lukács reprend, mais dans le même temps infléchit l'analyse du travail abstrait, en y introduisant donc le motif de la *rationalisation du travail* : l'abstraction accomplie par « le travail abstrait, égal, comparable, mesurable avec une précision croissante au temps de travail socialement nécessaire » devient chez lui un « principe réel du processus effectif de production des marchandise », ce qui implique « une élimination toujours plus grande des propriétés qualitatives, humaines et individuelles du travailleur », ainsi qu'une décomposition du travail « en opérations partielles abstraitement rationnelles, ce qui disloque la relation du travailleur au produit comme totalité, et réduit son travail à une fonction spéciale se répétant mécaniquement » (Lukács, 1960, p. 114).

Or à cette décomposition rationnelle du processus de travail, à la dislocation de la production correspond aussi « la dislocation de son sujet ». Point capital de l'analyse lukacsienne, où le premier symptôme de la pathologie sociale provoquée par la rationalisation du travail abstrait, la *réification du soi*, l'aliénation par rapport à notre propre existence est introduit :

> L'homme n'apparaît, ni objectivement ni dans son comportement à l'égard du processus du travail, comme le véritable porteur de ce processus, il est incorporé comme partie mécanisée dans un système mécanique qu'il trouve devant lui, achevé et fonctionnant dans une totale indépendance par rapport à lui, aux lois duquel il doit se soumettre. Cette soumission s'accroît encore du fait que plus la rationalisation et la mécanisation du processus du travail augmentent, plus l'activité du travailleur perd son caractère d'activité pour devenir une attitude *contemplative*. » (Lukács, 1960, p. 117. Passage fameux, cité par Debord dans l'épigraphe du chapitre II. de *La société du spectacle*.)

Dans le même temps, cette attitude contemplative ne se réduit pas au monde du travail, mais il arrive à pénétrer la totalité de la vie sociale :

l'objectivation de leur force de travail face à l'ensemble de leur personnalité – qui s'était déjà accomplie par la vente de leur force de travail comme marchandise – est transformée en réalité quotidienne durable et insurmontable, au point qu'ici aussi la personnalité devient le spectateur impuissant de tout ce qui arrive à sa propre existence, parcelle isolée et intégrée à un système étranger (Lukács, 1960, p. 118).

Cette propagation de l'attitude contemplative de la réification dans toutes les sphères de la vie sociale est la conséquence du processus plus général de la rationalisation de l'ensemble de la société. Cela ne veut pas dire que toute la société serait une sorte de grande usine, mais plutôt que dans « la forme intérieure d'organisation de l'entreprise industrielle » se révèle « de façon concentrée, la structure de toute la société capitaliste » (Lukács, 1960, p. 118). L'usine est donc la figure, le paradigme général de la rationalisation par mécanisation et fragmentation, transposable, par analogie structurelle, à toute une série des institutions modernes comme le droit, l'état bureaucratique etc.

Un second aspect de la pathologie sociale de la réification est *la chosification ou la marchandisation de nos propres facultés mentales*, où « une faculté (ou un complexe de facultés) qui est détachée de l'ensemble de la personnalité, objectivée par rapport à elle […] devient chose, marchandise », de manière qu'on « prend aussi une attitude contemplative à l'égard du fonctionnement de ses [nos] propres facultés objectivées et chosifiées » (Lukács, 1960, p. 128).

Finalement, le dernier aspect à mentionner est celui de *l'aspect intersubjectif de la réification*, l'atomisation, l'isolation des individus dans la société de la division du travail rationalisé et de l'échange marchand anonyme.

> […] la décomposition mécanique du processus de production rompt aussi les liens qui, dans la production « organique », reliaient à une communauté chaque sujet du travail, pris un à un. La mécanisation de la production fait d'eux, à cet égard aussi, des atomes isolés et abstraits que l'accomplissement de leur travail ne réunit plus de façon immédiate et organique et dont la cohésion est bien plutôt […] médiatisée exclusivement par les lois abstraites du mécanisme auquel ils sont intégrés (Lukács, 1960, p. 118).

La conséquence sociale de cette décomposition en étant que « toute la vie de la société est pulvérisée […] en actes isolés d'échange de marchandise » des individus atomisés (Lukács, 1960, p. 119).

Somme toute, la réification peut être définie, d'une manière générale, comme la décomposition, la fragmentation – la *séparation*, dira Debord – d'une totalité ou des relations organique(s) préexistante(s) (travail, produit, être ou communauté humaine) dans des éléments réifiés, résultat de l'abstraction et de la rationalisation du travail (ainsi que, par transposition structurale, de la rationalisation des institutions modernes et de la vie sociale). Et cette décomposition par la rationalisation du travail abstrait suscite, à son tour, les symptômes de la réification comme pathologie sociale : la réification et la décomposition du soi (l'attitude aliénée, contemplative à l'égard du soi, de ses propres activités et de ses propres facultés chosifiées), ainsi que la fragmentation de la vie sociale.

3. Debord : spectacle et réflexivité

Commençons l'interprétation de *La société du spectacle* avec une définition synthétique de la fonction idéologique spécifique du spectacle: le spectacle est *l'autoreprésentation de la société de la marchandise*, dont la fonction idéologique est celle de *la réunification illusoire du monde et de la vie sociale fragmentée,* c'est-à-dire séparée ou réifiée par l'économie capitaliste – réunification illusoire accomplie par *la contemplation passive des images qui se substituent au monde réel et à la vie sociale authentique*. (Voir, tout d'abord, *SdS*, 29, mais aussi les thèses 2, 6, 24 etc. ; cf. Jappe, 1999, p. 24). C'est sans doute ce moment de l'unification idéologique, par le spectacle, de la société réifiée, qui constitue l'apport original de Debord par rapport à Lukács, dans le cadre d'une analyse du spectacle qui se place d'ailleurs explicitement dans la lignée de l'analyse marxienne du fétichisme de la marchandise et de la description lukacsienne de la réification et de l'attitude contemplative.

Le spectacle correspond à la phase contemporaine de la domination de l'économie sur la vie, où, après la dégradation précédente de l'*être* en *avoir*, on assiste à « un glissement généralisé de l'*avoir* au *paraître* » (*SdS*, 17), à « l'*affirmation* de toute vie humaine, c'est-à-dire sociale, comme simple apparence » (*SdS*, 10). Certes, le spectacle est le « pseudo-monde »

de « l'image autonomisé », « objet de la seule contemplation » (*SdS*, 1), mais cette image autonomisée s'avère être quelque chose de tout à fait réelle – dans le sens des abstractions socio-économiques réelles analysées plus haut – à savoir *le capital*. Un *détournement* de Marx – où le spectacle est l'équivalent du capital, et l'image celle de la chose – est d'une importance centrale, car il affirme explicitement que le spectacle est en fait – toute comme la marchandise, la valeur, l'argent etc. – une forme de médiation sociale capitaliste : « Le spectacle n'est pas un ensemble d'images, mais *un rapport social entre des personnes, médiatisé par des images* » (*SdS*, 4 ; c'est moi qui souligne). Finalement, la dernière thèse du premier chapitre de *La société du spectacle* – un autre détournement de Marx, qui affirmait que l'accumulation de l'argent à un certain degré devient capital – ne pourrait pas être plus explicite dans sa concision : « Le spectacle est le capital à un tel degré d'accumulation qu'il devient image » (*SdS*, 34).

Le fétichisme du spectacle est – tout comme celui de la marchandise chez Marx – un fétichisme réel, objectif, donc non seulement l'inversion de la réalité par une sorte d'illusion collective, mais également une inversion même de la réalité, qui devient effectivement structurée et dominée par les abstractions réelles visuelles du spectacle. Ainsi, en dépit de sa fonction d'unification illusoire des spectateurs séparés, le spectacle est bel et bien une abstraction concrète, matérielle : « l'abstraction de tout travail particulier et l'abstraction générale de la production d'ensemble se traduisent parfaitement dans le spectacle, dont le *mode d'être concret* est justement l'abstraction » (*SdS*, 29). Une abstraction concrète (ou, pour le dire avec Marx : une « chose sensible suprasensible ») de la société fétichiste capitaliste, dans laquelle c'est la réalité sociale concrète elle-même qui est inversée, c'est-à-dire structurée, dominée par les abstractions réelles – auparavant – de la valeur (et de l'argent) et – dorénavant – du spectacle :

> C'est le principe du fétichisme de la marchandise, la domination de la société par « des choses suprasensibles bien que sensibles », qui s'accomplit absolument dans le spectacle, où le mode sensible se trouve remplacé par une sélection d'images qui existe au-dessus de lui, et qui en même temps s'est fait reconnaître comme le sensible par excellence (*SdS*, 36).

Le spectacle est donc une « inversion concrète de la vie » (*SdS*, 1), un « monde réellement renversé » dans lequel – détournement mémorable, cette fois-ci de Hegel, qui parle du « faux » comme d'un « moment du vrai » – « le vrai est un moment du faux » (*SdS*, 9), ce qui veut dire que la vie sensible, réelle, authentique (ou qui semble l'être) n'est que l'instance, la réalisation de l'abstraction suprasensible, fausse et inauthentique de la pseudo-vie spectaculaire. Mais dans le même temps « le spectacle qui inverse le réel est effectivement produit », « la réalité vécue est matériellement envahie par la contemplation du spectacle » (*SdS,* 8), c'est-à-dire que le spectacle, en tant qu'abstraction sociale aliénée exerce des effets réels sur la vie sociale réelle : « là où le monde réel se change en simples images, les simples images deviennent des êtres réels, et les motivations efficientes d'un comportement hypnotique » (*SdS*, 18). L'idéologie de la pseudo-vie spectaculaire est effectivement « matérialisée » (voir le titre du chapitre IX : L'idéologie matérialisée), le spectacle est « une *Weltanschauung* devenue effective, matériellement traduite […], une vision du monde qui s'est objectivée » (*SdS*, 5).

On a vu plus haut que dans la société de la marchandise les abstractions réelles de la valeur, de l'argent deviennent elles-mêmes le seul lien social existant, le principe totalisant du « synthèse sociale » (Sohn-Rethel) : l'argent, l'abstraction matérielle des relations socio-économiques capitalistes, apparaît ainsi aux hommes comme la « matérialisation de leur propre connexion sociale » (Marx, 1977, p. 223). Le spectacle n'est qu'une nouvelle *matérialisation visuelle* de cette médiation sociale abstraite et aliénée. Il est, au fond, la forme de médiation sociale spécifique pour la société capitaliste du spectacle, la *forme-image sociale non-sociale* : les images « sociales », les « rapports sociaux » des images spectaculaires s'imposent comme immédiates et concrètes, comme « le sensible par excellence », tout en étant en fait médiatisées par le spectacle comme l'abstraction réelle visuelle des rapports sociaux de production (ou plutôt de consommation, pour Debord) entre des producteurs (spectateurs) séparés, isolés. Et cette forme-image sociale non-sociale du spectacle s'aliène, à son tour, des rapports sociaux, devient autonome, en s'engageant dans un « automouvement » (*SdS*, 24) « tautologique », dont les « moyens sont en même temps son but » (*SdS*, 13). Somme toute, la description de l'abstraction

réelle aliénée du spectacle nous rappelle sur plusieurs points l'automouvement de la valeur comme « sujet automate » et son « autovalorisation » réflexive et tautologique. Sur ce point, Debord est très proche de la critique de la valeur : les deux démarches mettent l'accent sur ce qu'ils considèrent être le vrai sujet des interactions sociales, le spectacle ou la valeur, au détriment de la relation antagonique d'exploitation entre travail et capital.

Tournons-nous maintenant vers l'analyse de l'influence de Lukács sur l'élaboration de *La société du spectacle*. L'origine du spectacle est, selon Debord, la perte de l'unité du monde et de la vie sociale, de l'authenticité des relations interpersonnelles à la suite de l'imposition totale du système économique de la *séparation*. Concept central du diagnostic des pathologies sociales de la société du spectacle, la séparation est l'équivalent – mais également un développement originel – du concept lukacsienne de la réification. La thèse 26 – mais on pourra citer encore d'autres – convient parfaitement pour la démontrer : « Avec la séparation généralisée du travailleur et de son produit, se perdent tout point de vue unitaire sur l'activité accomplie, toute communication personnelle directe entre les producteurs » (*SdS*, 26).

Détaillons l'argument comparatif : avec « la séparation généralisée du travailleur et de son produit », c'est-à-dire à la suite de la rationalisation par décomposition du travail analysée par Lukács (dans le contexte où l'abstraction effectuée par le travail abstrait et par l'échange marchande devient le principe réel du processus de production), se perd « tout point de vue unitaire sur l'activité accomplie », à savoir tant l'unité organique du processus de travail, que l'unité du sujet et de l'objet du travail. Quant à la séparation prise sous l'aspect de la perte de « toute communication personnelle directe », les descriptions récurrentes du spectacle comme un système fondé essentiellement sur la séparation, sur la « production circulaire de l'isolement » (*SdS*, 28) ou la « fabrication concrète de l'aliénation » (*SdS*, 32) évoquent ce qu'on a décelé comme l'aspect intersubjectif de la réification chez Lukács, à savoir la « pulvérisation » de toute la vie sociale en actes isolés de production et d'échange entre individus atomisés.

En ce qui concerne les conséquences pathologiques de la séparation, les symptômes décrits par Debord sont eux aussi homologues à l'attitude contemplative décrite par Lukács – mais avec une différence essentielle. Chez Debord le spectacle correspond à la réunification illusoire et mensongère du monde et de la vie séparée (voir : « Le spectacle réunit le séparé, mais il le réunit en tant que séparé. » – *SdS*, 29), par la contemplation des images du pseudo-monde et de la pseudo-vie spectaculaire. Par conséquence, l'objet de la contemplation et le médium de l'aliénation deviendra chez lui non pas le monde du travail décomposé ou de la vie sociale fragmentée (comme chez Lukács), mais le spectacle d'un monde et d'une vie sociale réunifiée. De ce fait, la réification comme attitude contemplative et chosifiante à l'égard du soi et de ses propres facultés, ainsi qu'à l'égard des autres ou de la société toute entière – la réification dans toutes ces modalités s'exerce elle-aussi à travers le pseudo-monde du spectacle. La réification du soi, par exemple, est une aliénation à travers le spectacle :

> L'aliénation du spectateur au profit de l'objet contemplé […] s'exprime ainsi: plus il contemple, moins il vit ; plus il accepte de se reconnaître dans les images dominantes du besoin, moins il comprend sa propre existence et son propre désir. L'extériorité du spectacle par rapport à l'homme agissant apparaît en ce que ses propres gestes ne sont plus à lui, mais à un autre qui les lui représentent. C'est pourquoi le spectateur ne se sent chez lui nulle part, car le spectacle est partout (*SdS*, 30).

Mais au-delà de l'influence et de la réadaptation de l'analyse lukacsienne de la pathologie sociale de la contemplation, Debord repense de fond en comble le phénomène de la réification/séparation, en l'intégrant dans l'abstraction d'ordre supérieur du spectacle, et en le faisant réflexif dans une manière qui diffère – comme nous allons le voir – radicalement de la réflexivité de la forme-marchandise ou du travail élaborée par Lukács.

Tandis que chez Lukács le paradigme général de la société capitaliste était encore l'usine industrielle (ou le mode de production associé, le travail abstrait rationalisé), transposable, par analogie structurelle, à l'analyse de la réification des autres sphères de la vie sociale, chez Debord c'est déjà la séparation, l'auto-aliénation de la société de consommation qui est au centre

de l'analyse. A cause de l'abondance des marchandises, dans la société du spectacle « la consommation aliénée devient pour les masses un devoir supplémentaire à la production aliénée ». (*SdS*, 42) ; l'économie a colonisé tout le monde de la vie extérieur au travail, non seulement la consommation, mais aussi le temps libre, en prenant « en charge la totalité de l'existence humaine », y compris « les loisirs et l'humanité » du travailleur » (*SdS*, 43). C'est pourquoi, les concepts du spectacle et de la séparation présentent une époque nouvelle, totale, du fétichisme des marchandises : si pour Lukács c'était encore l'expérience contemplative du travail abstrait et rationalisé qui était à l'origine de la réification et la fragmentation subjective et intersubjective, chez Debord c'est en fin du compte la contemplation non pas du travail, mais de la marchandise elle-même comme spectacle qui est la cause principale de la séparation.

Mais si la marchandise parvient ainsi « à l'*occupation totale* de la vie sociale » (*SdS*, 42), si *la marchandise est le tout* et *la réification/séparation est totale* – est-ce qu'il y a encore un dehors ou un au-delà de cette totalité, plus précisément : est qu'on peut encore penser la subjectivation d'un sujet qui pourra dépasser ou transcender (en tant qu'une *transcendance immanente*, donc en tant qu'un sujet qui fait partie du tout qu'il dépasse) la totalité fétichiste de la marchandise ou du spectacle ?

La réponse de Lukács à cette question incontournable de la théorie critique (la question de la constitution du sujet théorique et pratique de la critique et de la transformation de la totalité capitaliste) était encore, comme on le sait, affirmative : la réification peut être dépassée, paradoxalement, par le sujet le plus réifié, objectivé en marchandise – le prolétariat. Car c'est seulement la classe ouvrière qui est capable de découvrir dans soi-même *le sujet-objet identique de l'histoire*, le sujet collectif dont l'action est réellement l'histoire, dont la praxis transforme la réalité historique. En étant « contraint d'objectiver sa force de travail par rapport à l'ensemble de sa personnalité et de la vendre comme une marchandise lui appartenant », c'est-à-dire en réifiant sa propre force de travail, « dans l'homme s'objectivant comme marchandise, entre objectivité et subjectivité » naît « une scission » qui « permet que cette situation devienne consciente » : « dans la marchandise l'ouvrier se reconnaît lui-même et reconnaît ses propres relations au capital » et par là, « sa conscience est *la conscience de soi de la*

marchandise », et en fin du compte « la connaissance de soi, le dévoilement de soi de la société capitaliste fondée sur la production et le trafic marchands » (Lukács, 1960, pp. 209-210). Dans un sens, c'est la réification elle-même qui s'auto-transcende : c'est la forme-marchandise, l'abstraction réelle de la valeur, le « sujet automate » des activités sociales réifiées et aliénées, qui devient consciente de soi-même, qui se reconnaît et se dévoile elle-même dans la scission du moi de l'ouvrier. A travers la conscience de soi de la marchandise spécifique de la force de travail (qui devient marchandise pour la première fois dans le capitalisme) c'est la force productive de la société elle-même – c'est le travail qui devient réflexif et se reconnaît comme l'essence de la totalité concrète de la société. Finalement, le sujet de ce travail, le prolétariat, réalise que le monde social objectif, ainsi que sa situation objective dans ce monde sont en réalité le résultat de sa propre activité (le travail) et devient ainsi le sujet-objet de l'histoire qui transforme, par la praxis révolutionnaire, la société capitaliste réifiée.

Tout comme Lukács, Debord identifie aussi le sujet qui dépasse la réification/séparation avec le sujet-objet de la praxis historique révolutionnaire, le prolétariat. (Certes, ils ne se réfèrent pas nécessairement à la même classe : dans la société de la séparation totale du spectacle tout le monde de vie sociale se « prolétarise ».) Cependant, le sujet de l'histoire est pensé aussi, au niveau conceptuel de *La société du spectacle*, à travers deux formes de subjectivation qu'il nous faut également introduire dans l'analyse : le sujet de la vie et le sujet du temps propre.

La forme concrète politique du sujet de l'histoire, Debord la voit dans les conseils ouvriers, où « le sujet prolétarien peut émerger de sa lutte contre la contemplation » car sa conscience « est inséparable de l'intervention cohérente dans l'histoire » (*SdS*, 116). Mais dans le même contexte de l'analyse du sujet des conseils ouvriers, le sujet de l'histoire est conçu également comme le sujet général de *la vie* ou du *vivant*, donc avec le terme qui est opposé – dans la conceptualité de *La société du spectacle* – au *non-vivant du spectacle*. En faisant abstraction de toute interaction dialectique entre travail et capital (et de leur l'antagonisme qui soutient en fait l'automouvement de la valeur) Debord généralise la relation travail-capital (ou la relation entre travail vivant et travail mort) jusqu'à arriver à une opposition abstraite, dichotomique entre le vivant et le « mouvement

autonome du non-vivant » (*SdS*, 2), ou entre « toute vie humaine » et « la négation visible de la vie » (*SdS*, 10), (Cf. Bunyard, 2018, 299-302). Le sujet de l'histoire, qui « ne peut être que le vivant se produisant lui-même, devenant maître et possesseur de son monde qui est l'histoire » (*SdS*, 74), se concrétise donc dans le pouvoir vivant des conseils, seuls capables de répéter – selon l'allusion du Debord – la fameuse « négation de la négation » au sens du Marx (la négation, par le prolétariat, des relations de production capitalistes niant les forces de production potentiellement déjà socialistes).

Ainsi, grâce au caractère *autopoïétique* du mouvement prolétarien conseilliste (qui « est son propre produit, et ce produit est le producteur même » et « qui est à lui-même son propre but ») le prolétariat arrive à nier la négation de la vie par le spectacle : « *la négation spectaculaire de la vie est niée à son tour* » (*SdS*, 117 – c'est moi qui souligne). Le problème avec ce « dépassement » du spectacle, c'est qu'en l'absence de toute interaction dialectique entre la vie (le sujet général de toute activité humaine) et la négation de cette vie (le spectacle), la répétition mécanique du schéma de la « négation de la négation » n'arrive pas au moment crucial de médiation réflexive, mais seulement à une opposition binaire vide et à l'affirmation autopoïétique de la vie à travers la négation du non-vivant. Par contre, le sujet-objet identique de l'histoire chez Lukács émerge à partir d'un sujet-objet du travail, ce qui correspond au moment dialectique de la médiation réflexive : comme le sujet du travail abstrait objectivé est la force de travail vivant, cela permet la médiation dialectique entre le travail vivant et le travail mort du capital, c'est-à-dire à la fois leur interaction *et* leur scission réflexive dans la conscience de l'ouvrier (et dans « la conscience » de la forme-marchandise capitaliste).

Dans une interprétation récente de l'œuvre de Debord, Tom Bunyard a proposé une relecture du concept de spectacle en valorisant – au-delà de sa dimension de relation sociale aliénée des producteurs ou des consommateurs – sa dimension de relation sociale aliénée au temps et à l'histoire. (Bunyard, 2018) Le spectacle se réfère dans ce sens à des situations dans lesquelles les individus ont été séparés des moyens de faire leur propre temps vécu et leur propre histoire collective. *La Société du spectacle* décrit en ce sens une sorte de paralysie historique d'une société qui a été séparée « d'abord de son propre temps » (*SdS*, 161), et par là aussi de sa capacité à construire sa propre

histoire. Par conséquent, la nouvelle forme de révolution envisagée par Debord et par les situationnistes serait plutôt une revendication du contrôle des moyens disponibles pour vivre son propre temps (ou pour produire, dans le milieu du temps, l'expérience vécue), et pour arriver à une « histoire consciente » (*SdS*, 80) qui permettrait une nouvelle manière de « *vivre* le temps historique » (*SdS*, 143).

Rappelons ici que Lukács mettait déjà en relation l'expérience du temps non seulement avec le phénomène de la réification, mais aussi avec son dépassement, plus précisément avec le moment réflexif de la prise de conscience de la marchandise ou du travail. Ainsi, l'attitude contemplative conduit aussi à la spatialisation du temps vécu par l'ouvrier, lequel « perd ainsi son caractère qualitatif, changeant, fluide » en se figeant « en un continuum exactement délimité, quantitativement mesurable, rempli de « choses » quantitativement mesurables », en un « espace » ou en un « temps abstrait, exactement mesurable » (Lukács, 1960, p. 117). Mais Lukács déduit aussi la scission entre l'objectivité réifiée (le travail abstrait contemplé) et la subjectivité de l'ouvrier à partir d'un dédoublement de son expérience du temps. Grâce à une véritable « réduction » phénoménologico-existentielle du temps abstrait, réifié au temps concret, qualitatif (réduction pratique vécue dans l'expérience du travail), l'ouvrier se rend compte que pour lui :

> la durée du travail n'est pas seulement la forme objective de la marchandise qu'il vend, de sa force de travail (sous cette forme, le problème est pour lui aussi celui d'un échange d'équivalents, c'est-à-dire un rapport quantitatif), mais en même temps la forme déterminant son existence comme sujet, comme homme (Lukács, 1960, p. 209).

En fin du compte, c'est donc cette expérience du dédoublement du temps de travail, ainsi que leur médiation dialectique réflexive, la réalisation du fait que le temps abstrait est l'objectivation du temps existentiel, qui est à l'origine de la scission du moi de l'ouvrier, ainsi que, finalement, de l'émergence de la réflexivité du travail et du sujet-objet de la praxis historique.

Chez Debord, le temps de la production capitaliste, le *temps-marchandise* des « intervalles équivalents » ou des « unités homogènes

échangeables » (à savoir le temps comme mesure du travail abstrait et de la valeur des marchandises) a envahi déjà, sous le déguisement du *temps consommable*, la totalité de la vie sociale, en homogénéisant, sous la domination généralisée du temps abstrait, « vie privée, vie économique, vie politique » (*SdS*, 147–151). En ce qui concerne la réappropriation du temps propre, la « réalisation totale, dans le milieu du temps, du communisme qui supprime « tout ce qui existe indépendamment des individus » », (la réalisation d'un communisme du temps qui supprimerait donc toute séparation aliénée), elle est présentée – d'une manière seulement allusive – comme « le projet d'un dépérissement de la mesure sociale du temps, au profit d'un modèle ludique de temps irréversible des individus et des groupes, modèle dans lequel sont simultanément présents des *temps indépendants fédérés* » (*SdS*, 163). Là encore, ce qui pose problème c'est l'absence de toute médiation réflexive entre le temps consommable abstrait de la société du spectacle et le temps « ludique irréversible », faute duquel on a du mal à penser comment on pourrait se rendre compte que dans la mesure sociale abstrait du temps il s'agit toujours du notre propre temps aliéné, dont on a été dépossédés. On n'apprend pas comment on pourrait arriver aux pratiques matériels (temporels ?) de réappropriation des moyens de production de notre propre temps, comment on pourrait arriver à l'expérience réflexive de notre propre temps, et à partir de là, à la praxis consciente de l'histoire – à part d'une autre allusion énigmatique, selon laquelle « le monde possède déjà le rêve d'un temps dont il doit maintenant posséder la conscience pour le vivre réellement » (*SdS*, 164).

Tout se passe donc comme si la construction théorique de *La société du spectacle* ne permettrait pas d'envisager la subjectivation d'un sujet qui pourrait transcender la totalité fétichiste du spectacle, une immanence transcendante réflexive comparable au sujet du travail chez Lukács. En l'absence de toute médiation dialectique réflexive avec le sujet de la réification ou du spectacle, la forme de médiation sociale (la forme-marchandise ou la forme-image) ne peut plus devenir consciente, n'arrive pas à se dévoiler dans la conscience du prolétaire ou du spectateur. A cause de l'échec de la subjectivation réflexive vivante ou temporelle du sujet prolétaire, il ne nous reste donc que la contemplation d'un autre moment de réflexivité, d'un degré supérieur : *c'est le spectacle lui-même, la forme-*

image sociale non-sociale qui devient une abstraction réflexive non-consciente de la forme-marchandise. Citons à cet égard la thèse 29, cruciale (du moins pour la vision proposée ici), qui définit le spectacle comme une abstraction de second degré, comme *l'abstraction réflexive de l'argent même* :

> […] si l'argent a dominé la société en tant que représentation de l'équivalence centrale, c'est-à-dire du caractère échangeable des biens multiples dont l'usage restait incomparable, le spectacle est son complément moderne développé où la totalité du monde marchand apparaît en bloc, comme une équivalence générale à ce que l'ensemble de la société peut être et faire. Le spectacle est l'argent que l'on *regarde seulement*, car en lui déjà c'est la totalité de l'usage qui s'est échangée contre la totalité de la représentation abstraite (*SdS*, 49).

Il n'y a donc rien au-delà – ou en deçà – de la totalité de la marchandise ou de l'argent – exceptant l'autoreprésentation idéologique de cette totalité elle-même dans le spectacle. La société de la marchandise ne se reconnaît pas dans une conscience de soi, ne se transcende pas dans une auto-dévoilement, mais se méconnaît plutôt, s'occulte soi-même dans une abstraction réelle d'ordre supérieur, le spectacle. La société de la séparation totale se sépare – dans une auto-aliénation redoublée – dans sa totalité d'elle-même et se subordonne à la réunification illusoire du spectacle. Ce mouvement d'auto-aliénation réflexive de la forme-marchandise ou de l'argent dans le spectacle n'est pas sans nous rappeler l'automouvement réflexif et non-conscient de la valeur comme « sujet automate ». L'œuvre du Debord nous apparaît alors comme le point d'aboutissement finale, peut-être même la dernière pensée du fétichisme de la marchandise : la société du spectacle représente l'époque de l'accomplissement total, non-dépassable du fétichisme, « où la marchandise se contemple elle-même dans un monde qu'elle a créé » (*SdS*, 53).

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L'anatomie du faux. La société du spectacle

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Abstract. Society is articulated in two ways: first, by its rational body, which claims form, image, the organic connection between the individual and their social environment, an adaptive behaviour; and second, by its irrational body, which demands disorientation and anarchy. In a rational society, the senses are accordingly adapted, coordinated within a subsidiary structure of the social system. The human body, in turn, gives rise to a falsified social body – both image and generator of alienation. The Situationist critique, through its experiments, provokes the diversion of this structure. The social body becomes the staging ground for new sensations, where the essential element is calculated drift, the awareness of the concrete and provisional form. Through drifting, the city space once again becomes a social construction that does not spontaneously reveal itself to the eye but first demands a kind of blindness and sensory confusion to undermine the rationality of the visual city. In the society of the spectacle, the body is an image of the false that replaces the living in order to guarantee it an ideal survival. The Situationists show that the body of this society secretes death even as it rejects it. Like the puppets of the Bauhaus theatre, individuals simultaneously project the sensation of escaping noise and fury, and the disturbing tyranny of immobility. Guy Debord's discrepant cinema – the anti-documentary, opposed to the documentary's intention of seeking the hidden spirit or authenticity of a society – argues that this is merely another form of Freudian spectacularization, a staging of authenticity and the irrational. Cinema, the total art, is not documentation, but the instrument of a revolution of totality. The spectacular body, marked by all the avatars of the consumer society, must reclaim its playful, creative, and ephemeral functioning.

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Keywords: social body; alienation; Situationist International; society of the spectacle; Guy Debord; drift; detournement; psychogeography; playful construction of urban anatomy.

> *Et si… si l'organisme n'était après tout qu'une convention, une simple interprétation (parmi d'autres), qui participerait essentiellement d'une contrainte sociale ? Loin d'être le tout du corps, le corps organisé ne serait qu'un corps institué. A quelle fin ?*
> (Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze - « Mille plateaux »)

L'équation est simple. Elle implique deux représentations qui se trouvent dans un rapport sous-entendu : le corps individuel et le corps social. On a dit à bon droit que l'attitude à l'égard du corps dans l'imaginaire d'une période ou d'une collectivité est organiquement entrelacée avec le fonctionnement concret du mécanisme social. En d'autres termes, le corps est une syntaxe commune du discours sur le sujet et sur l'objet, tout en représentant la légitimité rationnelle, le code interprétatif de la réalité. Le corps traduit les impulsions et l'indéterminé qui se trouve au fond de la production discursive de l'être et de ses structures intégratrices. De là à envisager le corps comme un mécanisme décodant et civilisateur, qu'on peut transposer à l'aise dans les systèmes différents du réel, il n'y a qu'un pas. L'imaginaire somatique, la science du mécanisme organique ont été appliquées également aux processus économiques et à la syntaxe sociale. Les institutions ont acquis un visage humain, l'échange et la consommation répètent le flux neuronal, les systoles et les diastoles réglables de manière chirurgicale. Il y a aussi une psychanalyse de l'appareil d'État, tandis que l'État même manifeste à l'égard de ses clients l'attitude bienveillante et dominatrice du psychanalyste. Les désirs deviennent les réflexes de l'inconscient administré de l'organisme socio-économique. Tandis que la société et l'État se forgent un corps sur les besoins et la désillusion des individus, tandis que les images du corps envahissent l'espace du visible, la représentation du corps comme valeur en soi diminue. La séparation entre le

sujet et l'État, la vie quotidienne et le fonctionnement apparemment hors le temps du système officiel, est remplacée par la séparation de l'individu de son corps unique, voué à la mort. Ce qui réclame cette séparation c'est l'entrée dans le régime de l'image, le revers de la vie imprévisible, éphémère. Jamais le corps ne s'est pas exhibé plus frappant et plus dominateur comme dans cette société surnommée par Guy Debord « la société du spectacle ». Cependant, jamais l'homme n'a pas expérimenté une telle schizoïde annihilation de sa propre corporalité.

Dans l'Antiquité, le corps et l'esprit fusionnaient dans une unité organique, une entité unique, inséparable du flux divin ; avec le christianisme le corps est une métaphore de l'esprit, marqué par les faiblesses de la chair. Dans le XVII^{e} siècle, le corps devient un objet fascinant, tout à fait extérieur, une machine ingénieuse. Les dissections mises en scène dans les amphithéâtres offrent le spectacle de l'ordre, de l'architecture organique qui valorise tout et ne laissent rien inachevé. Michel Lemire dans son livre « Artistes et mortels » affirmait que, vers 1700, les dissections destinées aux spécialistes se transforment en spectacles pour toute la haute société[1]. La représentation du corps en tant qu'objet soumis à la dissection, à l'observation, démontable, réglait des mécanismes sociaux, introduisait des filtres de pouvoir, permettait à l'élément vivant de quitter le périmètre de la mort par l'extra-territorialisation. Le cadavre n'est plus une leçon d'anatomie, c'est un objet spectaculaire qui rend possible la contemplation du corps social. Rassemblés autour du corps inerte, les membres de cette audience générale ne représentent plus des individus uniques ; ils forment déjà une société *à la recherche du corps perdu* ou jamais trouvé, un corps utopique. L'acte médical de la dissection était aussi un acte social. Le médecin réalisait la transgression du corps démystifié dans le régime organique à travers le spectacle qui était une forme sociale contrôlée. Pendant qu'il se trouve ébloui devant le spectacle de sa propre extériorité disséqué, le spectateur a deux révélations : la première c'est un catharsis grotesque (le contemplateur est un corps vivant devant lequel, par l'autopsie mise en scène,

[1] Cf. Michel Lemire, « Artistes et mortels », Paris 17 cité Joly, 75011 : R. Chabaud, 1990, 446 p. « Ces amphithéâtres anatomiques, parfois installés dans l'église d'un hôpital, étaient extrêmement importantes à l'époque parce que les dissections en soi constituaient un véritable spectacle théâtral. Elles duraient quelques jours et attiraient une foule immense ».

la mort est réduite au statut d'objet) ; la deuxième représente l'individu en tant que membre du corps social, et sous cette forme il expérimente à travers l'acte médicale les stratégies de pouvoir de l'État qui peut désarticuler, rationaliser, reconstruire les circuits ou extirper des organes. Barbara M. Stafford affirmait dans son livre, « Body Criticism : imagining the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine » : « *as the dissector dug deeper into the corpse, he exposed a mutable organism at once unified and fragmented, simple and complex, ideal and grotesque*[2] ». On peut affirmer nous aussi que l'image du corps devient à partir du XVI^e^ et du XVII^e^ siècle le théâtre d'opérations d'une représentation à la fois rationnelle et irrationnelle de la société, elle-même à la recherche d'un corps. Cependant, dès le XX^e^ siècle, l'illusion de la corporalité semble avoir été surmontée. Le régime diurne du corps social est remplacé par le régime nocturne de l'*image* du corps qui ne peut pas être disséquée, psychanalysée autrement qu'en passant entièrement dans le registre de l'image.

Le corps-image de la société du spectacle est pleinement présent et pleinement abstrait. En d'autres termes, il fonctionne sur un simulacre somatique ; au fond, il n'est qu'une représentation abstraite de la présence, pourtant il n'est pas moins réel. Le corps social, dans la société du spectacle, se trouve au-delà de la logique et de la hiérarchie anatomique, il surmonte le codage primitif des institutions disciplinées et la syntaxe rationnelle du langage. Il aspire et il s'installe déjà dans le scénario d'un *corps sans organes*, tel que Gilles Deleuze imaginait, une conception qui rejette le déterminisme organique et qui fonctionne avec des flux de vitesses et de lenteurs, des compositions de forces et d'affectes.

> Le Corps sans organes se définit donc par un organe indéterminé, tandis que l'organisme se définit par des organes déterminés (…). On dit : qu'est-ce que c'est, le Corps sans organes – mais on est déjà sur lui, se traînant comme une vermine, tâtonnant comme un aveugle ou courant comme un fou, voyageur

[2] Barbara M. Stafford, « Body Criticism: imagining the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine » (Cambridge et Londres, 1991), p.7 « Comme le dissecteur creusait plus profondément dans le corps, il a exposé un organisme mutable, unifié et fragmenté à la fois, simple et complexe, idéal et grotesque » (n.t.).

> du désert et nomade de la steppe. C'est sur lui que nous dormons, que nous veillons, que nous battons et sommes battus, que nous cherchons notre place[3].

La société à la recherche d'une représentation corporelle passe à l'étape suivante, celle de la matrice de toutes les *corporalisations* et reconnaît le fait qu'en réalité son fonctionnement organique ne peut être possible que par l'accès à son archi-réalité. La société n'est plus la communauté légiférée par des règles et des valeurs afin de produire un mode de vie intégrateur ; elle devient le mécanisme générateur de la notion d'individu et de communauté, réglé par les images et les représentations. Il s'agit d'un programme spectaculaire qui détermine le fonctionnement à la manière cinématique des relations humaines et des liaisons avec l'espace et le temps. Le corps rationnel, descriptible, anatomique, de la société est remplacé par le corps virtuel, hybride, matrice de tous les corps individuels. Bien que réel et objectif, le spectacle social n'est qu'une inversion du vivant à travers le mécanisme des relations de production, observait Guy Debord dans « La Société du Spectacle » en 1967.

> Les images qui se sont détachées de chaque aspect de la vie fusionnent dans un cours commun, où l'unité de cette vie ne peut plus être rétablie. La réalité considérée partiellement se déploie dans sa propre unité générale en tant que pseudo-monde à part, objet de la seule contemplation. La spécialisation des images du monde se retrouve, accomplie, dans le monde de l'image autonomisée, où le mensonger s'est menti à lui-même. Le spectacle en général, comme inversion concrète de la vie, est le mouvement autonome du non-vivant[4]. (Thèse 2)

Cette représentation du corps social devenu autonome, réglé par des mécanismes qui dépassent la sphère de la science économique et qui concernent l'économie de l'image est le sujet de la pensée de Guy Debord, mais aussi de celle de Lukàcs, Marx et Lefebvre. Pourtant, Debord a osé de faire en même temps une dissection de la société spectaculaire et la pratique

[3] Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, « Mille Plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie », Les Éditions Minuit, 1980, p.43.
[4] Guy Debord, « La Société du Spectacle », Gallimard, Paris, 1996.

existentielle qui justifie l'hypothèse d'un corps social vivant. Tout comme Marx, Debord a fondé sa théorie sur les concepts d'aliénation et de réification. Le corps social n'est pas naturel, il est un produit de l'activité humaine au cours de l'histoire. À son tour, le corps de la société produit consciemment et désintéressé le temps et l'espace. La logique n'est pas celle de la machine qui produit automatiquement et inconsciemment, ni celle de la genèse divine qui règle la dynamique du monde. Quand la valeur d'échange manifestée sous la forme abstraite du capital subordonne la valeur d'usage et l'ouvrier est représenté comme main-d'œuvre, entre le sujet et l'objet produit (le monde créé) intervient la médiation du capital qui, à un maximum d'accumulation, devient image. L'aliénation représente l'incapacité de l'être à relier aux objets de son monde en tant que produits de son activité autrement que sous la forme de l'objet-image mesurable, quantifiable comme produit d'échange. Le processus ne s'arrête pas à la manifestation anodine du mercantilisme, car il devient le principe de fonctionnement de toutes les sphères de la subjectivité et de la représentation humaine. « Le concept de spectacle unifie et explique une grande diversité de phénomènes apparents. Il est la *négation* visible de la vie, comme une négation de la vie qui est *devenue visible*[5] ». (Thèse 10) Le rôle du visible est essentiel et paradoxal : il est le médiateur le plus abstrait et le plus mystificateur qui a remplacé le toucher de sa place privilégiée. Dans la société du spectacle on ne dit que « ce qui apparaît est bon, ce qui est bon apparaît ». Le spectacle tend á un corps dont les organes sensoriels ne constituent que les annexes de sa structure amorphe. Les images, devenues des « êtres réels », ne sont pas seulement un produit médié par la vue, mais la forme aliénée, déshumanisée de notre rapport au monde. « Le spectacle – affirme Debord – n'est pas un ensemble d'images, mais un rapport social entre des personnes, médiatisés par des images. Il est plutôt une Weltanschauung devenue effective, matériellement traduite. C'est une vision du monde qui s'est objectivée. » (Thèse 4) En d'autres termes, ce n'est pas un corps illusoire, mais une réalité à rebours qui fonctionne dans un code différent tout en gardant les données organiques de cette réalité.

Le spectacle social n'est pas un territoire de l'inconscient, une région identifiable qui peut être traduite avec les méthodes de la psychanalyse, de la

[5] Ibidem, p. 11.

sociologie ou de la philosophie. Le spectacle est partout ; ce n'est pas une réalité superposée ou annexe, qu'on peut découper dans le paysage idéologique actuel et dont on peut recomposer l'histoire. Les méthodes, les instruments utilisés dans sa dissection subissent la même contagion du simulacre, tant qu'ils se présentent comme des domaines distincts. Il est impossible d'opérer sur le corps sans organes du Faux à la manière des dissections de Port Royal, dans le XVII[e] siècle. La société du spectacle est aussi un discours sur des organes illusoires qui ont pris la fonction des organes réels et qui produisent le mouvement autonome d'un corps réifié. Une radiographie du corps spectaculaire permettrait d'illustrer d'abord la spectacularisation des méthodes utilisées dans l'analyse du concept. « En analysant le spectacle on parle dans une certaine mesure le langage même du spectaculaire…C'est le moment historique qui nous contient[6] ».

Debord commence l'analyse du concept à la manière de Marx. Il affirme que ce qu'on appelle *la société du spectacle* n'est pas une transcendance devenue réalité objective, ni un accident, mais un produit, une mécanique simple. L'ennemi est le monde de la marchandise fondé sur l'opposition des classes. La marchandise introduit une hiérarchie des valeurs en même temps rationnelle et irrationnelle, masquée par son universalisme spectaculaire. Elle crée de faux besoins qui falsifient à leur tour. La consommation devient une fin en soi et la valeur d'usage affaiblit tandis que la valeur d'échange mène la guerre sur son propre terrain. Le travail est invisible, caché dans l'objet, c'est « une abstraction réelle[7] ». Le corps de l'ouvrier ne produit plus un objet où l'on peut déchiffrer encore la trace de son outil. Il est le générateur de cette abstraction qui n'a pas de valeur que dans le code du spectaculaire. L'image est la mesure du corps. C'est en fonction de la densité et de la rapidité de la consommation des images que le corps de l'individu obtient une matérialité. Les sens deviennent des agents de change qui sélectionnent principalement l'information qui adapte l'individu aux besoins du spectacle social, tout en réalisant des circuits similaires à la logique marchande. Les sens ne sont dans ce contexte que des articulations extrêmement concrètes entre l'homme et le monde qui

[6] Guy Debord, *idem*, page 24.
[7] La notion d'*abstraction réelle* est introduite par le philosophe Alfred Sohn-Rethel dans l'essai « La pensée-marchandise », Éditions du Croquant, avril 2010.

reçoivent, transmettent et règlent des représentations abstraites des objets ou des besoins humains.

La relation continue et perméable entre le microcosme et le macrocosme, le corps humain qui modifie et qui est en permanence modifié dans le contact avec le monde sont remplacés par une relation hors le contexte spatial et temporel universel. Il s'agit d'un rapport clos, le résultat de la fracture qui permet une rationalisation intensive, insulaire de la circulation des images abstraites devant un sujet réduit au statut de milieu de propagation et de consommation. La séparation même est recodée comme unité fonctionnelle du corps social.

> Le spectacle se représente à la fois comme la société même, comme une partie de la société et comme instrument d'unification (…). Il est le lieu du regard abusé et de la fausse conscience ; et l'unification qu'il accomplit n'est rien d'autre qu'un langage officiel de la séparation généralisée[8] (Thèse 3).

Cette fracture est visible particulièrement dans l'orchestration de l'espace urbain et du comportement dans cet espace. Raoul Vaneigem, membre de l'Internationale Situationniste, écrivait en 1961 : « Public-relation, l'urbanisme idéal est la projection dans l'espace de la hiérarchie sociale sans conflit. Routes, pelouses, fleurs naturelles et forêts artificielles lubrifient les rouages de la sujétion, la rendent aimable (…). L'aliénation à portée de la main : l'urbanisme rend l'aliénation tactile. Le prolétariat affamé vivait l'aliénation dans la souffrance des bêtes. Nous la vivrons dans la souffrance aveugle des choses. Se sentir autre à tâtons[9] ». Dans la nouvelle ville de Mourenx les urbanistes utilisaient les constructions pour stratifier littéralement les ouvriers par leur statut social et économique. Ce style de bâtiments est comparé dans la revue *Internationale Situationniste* avec la mode des abris antinucléaires de la période de la guerre froide. L'isolement dans les structures urbaines, la transformation de la rue, autrefois lieu des rencontres, dans le milieu de circulation des flux économiques, sociales, la réduction de la ville au statut d'organisme fonctionnel où le comportement

[8] Guy Debord, « La Société du spectacle », page 9.
[9] Raoul Vaneigem, « Commentaires contre l'urbanisme », *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 6, août 1961.

est purement adaptatif, reflète la logique scientifique qui résumait le corps humain à un système d'organes. En même temps, la cohérence de cette structure anatomique ne peut être révélée que par la démonstration et la mise-en-scène du médecin qui présente au public le spectacle des circuits.

L'organisme devenait une totalité par l'intermédiaire d'une représentation. Le contrôle de la maladie exigeait le contrôle des circuits, mais le pouvoir qui seulement restaurait la fonction de l'organe affecté a tourné dans ce que Foucault, Michel de Certeau ou Henri Lefebvre estimaient : le contrôle qui prend en charge la fonction de l'organe. L'État devient l'organe de surveillance et de contrôle, tandis que l'anatomie du sujet social est composée de parties standardisées et réifiées. Le corps qui communiquait autrefois avec l'espace réel et avec la structure arbitraire ou planifiée, ludique et concrète de la vie quotidienne, devient un espace clos, inaccessible à la métamorphose, aseptisé. Les urbanistes des années '50 et '60 opéraient sur la ville comme sur un corps inerte. La ville corbusienne était le paysage urbain idéal où tout conflit avec la nature, le corps, l'espace ou la société s'annulait. Le paysage extrêmement propre, ordonné, peu peuplé du croquis « Cité Contemporaine pour trois Millions d'Habitants » (1922) reflète l'idéal du corps rationnel, anatomique, d'où l'on a supprimé le souvenir de la mort.

Exposée dans les projets urbains, la mort se convertit en abstraction. Le mouvement autonome du « non-vivant » debordien est le spectacle de la mort abstraite qui n'a pas lieu ni dans la solitude et l'intimité de l'individu[10], ni dans le rituel des processions publiques. Dans la société du spectacle, le cadavre n'est plus un corps mais un objet retiré de la consommation et par conséquent inexpressif et inopérable. Baudrillard considérait le contrôle sur la mort par la séparation entre le monde des vivants et celle des morts, comme la manifestation du contrôle social. Cette fracture est symptomatique et se répète à un autre niveau, celui entre le sujet et son corps, entre l'individu et le corps social, entre l'homme et son travail. « La mort ôtée à la vie c'est

[10] Cf. Norbert Elias, « La Solitude des Mourants », Christian Bourgois, 1987. La mort se retire de la vie sociale des XIX^{e} et XX^{e} siècle et tend à devenir une expérience solitaire, « la mort masquée », l'affaire de l'individu. Cette répression représente l'économie psychique de la civilisation moderne qui gère les pulsions et les émotions.

l'opération même de l'économique – c'est la vie résiduelle, désormais lisible en termes opérationnels de calculs et de valeurs[11] ».

Il y a pourtant, dans un autre registre, une mort acceptée, recodée et placée dans le circuit spectaculaire. Il s'agit de l'état d'inertie parfaite de l'objet, extrêmement flexible cependant. C'est l'objet qui fonctionne comme une convention sociale, un signe, une image, hors de l'organicité. C'est un corps sans organes aberrant auquel les relations discursives spectaculaires impriment les traits du corps vivant, autonome. « Le spectacle – affirme Debord – consiste à reprendre en lui tout ce qui existait dans l'activité humaine à *l'état fluide* pour le posséder à l'état coagulé[12] » (Thèse 35).

L'état coagulé est, cependant, la condition de l'image et le signe de la mort. « D'autant plus sa vie est maintenant son produit, d'autant plus il est séparé de sa vie » (Thèse 33). Le temps réifié devient pseudo-circulaire, des moments répétitifs dans la logique de l'échange et de la production. L'espace est lisible, abstrait. Le monde souffre l'aliénation que David Le Breton ressentait au niveau de la représentation corporelle. Devenu « construction personnelle, objet transitoire et manipulable », le corps n'est plus l'incarnation du destin individuel :

> « le corps devient la prothèse d'un moi éternellement en quête d'une incarnation provisoire pour assurer une trace significative de soi. L'intériorité se résout en un effort d'extériorité (…) L'anatomie n'est plus le destin évoqué autrefois par Freud, elle est désormais un accessoire de la présence[13] ».

Le corps-objet, annexe passive et symptôme de la société spectaculaire est souvent répété ou détourné dans les pages de l'*Internationale Situationniste* : des modèles semi-nues à côté des objets de la société marchande, des scènes familiales où l'harmonie est conditionnée par la présence inquiétante des mêmes objets, l'état de rêve et l'apathie mélancolique de la fille dans une publicité pour un appareil photo accompagnent les textes théoriques sérieux sur la société. Les situationnistes représentaient le corps spectaculaire comme un emballage pour un contenu

[11] Jean Baudrillard, « L'Échange symbolique et la mort », Gallimard, 1976, p.75.
[12] Guy Debord, ibidem, p. 26.
[13] David Le Breton, « Imaginaires de la fin du corps » dans *Les valeurs du corps dans la société contemporaine*, coordination Claude Raisky, Educagri éditions, 2003.

entièrement spectaculaire, privé de valeur d'usage. Le modèle qui nous regarde dans les pages de la revue, regarde en fait sa propre image qu'il ressent étrange et aliénée. Le désir manque ; les simulacres humains exposent la séduction des faux besoins. C'est le temps de l'objet, répétitif, immanent qu'ils expriment, pas le temps linéaire. La réification devient la mise-en-scène et le codage consumériste de la mort, « l'inversion concrète de la vie » où « le vrai est un moment du faux ». Debord affirme :

> Immobilisée dans le centre falsifié du mouvement de son monde, la conscience spectatrice ne connaît plus dans sa vie un passage vers sa réalisation et vers sa mort. Qui a renoncé à dépenser sa vie ne doit plus s'avouer sa mort. (…) Cette absence sociale de la mort est identique à l'absence sociale de la vie…(Thèse 160).

L'image du corps humain spectaculaire ressemble à l'image des poupées du théâtre BAUHAUS qui respirent l'empathie et l'aliénation, le naturel et l'artificiel, des figures statiques dans des postures intemporelles, un mélange de charme apparemment vivant et d'apathie mélancolique. Tout comme le modèle, la poupée manifeste une pure extériorité, une efficience élaborée et une uniformité anonyme. Oskar Schlemmer, le créateur du Ballet triadique, écrivait en 1930 : « L'abstraction de la forme humaine…crée une image dans un sens plus élevé (…) Ce n'est pas un être humain naturel qu'elle construit, mais une créature artificielle ; elle crée une métaphore, un symbole de la forme humaine[14] ». La poupée BAUHAUS n'apparaît pas comme sujet en soi ; c'est par l'association dans le corps collectif qu'elle gagne son identité. Elle fait partie d'une nouvelle race, post-humaine. Les poupées, comme les modèles, enseignent les spectateurs à surmonter l'individualité pour adhérer au public de masse, avec la promesse d'une expérience confortable au prix de l'aliénation. Elles offrent cette « pause de l'âme[15] », le néant des sentiments et des conflits. L'espace et le temps spectaculaires respirent cette étrange impondérabilité et la banalisation de la vie quotidienne. Debord remarque : « La nécessité capitaliste satisfaite dans

[14] Oskar Schlemmer, *Lettres et journaux*, trad. de Claude Rabant, Dijon, France, Presses du réel, 2014, p. 288.
[15] R. M. Rilke, « Puppen » dans *Schriften*, tome 4, ed. Horst Nalewski, Frankfurt Insel, 1996, p.689

l'urbanisme en tant que glaciation visible de la vie, peut s'exprimer – en employant des termes hégéliens – comme la prédominance absolue de la *paisible coexistence de l'espace* sur *l'inquiet devenir dans la succession du temps* » (Thèse 170).

Il souligne encore que :

> Le mouvement général de l'isolement, qui est la réalité de l'urbanisme, doit aussi contenir une réintégration contrôlée des travailleurs (…) L'intégration au système doit ressaisir les individus isolés en tant qu'individus isolés ensembles : les usines comme les maisons de la culture, les villages de vacances comme les grands ensembles, sont spécialement organisés pour les fins de cette pseudo-collectivité qui accompagne aussi l'individu isolé dans la cellule familiale[16].

La séparation se trouve partout, la seule unité visible est celle du spectacle et l'unique attitude consolatrice, la contemplation passive. L'anatomie du faux, selon Debord, ne peut être réalisée que par l'accentuation de cette séparation à travers le discours. Il met en scène des séparations par la technique du montage cinématique (les séries de répétitions et de *freeze frames*) ou par les œuvres composées intégralement de fragments plagiés, comme il le fait dans « Mémoires ». Son premier film, « Hurlements en faveur de Sade » scandalise le public à Cannes en 1952. C'était un film sans images dans l'esprit du « terrorisme cinématographique » (Alice Debord). Des écrans blancs et des écrans noirs alternaient, accompagnés par des fragments de dialogue ou de texte. « Ici les spectateurs, privés de tout, seront en outre privés d'images », avertissait l'auteur. Les autres films sont composés généralement par des extraits de journaux télévisés, photographies, bandes dessinées, extraits de films « volés » allant du western hollywoodien aux films du cinéma soviétique. Debord cultive consciemment la confusion par des syncopes, le rythme coupé, des silences ou des images figées longtemps. Ses techniques mettent en garde que ce n'est pas le cas de chercher des sujets cachés ou de croire dans des représentations raisonnables. Ici on travaille avec les images des images, avec des surfaces. Le corps sans organes, falsifié du spectacle

[16] Guy Debord, ibidem, p.125.

devient concret, anatomique. Sa mécanique est rendue tangible. Les pauses suspectes, prolongées suggèrent à la fois le manque de vie réelle du corps disséqué et la possibilité d'intervenir, grâce à cette syncope même, et de détourner le spectacle.

Debord demande une double lecture de ses films : la confusion des sens est l'effet de l'aliénation de la vie quotidienne dans le spectacle social, mais aussi la seule manière de sa récupération. La séparation ne peut pas être supprimée que par sa propre mise en scène sous la forme d'une situation, une syncope qui permet à l'image d'être aperçue comme image, la seule manifestation dynamique étant la loi de la dislocation, de l'inversion des forces. Les films de Debord ne cherchent pas à déchiffrer la réalité, la caméra n'a pas l'ambition de capter le flux inconscient de la vie quotidienne. Debord insiste sur l'impénétrabilité de celle-ci. La vie quotidienne n'est pas un corps psychanalysable, c'est un corps ludique, la vie qui ne se laisse pas traduite.

Cependant, le spectacle social est tangible, anatomisé, le sujet est rudimentaire, mais ses effets sont aliénants : tandis qu'il mystifie son mécanisme, il réifie et banalise la vie quotidienne de l'individu, sa relation avec le temps et l'espace. Les tentatives spectaculaires de représenter la vie d'une manière ordonnée ont ignoré l'imprévisible et l'inconstance, la nature hybride et incomplète de celle-ci. Dans la *Métaphysique de la tragédie,* Lukàcs affirmait : « La vie est une anarchie du clair-obscur : rien en elle ne s'accomplit totalement, et jamais quelque chose ne va jusqu'à son terme (…) Tout s'écoule, tout se mélange avec autre chose et le mélange est incontrôlable et impur[17] ». Pourtant, Lukàcs et Debord imaginent la possibilité d'une manière toute différente de se rapporter à cette vie : « des étincelles d'un passé non résolu qui éclaircissent les moments vécus autrefois dans la confusion et la suspicion[18] ».

Les surfaces, les apparences, les objets de l'industrie publicitaire et les images officielles sont récupérées dans une logique du discours toute différente de celle marchande. Le spectateur ne peut pas se rapporter à ces images comme un consommateur passif. S'il se laisse séduit par l'objet, il fonctionne lui-même comme une image du détournement. Ce n'est pas une

[17] G. Lukàcs, « La métaphysique de la tragédie », publié en 1911, traduit dans L*'Âme et les Formes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1974, p. 475.
[18] G. Lukàcs, ibid., p. 235.

simple critique esthétique avant-gardiste. Le détournement des images consuméristes est la condition de la matérialisation d'une vision nouvelle de la vie quotidienne, en d'autres termes, une praxis ludique. Les contextes détournés d'une phrase ou d'une photo, d'un slogan publicitaire ou la reconstruction d'un quartier à l'intérieur d'un autre sont quelques exemples de détournement situationniste. Dans le cinéma le procédé est plus efficace : le recyclage des séquences du film « Naissance d'une Nation » dont on garde le montage, mais on y ajoute une musique subversive. Le détournement, affirme Debord, marque « au contraire notre indifférence pour un original vidé de sens et oublié[19] ». Ce n'est pas la nouveauté d'une image-objet qui intéresse, mais la flexibilité et la disponibilité de l'image de se mettre en jeu, même au prix de sa propre annihilation. En d'autres termes, l'organisme de la vie quotidienne n'est pas un système d'organes et de fonctions déterminé, il est un milieu qui provoque des situations, des expériences, un organisme jamais clos, jamais définitif. L'anatomie proposée par les situationnistes est un système ouvert, intégrateur, dynamique et la dissection est un jeu infini d'opérations et d'effets. La stratégie s'applique aussi à la relation avec l'espace urbain imaginé comme un labyrinthe. Le projet urbain de Constant, *Le Nouveau Babylon*, fonctionnait sur *le principe de la désorientation* « une confusion délibérée de la hiérarchie spatiale à travers des obstacles, des géométries incomplètes et des éléments translucides[20] ». Les nouveaux babyloniens nomades, déracinés, modifiaient sans cesse le *tissu urbain*.

Pourtant, le comportement n'était pas arbitraire, impulsif, il impliquait la connaissance des lois du dialogue entre l'homme et l'espace habité, dialogue occulté par la cécité du spectacle social. Debord insiste sur l'existence d'une science et d'un art de l'existence urbaine que les situationnistes appellent *psychogéographie :* « La psychogéographie se proposerait l'étude des lois exactes, et des effets précis du milieu géographique, consciemment aménagé ou non, agissant directement sur le comportement affectif des individus[21] ».

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[19] Guy Debord, Gil J. Wolman, « Mode d'emploi du détournement », dans *Les Lèvres nues*, nº 8, mai 1956.

[20] Libero Andreotti, « Tactiques de jeu dans l'Internationale Situationniste », October, tome.91, Hiver 2000, p.36-58, MIT Press

[21] Guy Debord, « Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine », dans Les *lèvres nues* n° 6, Bruxelles, 1955.

Une carte situationniste désoriente, rompe les articulations des quartiers, tout en montrant comment les effets du dialogue affectif et rationnel entre l'homme et l'espace refait une nouvelle structure organique de la ville, incomplète, dynamique, mais contrôlée. La carte du Paris publié en 1957, « The Naked City », composée par 19 sections découpées liées par des flèches représentant des « modifications spontanées de direction » entre les « unités d'atmosphère », contredit la fausse continuité de la ville. L'espace devient « un élément de pratique sociale », tel que le remarquait Thomas McDonough : « Tout en se laissant attirés par les sollicitations du terrain, les personnes engagées dans la dérive échappent aux totalisations imaginaires de la vue et choisissent plutôt une sorte de cécité[22] ». Cette cécité, continue l'auteur, « caractéristique pour l'utilisateur quotidien de la ville qui traverse un environnement opaque, est adopté consciemment afin de renverser la ville rationnelle de la pure visualité[23] ».

En conclusion, on peut affirmer que toute la construction situationniste est une dissection appliquée à l'anatomie du faux, à la structure rigide, pseudo-totalisante, à la mécanique sociale qui dérive des besoins artificiels, au spectacle de la séparation et de la fausse unité d'un organisme-simulacre. On ne peut pas échapper totalement à cette structure fictionnelle de la société, mais il est possible d'opérer autrement avec ses fonctions. L'organisme social ne doit pas avoir une autre finalité que la vie quotidienne, qui est incomplète.

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[22] Thomas F. McDonough, « Situationist Space », October 67, Hiver, 1994, p. 56–77

[23] Thomas F. McDonough, idem, p 64

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Notes on Guy Debord's Reception in Socialist Romania

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Abstract. Before being translated into Romanian for the first time in the 1990s, Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* was rarely mentioned in Romanian texts published before the fall of the socialist regime. Starting from an assessment of the theoretical assumptions that define the debates on "mass culture" in the context of the reinstitutionalization of sociology in the late 1960s, this essay attempts to explain why Debord's radical critique was not assimilated in the writings of Romanian sociologists during the socialist era. Furthermore, by analyzing the texts on mass media authored by Pavel Câmpeanu and Ștefana Steriade, which integrated, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the theoretical insights of the French philosopher, the essay highlights the changes undergone by the sociology of mass media during a period marked by increased state control and growing cultural isolation.

Keywords: Guy Debord; Pavel Câmpeanu; Ștefana Steriade; Sociology of Mass Culture.

1. Introduction

In an article published in July 1971 in the newspaper *Scânteia*, entitled "Sterile Trends and False Illusions in Western Cinema", film critic Florian Potra commented on a recent (in his words) "pamphlet" titled *The Society of the Spectacle*. Potra's presentation began with a personal anecdote: a Western producer and director had confessed to him that in the capitalist West the most profitable industry, above even oil or steel, was the entertainment industry. From this perspective, Potra saw Guy Debord's analysis as confirmation of a state of affairs, a philosophical analysis of the

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decline of Western cinema to the rank of a commodified industry. The film critic quoted three relevant passages from *The Society of the Spectacle*: "The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image" (Debord, 1995, 24); "The spectacle is the self-portrait of power in the age of power's totalitarian rule over the conditions of existence" (Debord, 1995, 19); "The spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life" (Debord, 1995, 29).

These theoretical formulations served as a starting point for criticizing the lack of political commitment in contemporary cinema. The film critic divided most contemporary Western films into two broad categories: commercial films ("films devoid of any human and social content, products manufactured for commercial purposes and aimed at the 'epidermis', targeting the primary instincts and the most basic sensations") and films with superficial ambitions to surpass the level of the former category ("films that raise certain issues of moral and social interest, but resolve them in such a way that the ideas are flattened before they gain strength and prominence") (Potra, 1971, 4). Of the latter, Potra critically dismissed the perceived bankrupt "Rousseau-ism" of Denis Hopper's *Easy Rider* and the superficial subversive content of a film such as Paul Mazursky's *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, suggesting that the ultimate goal of films such as these was to limit the ideological perspective of Western consumers, keeping it within the confines of the ideas and policies of the ruling classes. Fortunately, Potra added, this constant exposure to the ideology of the privileged classes was more of a Western phenomenon, as the selection of films shown in Romania shielded viewers from many of the problematic films: "For Romanian audiences, this reality is much less visible, because our cinemas' repertoire is spared the plethora of 'dangerous films' that invade screens elsewhere". In conclusion, the film critic proposed as an alternative the type of cinema conceptualized by the influential Italian theorist Liborio Termine, a politically engaged "antagonistic cinema" that would resist the ubiquitous "art without ideals" (*ibidem*, 4).

Even though they are far removed from the philosophical intentions of *The Society of the Spectacle*, Potra's reflections are among the few extensive reactions to Debord's book during the socialist period in Romania. It is obvious that Debord's theories, which are not referred to after the first

two paragraphs of Potra's polemical essay, are rather a pretext for presenting Potra's own theories about contemporary Western cinema. However, at the time these lines were written, they were symptomatic not only for Potra's aesthetic choices, but also for a much broader debate concerning the connection between the current state of capitalism and the type of mass culture produced by the unprecedented industrial development of the West. This broader debate, involving some of the most prominent researchers and theorists of the time in Romania, explains to a large extent why radical critiques of capitalist and socialist mass culture, such as *The Society of the Spectacle*, did not receive widespread attention in Romania and, to the extent that texts such as Debord's seminal book are mentioned in the theoretical interventions of the time, why the French philosopher's ideas were often, as in Potra's article, diverted and reduced to a critique of the differences in aesthetic taste amplified by capitalist societies.

2. Legitimizing a New Scientific Field in Socialist Romania: The Sociology of Mass Culture

The inherent link between the late, industrialized stage of Western capitalism, characterized by mass consumption, and a related type of culture produced for the largest possible number of consumers was, in the theoretical texts written in Romania in the late 1960s and early 1970s, one of the fundamental axioms of a subfield of sociology, named, in the vocabulary of the era, the sociology of mass culture (as evidenced by some observations in the writings of the time, there was resistance among Romanian sociologists to the term "mass media" – see, for instance, Câmpeanu, 1972, 115). As a field of knowledge in its own right, sociology had only been rehabilitated in the mid-1960s in socialist Romania. Ștefan Boromitu has written extensively on the efforts to re-institutionalize sociology (see, for instance, Boromitu, 2017). Adela Hîncu, in turn, has reconstructed the chronology of the various efforts to institutionally re-establish this field, which was viewed with hostility by state officials until the mid-1960s (Hîncu, 2019, 43-86). Thus, thanks to the combined efforts of several academics, sociology was reintroduced into the curriculum of the University of Bucharest in 1966, with the same thing happening two years later at the Universities of Iași and Cluj. Very quickly, sociology specialists, many of whom were affiliated with the

Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, produced an abundance of scientific literature through which they indirectly justified the discipline's right to exist by presenting new methodologies. In turn, one of the scientific fields in which they were most active in the late 1960s and early 1970s was that of the sociology of mass culture.

Several volumes dedicated to this subfield of sociology, generally containing a mixture of theoretical essays and specific interpretations of quantitative or qualitative studies undertaken by the Romanian sociologists, appeared during this period: *The Psycho-Sociology of Mass Culture* (*Psiho-sociologia culturii de masă*, 1968), the two-volume anthology of essays generically titled *Contributions to the Sociology of Mass Culture* (*Contribuții la sociologia culturii de masă*, 1970, 1971) and *De gustibus disputandum* (1972). One of the terms most frequently invoked in the theoretical excursions in these volumes was "empirical". In the first of the two volumes of *Contributions to the Sociology of Mass Culture*, it is telling that, unlike its later occurrences, it appears as a euphemism to characterize the rather improvised efforts to address and shape mass culture in the previous period:

> despite their scale and the resources they employed, cultural dissemination activities were largely carried out under the banner of empiricism. The dissemination of culture, as a large-scale social process, did not have its own *science*, that is, a body of systematized principles according to which the technical development of this activity could be optimized and which, at the same time, could be theorized through a methodical study of this activity itself. […] Mass cultural activity has, of course, given rise to a crystallized experience, certain norms and methods, and even a spontaneous 'sociology'. But *scientific* sociology has much to contribute here (Mihail Cernea, in Cernea et al., 1970, 7).

Texts theorizing during this period the study of mass culture and, secondarily, the manner in which mass culture could be influenced, insisted unanimously on the empirical nature of the methods and on the necessary scientific approach of this field of knowledge. At the same time, paradoxically, the new subfield of knowledge seemed to be constructing its theoretical edifice as it went along, as quantitative and qualitative investigations carried out in various towns in Romania were accumulating.

The bibliographical references of studies published during this period reveal an attempt to synchronize with contemporary Western theories. A number of classic studies were frequently cited – one of the most frequently discussed, for example, is Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton's 1948 seminal article "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action" (1948) –, but generally, until the mid-1970s, the volumes or studies discussed originating in the West were no more than a decade old – a remarkable update for a newly reinstated scientific field. Access to such recent bibliography suggests in itself how important sociology was to the authorities at the time of its reinstatement: volumes in languages of international circulation – predominantly English and French –, which would otherwise have been almost impossible to access, were made available to researchers either in the original or in translation (Matei, 2013, 180). In this process, theorists of the sociology of mass culture became cultural mediators: what they selected and synthesized from Western scientific literature represented, for a significant part of the Romanian public, an initial contact with new theories and concepts. This effort at cultural translation explains the encyclopedic nature of most of the texts: structured as introductions to a relatively new field, they discussed a wide variety of theories concerning the mass media, even if their frameworks were at times contradictory, in an effort to synthesize as many theoretical options as possible.

The paradox of the position in which the sociologists found themselves at that time was that, in their search for a theoretical synthesis, they had to select theories that did not risk contradicting the theoretical frameworks in which mass culture issues had been discussed up to that point, while their scientific approach and the cultural practices they wanted to implement were intended to be fundamentally different from the existing ones. In their texts, they declared, implicitly or explicitly, their adherence to a Marxist approach in studying issues related to mass communication and mass culture. This positioning brought with it a first criterion for selecting theories imported from the West. At the same time, the need to discuss sensitive aspects of mass communication, such as state intervention in matters regarding culture in socialist regimes, represented a second implicit selection criterion. These two criteria largely explain the extraordinary popularity in socialist Romania of the late 1960s and early 1970s of the so-

called systems theories, borrowed from cybernetics. At the time, cybernetics had the advantage of having Norbert Wiener – a theorist living in the United States, but viewed with suspicion by the American authorities for his willingness to collaborate with scientists from the Soviet Union – as its emblematic figure, as well as having a recent tradition in the German Democratic Republic, initiated by the German philosopher and theorist Georg Klaus. The theoretical language of cybernetics had the advantage of neutrality, describing in technical terms a communication process whose contours could be easily adjusted to the different contexts of the capitalist West and of the socialist countries. Here, for example, is how sociologist Pavel Câmpeanu, influenced by theories originating from cybernetics, described in 1972 state control over the mass media:

> Any social hierarchy spontaneously aspires to exercise the most effective control possible over the field of events. But of all the elements of the mass communication system, the field of events is the least receptive to the direct demands of the command apparatus. The field of reception is in a somewhat similar situation. The only fundamental element of the system on which the command apparatus can act directly is the communication mechanism. […] The command apparatus is interested in the circulation of certain information developed from certain positions. The field of reception shows a differentiated interest in the existing communication offer. This attitude cannot be changed by coercive actions (Câmpeanu, 1972, 84-85).

It was understood in the texts written at that time that such a description circumscribed a general communication process, applicable on a universal scale. However, in order to leave no room for ambiguity, the authors frequently inserted passages in which they explicitly emphasized the differences in nuance between the communication systems of capitalist and socialist regimes:

> It is natural that in socialism, the dynamic potential of the system should be given free rein, and the contradictions of social development should be detected and resolved without reaching conflictual forms. Under these conditions, the dominant feature would be the concordance between the interests promoted by the command apparatus and those to which the field of

> reception is sensitive – precisely because the economic base itself would have no reason to generate, naturally, conflicts of interest or, more precisely, because the command apparatus should essentially express the interest of the field of reception (*ibidem*, 85).

In such a manner, the theories synthesized by sociologists could present a mainly neutral version of the communication process, but one in which possibilities for criticism could be glimpsed, while at the same time emphasizing the exceptional nature of mass communication in socialist regimes.

Such ambiguity characterized the syncretic assimilation of multiple theories concerning mass culture and mass media from Western scientific sources. The theoretical framework proposed by most Romanian sociologists during this period, in addition to elements borrowed from cybernetics, retained, in a composite mixture, structural-functionalist theories in vogue at the time in the West, Marxist critiques of mass culture such as those of Adorno, the abstract syntheses of the communication science pioneer Abraham Moles, and sociological research on the structuring of leisure time. For each particular aspect of the field, a limited number of authors were repeatedly cited, to the point that they became almost mandatory references in any discussion on that subject: for instance, the French sociologist Joffre Dumazedier, particularly due to his 1962 volume *Vers une civilisation du loisir?*, exerted such a palpable influence on any discussion of leisure time that Romanian texts from that period retain the original French term *loisir*, without attempting to find a Romanian linguistic equivalent. In the case of multiple theoretical imports from Western sociological texts, methodological proposals were presented neutrally, while the critical implications of the texts under discussion were generally understood as a critique of capitalist mass culture, originating from within, and as a specific manner of differentiating the particular character and aims of mass culture in socialist societies.

The controversies that arose during this period among Romanian sociologists focused mainly on one of the fundamental contradictions of sociological practice at the time, discussed at length by Adela Hîncu (Hîncu, 2019, 245-286): the results of questionnaires administered by sociologists in various peripheral localities in Romania frequently revealed a cultural

consumption that was more oriented toward mass media (especially television) and less anchored in more traditional means of transmitting culture (theatre, cultural press, or even cinema). In the case of theatre or cinema consumption via television, the questionnaire results usually showed a clear differentiation between a small number of viewers who preferred challenging or difficult art and the majority, who mentioned in their preferences more accessible plays or films, associated by the sociologists with the broader area of mass entertainment. Such a differentiation of tastes, described by Romanian sociologists in neutral terms such as "cultural stratification", represented an issue that was difficult to ignore for the Romanian theorists of mass communication. In this case, criticism of mass media, and especially television – as the most advanced form of communication in industrialized societies –, which they selected and commented on from Western scientific literature, seemed to apply equally to the effects of cultural policies in socialist Romania. To solve this ambiguity, some Romanian theorists of mass culture echoed in their writings the criticism of television to be found in certain Western sociological or philosophical texts or they alternatively downplayed the importance of television altogether. A debate reflecting these contradictory positions was recorded, for instance, in three texts published in the volume *De gustibus disputandum* (1972), penned by philosopher and aesthetician Henri Wald and sociologists Oltea Mișcol and Mihail Cernea. Of the three, Wald, citing sociologist Jean Cazeneuve in support of his arguments, criticized the way in which mass media tended to fragment communication and to strip it of its authenticity:

> The cultivation of audiovisual media at the expense of ideas and the cultivation of fleeting emotions to the detriment of lasting feelings leads to the intensification of external life and the diminishment of inner life, to depersonalization, to uniformity, to an increase in social entropy (Henri Wald, in Pascadi et al., 1972, 332).

In response, Oltea Mișcol, reviewing Western and local sociological theories concerning the effect of television on mass culture, which she divided into pessimistic, optimistic, and realistic (i.e., moderate in

assumptions and conclusions), insisted on the potential of mass media to transform culture in a broader sense, provided that there was a good understanding of audience categories and that the mass media message was tailored to the requirements of specific types of audiences:

> … in our opinion, it is essential to know and recognize that the effects of this means of communication (as well as those of others, for that matter) cannot be attributed to the medium itself, but to the way it is used as a means, i.e., to a socially determined human intentionality, arising either from an obsession with financial profitability or, on the contrary, under the auspices of genuine humanism. The nature of the relationships of production and the 'ideological field' in which audiovisual messages are developed, transmitted, and received are ultimately responsible for the effects and educational and formative purposes of these messages (Oltea Mișcol, in Pascadi et al, 1972, 281-282).

In turn, Mihail Cernea, recalling a recent research internship at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences in California, where he had interacted with numerous American sociologists, emphasized the ability of viewers to actively respond to media messages and distinguished two specific and not equally desirable functions of television:

> Many sociologists critically highlight the consequences of using television to serve a society of "mass consumption" that is controlled by profit-driven elites. Driven by profit motives, commercial television regularly sacrifices cultural standards for financial ones. In order to increase the audience for commercial advertising, programs of minimal consistency or horrible substance are favoured if they bring in maximum viewership. The difference from American educational television, with its frequent programs of high cultural relevance, with excellent philosophical or political debates, long and yet telegenic, is obvious" (Mihail Cernea, in Pascadi et al., 1972, 343-344).

From this polemical exchange of ideas, it becomes clear how references to the authority of Western sociologists ultimately masked personal perceptions of mass culture and the role of the mass media – both Henri Wald and Oltea Mișcol were quoting in their interventions Jean

Cazeneuve's *Sociologie de la radio-télévision*, ultimately reaching diametrically opposed conclusions –, while the ideological stakes of the debate, translated into the language of Marxist cultural criticism, were in fact related to the authors' own cultural positioning in relation to the idea of a homogeneous, mass culture, and in relation to their preferred means of intervention, through cultural policies, in order to alter the cultural habits of the working class. As in the passages quoted from Florian Potra's article at the beginning of this text, the quotations from Western authors cited as evidence in these interventions were simultaneously references to contemporary debates in the capitalist West and pretexts for diagnosing, in more or less critical terms, an alleged decline of mass culture under the influence of the mass media, the ultimate target of these criticisms being a certain type of homogeneous culture of the less educated classes and its implied source: the cultural policies of the socialist authorities.

3. Is Criticism of the Mass Media Possible under Socialism? Pavel Câmpeanu's and Ștefana Steriade's Theoretical Writings

In terms of the optimistic, pessimistic, or realistic stance toward the emancipatory potential of mass culture discussed in Oltea Mișcol's essay, quoted earlier, the texts of the Romanian sociologists published in the late 1960s and early 1970s strike a tone that is, if not optimistic, at least realistic. What did this "realism" mean in practice? It implied an impartial consideration of the pros and cons of mass culture – especially mass culture disseminated through television –, and ultimately a theoretical distancing from overly harsh criticism of mass media. Contemporary critics in the capitalist West who questioned the value of culture produced and disseminated through the mass media were affectionately labelled extremists in some texts, as evidenced by this descriptive passage penned by Oltea Mișcol in 1976:

> Extremists associate the media with a categorical rejection of art, while moderates are willing to admit, alongside the usefulness of mass media in propagating and raising awareness of artistic values, even the possibility of creating specific artistic products within their system (Oltea Mișcol, in Smeu, Matei et al., 1976, 121).

This distinction between an extreme, radically critical position and a moderate one, which saw the potential of the mass media to create an authentic mass culture, recurred from one text to another in the scientific literature of that period produced by Romanian sociologists of mass culture. It appeared, for instance, in different forms in two of the texts published in 1968 in the volume *The Psycho-Sociology of Mass Culture*, which dealt with cinema and television, respectively. The essay on cinema, penned by Ștefana Steriade, which included a theorization of the viewer's emotional participation in the audio-visual communication circuit, as opposed to a theoretical passivity of the audience in relation to cinema, referred to critics of mass media using the French phrase "*les prophètes de malheur*", while briefly analyzing, as a representative example, Gilbert Cohen-Séat's volume *Essai sur les principes d'une philosophie du cinema* (Ștefana Steriade, in Herseni et al., 1968, 178). In his analysis of television, Pavel Câmpeanu constructed an ideal model of the mass media consumer, endowed with "the triple ability of critical selection, reception, and refusal", and distinguished his theory of active consumption, based on a continuous feedback loop between transmitted messages and audience reactions, from the theorizing of such American sociologists and cultural critics as Ernest van den Haag and Gilbert Seldes, labelled by Câmpeanu as "pessimists" (Pavel Câmpeanu, in *ibidem*, 224). The expository, quasi-encyclopedic structure of the texts, including multiple possible points of view on the same subject, allowed the authors to insert and comment on radically critical stances regarding the generic content of audiovisual culture – in his intervention, Câmpeanu noted, for example, the following lines, in a paragraph referring to Adorno's essay, "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture": "What the average consumer of radio and television communications generally desires is not Aristotelian catharsis, but a pleasant way to fill their free time" (Pavel Câmpeanu, in *ibidem*, 240) – without the "realism" of their conclusions to be affected by such dire statements.

There were two main reasons for the absence in the late 1960s and early 1970s of a more radical critique of the mass media in Romania and of the resulting change in social relations in industrialized societies, a critique that would take up and expand on the arguments of Western "pessimists" such as Guy Debord. One of these reasons was the technological gap between

capitalist Western countries and socialist countries such as Romania, which were undergoing an extensive modernization process at that time. The arguments of Romanian sociologists in favor of the efficiency and expansion of mass communication networks were often accompanied by comparative figures taken from reports released by Western institutions, which discreetly noted this gap. The tone of these assessments sometimes mirrored the triumphant statements in official reports regarding Romania's ongoing modernization, but at the same time, the implicit recommendations of sociologists raised the issue of expanding the population's access to modern means of mass communication. An even more important reason, however, is the hegemonic position that sociologists assumed at that time as intermediaries between the authorities and the public. Beyond the fact that rejecting the harshest criticism of the media was largely a rhetorical strategy, necessary in order to reaffirm the institutional standing of the field of research they represented, the writings on mass culture by Romanian sociologists attested, in the period immediately following the reinstitutionalization of sociology, not only to an appetite for analyzing the data and social phenomena they were studying, but also to a desire to provide solutions for improving the situation on the ground. For instance, in 1972, in one of his first comprehensive volumes on mass media, *Radio, Television, Audiences* (*Radio, televizune, public*), an inquiry generally devoid of polemical notes, Pavel Câmpeanu critically analyzed the indiscriminate way in which advertising was used in the widely circulated daily newspapers of the time, without taking into account – this being the author's implicit proposal – the different types of audiences to which these newspapers were addressed (Câmpeanu, 1972, 119-120). Such cultural policy proposals, which could also be found in the conclusions of large-scale sociological surveys conducted during this period, were frequently accompanied by calls for quantitative and qualitative analysis of audience composition, for creating appropriate cultural institutions, and for encouraging active public participation in the cultural process.

More general criticisms, explicitly influenced by Western sociological and philosophical theories that warned of the passivity of spectators in the new era of mass media and of the dehumanization of social relations within consumerist culture, started to insinuate themselves into the

analyses of mass culture only when the illusions concerning the ability of sociologists to influence the cultural policies of the regime began to dissipate. This disenchantment took place in the context of the gradual marginalization of sociology, beginning in the mid-1970s, and its gradual transformation into a field of knowledge meant to reflect and support, through its activity, the cultural policies of the socialist regime. During this period, Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime became not only more authoritarian and less willing to accept the moderate discourse proposed by the writings of Romanian sociologists, but also less willing to assimilate theoretical debates concerning the very idea of a mass culture evaluated in quantitative terms. As Alexandru Matei notes, during the 1970s, the term "mass culture" itself became less and less present in theoretical texts (Matei, 2013, 38). In the mid-1970s, a sociological study conducted by Haralamb Culea, in which he referred to the "intra- and inter-systemic" contradictions of mass culture, was rejected upon publication – one of the first signs of the regime's growing hostility towards theories that signaled discrepancies regarding the complete alignment of public opinion with its official goals (Hîncu, 2019, 265-267). Towards the end of the decade, the majority of the theoretical texts on mass media – as evidenced, for example, by Ion Drăgan's volume, *Public Opinion, Mass Communication, and Propaganda in Contemporary Society* (*Opinia publică, comunicarea de masă și propaganda în societatea contemporană*, 1980), a synthesis of the sociology course the author taught at the University of Bucharest – largely retained the conceptual apparatus developed in the previous decade, but, in their analyses of the situation in Romania, they carefully aligned their conclusions with the official documents and proclamations issued by the regime (see, for instance, Drăgan, 1980, 287-308). The possibility of critically analyzing the effects of mass media on different types of audiences and on culture in general thus became practically unfeasible.

One notable exception to this general trend is represented by the sociological texts authored during this period by Pavel Câmpeanu and Ștefana Steriade. As noted earlier, in their theoretical syntheses published in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the two distanced themselves from more radical positions regarding the effects of mass media on mass culture, in an attempt to construct systematic models of communication in which the

audience (the "receiver", in the technical terms used by them) constantly negotiated its position in the communication circuit in relation to the content received (i.e., in relation to the "transmitter"). This theoretical model and their overall interest in the cultural stratification of the audience largely reflected the institutional activity that the two were engaged in at the time. Pavel Câmpeanu had obtained his PhD in the early 1960s at the most prominent institution in the socialist education system at the time, the Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy, and, after working for a period in one of the departments of the Romanian state television, was appointed in 1967 as manager of a newly established institute within the same institution, the Office for Studies and Polls, which he would lead until 1980 (Cistelecan, 2015, 292-293). In turn, as evidenced by her early writings and her affiliation with one of the most important institutions for the revival of sociology in Romania, the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, as well as her collaborative work with the Office for Studies and Polls, Steriade was interested in measuring the educational impact of the cultural policies implemented by the socialist regime. Individual studies of the two authors appeared frequently until the mid-1970s in collective volumes dedicated to the subject of mass culture, while in the following decade they published some of their contributions under a joint signature. Especially in these later texts, published from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, aspects relating to the relationship between mass communication and changes in social structures in industrialized societies began to be addressed from a critical perspective.

The most important texts in which traces of this new approach can be found are an essay penned in 1976 under a joint signature, "The Fascination of the Trivial" („Fascinația derizoriului"), a volume published in 1979, signed only by Câmpeanu, *People and Television: A Sociological View of the Viewer* (*Oamenii și televiziunea: Privire sociologică asupra spectatorului*), and a final volume published under a joint signature in 1985, *People and Cinema: A Sociological View of the Film Spectator* (*Oamenii și filmul: O privire sociologică asupra spectatorului de film*). The latter two are among the few theoretical syntheses from this period in which passages from Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* are commented on and used as arguments in a philosophical framework that goes beyond the technical,

abstract descriptions of mass media that Romanian sociologists continued to elaborate. As will become clear below, references to Debord and other critics of mass media-influenced culture, whom Câmpeanu and Steriade had treated with caution in their early writings, are usually inserted as part of brief philosophical digressions in relation to the major themes addressed or are in themselves elaborations on theoretical concerns barely sketched out in their early works. In retrospect, their critical remarks on the systematic effects of mass culture reveal a concern about the limits of what could and could not be written at that time – as Alex Cistelecan notes in relation to Câmpeanu's texts (an observation that can be extended to the work of both authors), the underlying impression they give is that these texts were always written with two audiences in mind, one local and one international (Cistelecan, 2015, 296). Moreover, even though the texts published by the two authors could not explicitly reflect the professional marginalization suffered by Pavel Câmpeanu in the late 1970s and the harassment that both authors suffered at the hands of the regime's secret police, the Securitate, they still reflected implicitly the growing cultural isolation of the socialist regime. A phrase included in *People and Film* suggests quite clearly, in contrast to the early period of their work, the lack of access to up-to-date Western scientific literature that sociologists were facing at that time: "To the extent that it was accessible to us, the literature in question [i.e. relating to cinema] also seemed to us to be marked by certain shortcomings" (Steriade & Câmpeanu, 1985, 32). However, the analyses penned by the two authors in these late texts, indirectly marked by the increasingly restrictive ideological climate, are among the most lucid and complex theorizations of mass culture published in Romania during that period.

"If agricultural work gave rise to folklore, the equivalent of industrial work, at least until now, is industrialized entertainment" (Câmpeanu & Steriade, 1976, 184-185). This was one of the hypotheses formulated by Pavel Câmpeanu and Ștefana Steriade towards the end of their brief essay "The Fascination of the Trivial" („Fascinația derizoriului"), published in 1976. The volume in which it appears, *Aesthetics in the Sphere of Culture* (*Esteticul în sfera culturii*), was also one of the latest collections of essays by Romanian sociologists addressing the issue of mass culture. The central concept debated in the volume was kitsch, one of the most discussed issues

being that of entertainment without cultural pretensions – in the words of Câmpeanu and Steriade, a broad field that includeed "cinematic melodramas, pop music, television series, and some adventure films" (*ibidem*, 176). Beginning in the early 1970s, the shift in sociological perspective from a quasi-neutral, implicitly normative definition of mass culture to recurrent conceptualizations of the connections between mass culture and kitsch signaled one of the strongest indirect reactions to official pronouncements regarding the virtues of a common, homogeneous socialist culture. Based on the results of sociological surveys and more in-depth detailed knowledge of the cultural preferences of Romanian workers, sociologists were put in the position of explaining the partial results of the cultural policies of the regime.

Many of these interpretations of the sociological data reveal a not-so-subtle condemnation of current patterns of cultural consumption. Broadly speaking, "The Fascination of the Trivial" is no exception in this regard. However, whereas other sociologists lamented a decline in taste, which they repeatedly attributed to the lack of education of the audiences (and, therefore, to the ineffective implementation of cultural policies), Câmpeanu and Steriade attempted to offer a more comprehensive explanation. In their view, the unprecedented scale of the phenomenon had more to do with the technological changes inherent in modernization and industrialization:

> One possible answer, also belonging to the realm of hypotheses, would be that the need for this type of entertainment is not due to the economic organization of modern industry, but to its technology. The fascination with the trivial would thus originate not from an artificial need, but from an objectively determined one, in other words, from the technology itself, which represents the immediate and everyday framework of human labor (*ibidem*, 184).

The two authors gave no examples for this determinism, but in their speculations, characterized by a certain ambiguity, they raised for the first time in their writings the issue of the passivity of the public in the new technological and social configuration:

> Entertainment produced by technology is generally a spectacular modality. It presupposes a rigorous separation between spectators and protagonists. This

outline yet another tendency towards the passivity of the public, towards its dependence on the advantages of stereotyping, towards the transformation of the receiver into a consumer – an additional possibility for the fragmentation and miniaturization of consciousness (*ibidem*, 183).

Such statements, which did not explicitly refer to either capitalist or socialist modes of organization, but seemed to describe both equally, were expanded upon by Pavel Câmpeanu in his synthesis on television published in 1979. This was also the first text in which Câmpeanu, in a section in which he philosophizes about the nature of time spent in front of television screens, explicitly quoted Guy Debord. Câmpeanu's theoretical dialogue with the philosophical themes in *The Society of the Spectacle* is also noticeable in other sections of the volume. In fact, one of the most remarkable features of this volume was the complex way in which it returned, from different angles, to various conceptualizations of the notion of spectacle, understood not only in its literal sense, as a feature of mass media, but extended to its social implications. On the surface, the author's remarks seem cautious and balanced, as in his early writings on mass media, highlighting both the advantages and disadvantages of television exposure:

The power of television lies in the fact that, by transforming everything it touches into spectacle, it makes it accessible to everyone. The danger of television lies in the fact that, by giving spectacle an explosive reach, it risks replacing the understanding of what is necessary with its mere contemplation, real action with imaginary action (Câmpeanu, 1979, 52).

In this instance, the author's philosophical stakes went beyond the classic findings of mass media sociology, which portrayed viewers as overwhelmed by the abundance of messages constantly transmitted by television. For Câmpeanu, informational excess constituted one of the fundamental and symptomatic characteristics of contemporary mass media communication, as evidenced by one of the sections of *People and Television* dedicated to this issue:

By creating overly abundant programs, television becomes a tool for excessively satisfying the need for spectacle. […] Entertainment and excess

are the decisive parameters of the specific way in which television organizes human relations […]. Its excessive nature – coupled with the circumvention of exchange relations – is the axis around which the interference of television with the economy is organized. […] For in the context of overly abundant programs – that is, of excessive supply – the message of the television is the only industrial product whose production not only exceeds social consumption capacity, but whose strategy consists precisely in exceeding this capacity (*ibidem*, 53, 56, 57).

As an extension of these philosophical speculations, Câmpeanu systematically touched upon, in paragraphs scattered among more specific analyses of the various components of visual communication, some of the fundamental themes of *The Society of the Spectacle*: the alienation of the audiences in relation to the spectacular nature of the mass media, the general passivity maintained through spectacle and, in the tradition of the Marxist analysis revisited by Debord (Jappe, 1999, 13-19), the fetishization of commodity exchange-value over use-value in industrialized societies, encouraged by mass media consumption. Some of the paragraphs written by Câmpeanu, due to the manner in which the author used the expressiveness of concepts to highlight dialectical links between opposing terms, seemed to be actual extensions of the reflections in *The Society of the Spectacle*. In one such fragment, Câmpeanu attemped to demonstrate, in Debord's manner, the necessary connection between the abundance of mass media messages and economic scarcity:

As real scarcity decreases, so does the legitimacy of economic adaptation to its imperatives. By creating artificial needs to which it confers economic legitimacy, the "consumer society" widens the gap between productive capacity and legitimate needs – or, in other words, cultivates an artificial state of scarcity. It is not economic organization that adapts to the real state of affairs, but the real state of affairs that adapts to economic organization. // The strategy of excessive spectacle is in obvious consensus with this social organization. The economy presents itself as an empire of necessity, to which television seems to oppose its own empire of apparent freedom. The prohibitive society appears here as a society that overcompensates. Restriction is replaced by generosity. The economic appearance of society is

> negated by its televised appearance. The harsh world of deprivation is countered by television with its own fascinating world of overabundance (*ibidem*, 60).

In such speculative excursions, although the explicit target was understood to be Western consumer society, the implicit allusions in the text could also be understood in regard to the social and political context in which they were written. The same was true of the opposition drawn by Câmpeanu in *People and Television* between false consciousness, resulting from the assimilation of the spectacle, and freedom, derived solely from action and understood as a form of opposition to the ubiquity of the spectacle. Paradoxically for a theoretical text on television, what Câmpeanu seemed to suggest, in a section dedicated to time, in which he retained one of Debord's axioms – "The spectacle [...] is in effect a false consciousness of time" (Debord, 1995, 114) – was the fact that television, due to its transformation into industrialized spectacle, was becoming an obstacle to authentic needs for action and self-affirmation:

> Passively contemplating the world takes more time than actively transforming it. This is excess in terms of time. The spectatorial experience of life becomes an instance whose scope, formed spontaneously and as yet unstable, cannot be justified by the adequate satisfaction of specific needs (Câmpeanu, 1979, 143-144).

The opposition between active participation and passive consumption of the spectacle was also one of the fundamental ideas of *People and Cinema*, the 1985 synthesis penned by Ștefana Steriade and Pavel Câmpeanu. In the volume, the two authors expand on one of the ideas outlined in the essay "The Fascination of the Trivial", constructing two abstract types representative of the relationship with the mass media: the protagonist and the spectator. These represented two opposing social roles: if the protagonist (understood both literally, as the main character in cinema, and figuratively, as an embodiment of social action) symbolized the need to express oneself, to act, the spectator embodied all the compensatory social needs sublimated through mass media consumption. In a paragraph explicitly quoting one of

Debord's philosophical stances, the two authors highlighted the process of alienation underlying this dichotomy:

> Non-participation in imaginary events can lead to real events: the viewer adopts behaviours inspired by film models. This is an indirect, post-spectacular kind of participation, which does nothing more than convert the mimetic impact of film fiction into reality. The conflict between the reality of the individual and the reality of alienation also determines the reversal of film participation. Due to imitation, it is not the real individual who participates in fictional events, but fictional events that insinuate themselves into the life of the real individual. As Debord points out, "the consumer's need for imitation is precisely the infantile need conditioned by all aspects of his fundamental dispossession". The resort to imitation is generally a testimony to the individual's inability to assert himself as such, or at least to resist the levelling pressures exerted from outside. Insofar as fiction does not dissociate itself from reality except to reproduce it – or insofar as it is only received within these limits – the imitation of fictional models represents a fictitious freedom of choice: the viewer yields to real pressure, believing that he is rejecting it; he believes that he is asserting himself as an individual, but he is only asserting himself as an alienated individual (Steriade & Câmpeanu, 1985, 138).

The conceptualization of imitation and of the social roles shaped by mass media consumption were themes addressed by Ștefana Steriade in her early writings, but the extension of these reflections towards a theorization of the alienation of the audiences represented a symptomatic evolution in the writings of both Steriade and Câmpeanu. At the time of its publication, the volume contained an interpretation of quantitative surveys conducted by the Office for Studies and Polls in the late 1970s, an attempt to explain, using methods that were innovative for their time, the population's widespread appetite for cinema, and especially for sensationalist cinema. A large part of the volume addressed this consumption with extra-aesthetic, compensatory dimensions, proposing concepts such as "selective distortion" (an alteration of aesthetic taste in relationship to the social environment) in order to reformulate, on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data, the classic problem of cultural stratification in relation to taste. However, in the passages

where the two authors referred to Marxist critics of mass media such as Althusser or Debord, the stakes of the text became much more allusive. Thus, in a broader discussion prompted by one of the opening remarks of *The Society of the Spectacle* (§6, see Debord, 1995, 13), which opened the section referring to the concept of the spectator, Steriade and Câmpeanu, in the abstract, philosophical terms, outlined a critique of social passivity that went beyond the theoretical framework of the discussion on the functions of cinema:

> According to Debord's vision, connected to the spectacle of the world, the spectator is less and less available for his own spectacle or for non-spectatorial relationships. Reduced mainly to the exercise of social roles related to his profession, he participates in the real process of transforming the world through the fetishizing mechanisms of the economy. […] The extinction of interchangeability between protagonists and spectators creates the premise of the interchangeability of all spectators. Assuming the role of spectator is not conditioned by any professional aptitude or qualification, as such it equates to a temporary, voluntary – and therefore comforting – suspension of identity. Anonymity is one of the main advantages – but also one of the main servitudes – of the spectator (Steriade & Câmpeanu, 1985, 91-92).

Judging by such philosophical excursions, with their implied social criticism, Steriade and Câmpeanu had become during the last decade of Romanian socialism, using a term they employed nearly two decades earlier, "pessimists".

4. "25 Theses to a Marxist Television Theory"

Were the most striking criticisms in the texts of the two authors intended as subversive criticism of the socialist regime? The text best suited to answer such a question is probably an essay by Pavel Câmpeanu, "25 Theses to a Marxist Television Theory", published in English, in 1985, in the journal *Jel-Kép*, a publication of the Hungarian Mass Communication Research Center. First presented at a conference bringing together researchers from socialist countries held in Bulgaria in 1979, Câmpeanu's

text had been probably written around the same time that *People and Television* had been published. Indeed, many of the themes addressed in *People and Television* were summarized in Câmpeanu's 25 theoretical axioms, although, as the article was published for a specialized audience outside Romania, in a climate less marked by ideological uncertainties, the author's positions were expressed in more straightforward terms. The third thesis of the article thus reveals the theoretical ambitions of Câmpeanu's scientific project in relation to both Western and socialist scientific literature on mass media:

> In my opinion, the Marxist researchers of the field did not satisfactorily elaborate on the coherent criticism of the almost classic American theories (Lasswell, Parsons, Schramm, Lazarsfeld and Merton, etc.) and did not produced a thorough and scientifically competitive Marxist theory. Concerned efforts were multiplied without producing more than a line of partial visions, formulated in various manners. We can mention names, such as Althusser, Dallas Smythe, Burgelin, Fardone, Enzen[s]berger, and Nordenstreng, etc. These are Marxist authors or standing very near to Marxism, who despite their differences have two identical features: they all live in the West and almost all base their analysis on the fact that through advertisement television was directly connected into the economic process. // Thus, Marxist approaches do not add much to the television theory, and researchers in the socialist countries do not really participate in these international efforts (Câmpeanu, 1985, 38-39).

As can be seen, Guy Debord's name did not appear in the list of Western authors mentioned by Câmpeanu, but his influence could be noted in a later thesis (§13), in which the Romanian author constructed his arguments using terminology close to Debord's philosophical speculations:

> With the help of this technology [i.e. television], information is turned into a "kinetic" picture, which can be transmitted great distances. Because of this kinetic character, television does not introduce static objects and persons, but relations, procedures and actions, which are the subject of spectacularity. Therefore, it can be said that television transforms information into a spectacle. Accordingly, the concept around which we can build a fertile

definition of television is the requirement of the spectacle. In fine arts, one becomes the object of one's own contemplation. In the spectacle, the object of contemplation is no longer man, but mobile human relations (*ibidem*, 40-41).

The most precise contextual fact that Câmpeanu offered to support his position was the increase in the number of hours spent watching television, both globally and in Romania:

> The increased social time spent on the depiction of the spectacle. This time is incomparably longer than in the previous periods: in many countries television programs are transmitted for 24 hours a day, in Romania for an average of 15 hours (*ibidem*, 41).

Two of the following theses (§16 and §17) reproduced almost word for word the theories in *People and Television* regarding the link between economic poverty and the abundance of the televised spectacle – "The system of commodity economy, because of its essence, is a form of the socialization of poverty… […]. The immoderate offer of television confronts the strictness of economic limitations" (*ibidem*, 41) –, while three others (§20-§22) reiterated Câmpeanu's comments on Marx's theory of the fetishization of commodity. Although very few of Câmpeanu's references to the immeasurable importance of television in contemporary societies offered any remedial solutions, two proposals were nevertheless included in his last thesis. On the one hand, according to the Romanian sociologist, it was necessary to distinguish between the two distinct spheres in which television exerted its influence:

> Television is regarded as the object of social consciousness – and this is correct. Television is only infrequently regarded as the object of social practice – which is completely incorrect. […] The activity which is the object of social consciousness is determined by the activity that is the object of social practice. The approach which accepts this duality can confirm the premise of such a social integration of television which creates less tension and confusion (*ibidem*, 43).

On the other hand, Câmpeanu noted that it was necessary to theorize an ontology of television, which meant, according to the author, "the study of those genuine relations which are created and amended by television" (*ibidem*, 43). It was not the actual content of television programs that would have been the subject of such a philosophical investigation, but rather the social relationships and practices created by exposure to the mass media. In such articulations, from a Marxist perspective, of the need to study the connections between technology, spectacle as a constituent element of technological advancement, and the new transformations of everyday life under their impact, Câmpeanu's theories on mass media and television engaged into a philosophical dialogue with radical critiques of the passivity of the consumer in industrialized societies, such as those penned by Debord. Relating "25 Theses to a Marxist Television Theory" to the two volumes subsequently devoted to television and cinema by Câmpeanu and Steriade, one may speculate that the sections and excursions referring to the inherent alienation of the audiences, the abandonment of action in favor of a false spectatorial consciousness, implicitly alluded to the abandonment of the ambitious scientific project conceived in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Romanian sociologists, a project made increasingly irrelevant by the unfortunate ideological developments in Romania in the latter years of the socialist regime. The texts penned in the late 1970s and and early 1980s by Câmpeanu and Steriade were, from this point of view, a final attempt to assess the social and behavioural effects of mass media and the ambiguous cultural policies of the regime during that era.

Ironically, the three theoretical replies to the essay included in *Jel-Kép*, authored by preeminent Hungarian philosophers and sociologists Miklós Almási, István Hermann, and Iván Vitányi, even though they acknowledged Câmpeanu's ambition to reevaluate the effects of mass media from a Marxist perspective, insisted with various arguments on the ability of the audiences to freely select and interpret messages received through mass media – exactly as Câmpeanu himself would probably have responded a decade earlier. Differences in political context – the climate of relative liberalization in socialist Hungary, compared to the increasing cultural isolation and homogenization of the Romanian regime – probably had a lot to do with this theoretical asymmetry.

5. Conclusions

In the last two decades of the Romanian socialist regime, references to Guy Debord's cinematic work are difficult to find. Probably, his films were not even screened in Romania during this period. One can only speculate as to how they would have been received in a cultural climate that was still assimilating the Western cinematic modernism of the 1960s. An approximation of the possible reactions to Debord's abstract cinema is offered by an article authored by future director Nicolae Oprițescu, published in 1970 in the cultural newspaper *România literară*, in which he presented a retrospective at the French Cinematheque dedicated to films directed by directors affiliated with the Lettrist group. The Lettrist movement was mentioned in the Romanian cultural press of the time mainly due to the Romanian origins of its founder, Isidore Isou. In Oprițescu's account, both the films in the retrospective and the happenings in which both the Lettrists and some members of the Situationist movement, unidentified by the author, indulged are related with pervasive irony. For Oprițescu, the most striking features of Lettrist cinema were its cultural exoticism and its theoretical pretentiousness. It is possible that Debord's films would have suffered a similar reception, even if his open attacks on the bureaucratic characteristics of socialist regimes would have been overlooked by the institutions responsible for distributing foreign films in Romania. On the other hand, despite the few references to his most famous book, *The Society of the Spectacle*, texts such as those authored in the late 1970s by Pavel Câmpeanu and Ștefana Steriade attest to the fact that, at least in some cultural milieus, Debord's essay was known and discussed. Debord's radical theories, and especially his equal aversion to the different strands of "orthodox Marxism", to be found in capitalist West and in the socialist countries, made him philosophically unsuitable for socialist cultures which were frequently affected by ideological changes, such as the one in Romania. However, a partial version of Debord's philosophical intuitions, especially his distinctions regarding the characteristics of the spectacle in industrial societies, was integrated as an authoritative argument for an extensive scientific endeavor aimed at influencing the cultural policies of the socialist regime, especially in the theoretical texts authored by Pavel Câmpeanu and

Ștefana Steriade. At the root of this philosophical affinity there was probably also a shared inclination toward a certain sophisticated, dialectical way of using philosophical concepts; in this regard, Alex Cistelecan compares Câmpeanu's expressive style with that of the philosophical texts of Marx, Adorno, or Debord himself (Cistelecan, 2015, 295). However, the contextual evolution of Pavel Câmpeanu and Ștefana Steriade's theories regarding the ambiguous effects of mass media suggests that the use of the central concept in *The Society of the Spectacle*, alongside other critical theorizations of mass culture, reflected their increasingly critical stance towards the ideological trivialization of the debates related to the functions and effects of mass media.

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Cartographies transverses. Traduire la ville

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Abstract. Contemporary Hungary is constructing a glorious historical narrative to legitimize the current authoritarian regime. This process permeates all cultural aspects of its capital, Budapest, including its urban landscape. How can we decipher the rhetoric of architecture and the way it is reinterpreted in a political context? Few studies in polysemic translation studies explore the link between translation and urban space, yet a polysemic approach in semantics allows for an analysis of this cultural transfer. Using translation as a tool to analyze urban linguistic transactions involves mobilizing the notion of *zones of translation*, inspired by Mary Louise Pratt's *contact zones*. Polysemy, as a semantic approach, guides this reflection. Our objective is to examine how certain elements of historical falsification appear in the ongoing architectural reconstructions, and how this history – recreated, redone, renarrated – is translated and transformed once again into language. The relationship between language and the city is underexplored, yet cities are living texts, shaped by history, architecture, infrastructure, and their inhabitants. They are built through narratives, lived experience, and memory. The urban landscape is a process in perpetual transformation, modification, and translation.

Keywords: zones of translation; contact zone; cultural studies; polysemy; cultural geography; mental mapping; Budapest; urban landscape.

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1. Traduire la ville

Présentée lors du festival *Nuit Blanche 2025* de Toronto, la série « Translating the City » explorera l'expérience urbaine à travers l'art. Inspiré par la nature multilingue de la métropole ontarienne où plus de 200 langues sont parlées, ce thème s'intéressera aux croisements entre culture, langue, identité et lieu. Pour les organisateurs de la série, la traduction ne se limite pas à la conversion d'une langue à une autre, mais englobe les liens et la compréhension qu'elle permet de créer. Ils soulignent que les villes sont des textes vivants, façonnés par l'histoire, les paysages, l'architecture, les infrastructures, la nature et leurs habitants. Leurs langages se déclinent sous de multiples formes – parlées, écrites, visuelles, gestuelles et sonores – tissant des récits individuels et collectifs en constante évolution. Les villes communiquent aussi à travers leurs espaces bâtis et naturels, leurs rythmes et même leurs silences. Le choix de la métropole confirme l'hypothèse que la problématique de traduire la ville est pertinente.

Dans notre recherche conceptuelle nous allons concevoir la ville comme « translation zone », un espace multimodal et multisémiotique. Selon Emily Apter « [t]he translation zone defines the epistemological interstices of politics, poetics, logic, cybernetics, linguistics, genetics, media, and environment; its locomotion characterizes both psychic transference and the technology of information transfer » (Apter, 2006, 6). L'idée de *zone de translation* nous permet de représenter la ville comme « contact zone » selon la définition initiale de Pratt. Selon Pratt les « contact zones are […] social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today (Pratt, 1992, 7) ». Dans cette perspective les villes peuvent être considérées comme des espaces de rencontre, de négociation, de transfert et d'apprentissage, où objets, idées, savoirs, coutumes, valeurs et émotions sont rassemblés, exposés, et parfois échangés (Irmak Mertens, Sophie Decroupet, 2024).

Sherry Simon dans son article *Introduction : The city as translation zone* analyse plus près la possibilité d'une étude interdisciplinaire entre traductologie et urbanisme :

> Mettre la traduction au service de la réflexion sur les transactions linguistiques en cours dans les villes revient à évoquer l'idée des zones de traduction. Ce terme a été développé par analogie avec le concept influent de Mary Louise Pratt, « la zone de contact », qui est largement utilisé depuis sa présentation dans *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Pratt définit les « zones de contact » comme des « espaces sociaux où des cultures disparates se rencontrent, se heurtent et luttent les unes contre les autres » (Michael Cronin et Sherry Simon, 2014).

Dans son approche herméneutique, Sherry Simon considère la traduction comme mode d'écoute (Simon, 2021, 10). Il s'agit de porter attention aux interactions des langues les unes avec les autres : « les relations de tension ou de bienveillance, de concurrence ou de convivialité » (Simon, 2021, 11).

L'auteure divise les lieux auxquels elle s'intéresse en deux groupes : ceux qui peuvent être repérés sur une carte et ceux qui n'existent que dans les livres. À propos de l'Opéra de Prague, elle souligne que « ces structures montrent comment des formes architecturales peuvent devenir des formes d'expression linguistique lorsqu'on associe à des langues particulières au moment de leur construction ou qu'on y ajoute ultérieurement des couches de sens et de mémoire » (Simon, 2021, 44). Sa remarque concernant le transfert culturel entre l'architecture, la rhétorique et la construction de la mémoire est pertinente et nous permet de circonscrire le champ de notre recherche conceptuelle.

Le paysage urbain peut être analysé comme une expression linguistique à part entière, un texte matériel où chaque élément architectural, organisation de l'espace, transformation urbaine participe au discours culturel et sémantique. Ce tissu fonctionne comme une syntaxe spatiale où les bâtiments, les places, les rues et les monuments constituent un lexique visuel et symbolique.

Dans cette perspective, changer le décor de ce paysage revient à réécrire une partie du discours historique d'une communauté. Cette réécriture ou révision provient souvent d'un projet politique de refonte identitaire,

cherchant à imposer une nouvelle interprétation du passé en modifiant les signes visibles de cette histoire.

Le dictat idéologique, la philosophie politique d'un gouvernement autoritaire circule soit par la rhétorique, le choix de la langue, la façon dont le gouvernement communique avec les citoyens, soit par la manipulation des repères emblématiques de la mémoire collective : noms des rues changés, lieux de mémoire érigés ou démolis, tissu urbain remanié.

De la même manière qu'une langue peut être façonnée, appauvrie ou enrichie, le paysage urbain est soumis à des dynamiques similaires : il peut être homogénéisé au nom d'une modernisation radicale, fragmenté par des interventions ponctuelles ou embellir par une approche polyphonique qui préserve la diversité des couches temporelles.

Enchevêtrement de la rhétorique et celle de l'architecture est un lieu commun depuis les Lumières. Louis-Étienne Boullée (1728-1799) architecte visionnaire du XVIII^{e} siècle conçoit toute création artistique au service du progrès social. Il propose une architecture « parlante » aux vertus éducatives, c'est-à-dire des bâtiments dont les formes expriment la finalité. Pour Boullée l'architecture peut mettre en acte ce que la poésie ne peut que décrire.

En ce qui concerne la philosophie contemporaine ou récente, la théorie de l'espace y gagne beaucoup d'attention. De nombreux penseurs s'y intéressent, que ce soit pour interroger les conditions de l'habiter, les rapports entre espace et pouvoir, ou encore les dimensions esthétiques, politiques et perceptives de l'espace.

Avec Henri Lefebvre, l'espace devient un concept central dans l'analyse des rapports de pouvoir. Dans *La Production de l'espace* (1974), il critique la vision purement physique ou géométrique de l'espace et montre comment celui-ci est produit par les structures économiques et sociales. Il distingue trois niveaux de l'espace, l'espace perçu, conçu et vécu (expérience subjective et symbolique). Le philosophe pose aussi la question : « un espace se lit-il ? » (Lefebvre, 1974, 44.) Lorsqu'un espace se lit, il implique un processus signifiant qui démontre non seulement que le langage précède l'espace social, mais qu'il en est sa *primae causae* (Lefevre, 1974, 26).

2. Espace tiers

Doris Bachmann-Medick propose l'idée selon laquelle les études culturelles ne voient pas simplement les caractéristiques culturelles et les transitions comme un ajout de plus, mais s'intéresse à l'émergence d'un nouvel *espace tiers*. L'interculturalité n'est pas simplement une médiation entre deux cultures, elle articule également, *entre* les deux, un « espace interstitiel ». Elle dit :

> Third space is a medium of social interaction that foregrounds communicative practices like translation and the negotiation of identity differences […]. Current cultural-geography ideas of "mental mapping" in particular, provide this contentious "imaginary geography" of literary texts with a Cultural Studies dimension (Doris Bachmann-Medick, 2009, 41).

La notion de culture doit être poussée vers plus d'ouverture et de dynamisme, car l'espace tiers' n'est pas simplement un lieu ou une condition entre différentes cultures, mais aussi une stratégie de prolifération de couches non homogènes au sein d'une culture particulière. Notre notion habituelle de la culture, comme un lieu de cohésion et d'appartenance solide, cède alors la place à une notion de culture comme traduction, transition et développement.

La cartographie culturelle est une méthodologie qui rend visibles les relations spatiales et les formes bâties, les ressources et pratiques culturelles. Cependant il y a un patrimoine immatériel, les dimensions vivantes et les pratiques créatives des villes qui forment des systèmes sous-jacents et qui sont à déchiffrer, décoder, traduire.

Ces systèmes traduisent certaines coutumes, pratiques, usages sociaux, mais aussi des rituelles, des idées, des traditions communautaires. Le domain de cartographies culturelles

> needs the fictional surpluses, the symbolic processing, the irony and the vivid sensuality of cultural criss-crossings in the space of literary texts, a space that is free of the burden of action and yet still intimately connected to the world (Doris Bachmann-Medick, 43).

Ce « tiers espace » donne lieu aux réflexions sur la rhétoricité de l'espace. La rhétorique, ou l'énoncé signifiant de l'espace, se manifeste de manière saisissante en Europe centrale, où les strates de l'histoire s'entrelacent dans un paysage urbain hétérogène, souvent éclectique. Dans les centres-villes européennes les vestiges des cités médiévales cohabitent avec les façades Art nouveau et les édifices classicistes de la fin du XIXe siècle. À cela s'ajoutent les empreintes laissées par la Seconde Guerre mondiale, perceptibles dans les vides urbains, les fissures et les discontinuités du décor architectural. Ensuite, l'architecture moderniste, héritée des grands projets d'urbanisme du XXe siècle, souvent socialistes vient s'imposer avec ses formes géométriques. Cette superposition d'esthétiques, de temporalités et d'idéologies fait de l'espace urbain d'Europe centrale un véritable palimpseste, où chaque bâtiment, chaque vide, chaque ornement raconte une histoire.

Si le décor urbain nous traduit l'histoire d'une ville, cette histoire peut être remaniée, manipulée à travers les reconstructions politique, presque toujours idéologique.

La question de la traduction se pose ici dans la mesure où la falsification du passé, qui prend corps dans la reconstruction de bâtiments et de quartiers, peut être considérée comme falsification de la mémoire. Dans la section suivante de ce travail, nous examinerons comment l'espace urbain peut être manipulé et remodelé au service d'intérêts politiques, notamment lorsqu'on cherche à l'utiliser comme illustration d'un récit historique qui, en réalité, n'a jamais existé. Autrement dit, d'une histoire imaginaire, construite selon des critères idéologiques.

3. Construire-démolir-falsifier

La Hongrie, sous l'influence d'une politique révisionniste, réintroduit dans son cadre constitutionnel actuel certaines institutions de la constitution historique d'avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale – comme *ispánság, vármegye*, etc. Cette modification inclut également un changement dans l'organisation territoriale du pays : en référence aux traditions historiques et aux acquis de la constitution historique, le terme de département est remplacé par celui de « comté historique ». Depuis la fondation de l'État jusqu'en 1949, ces « comté historique » constituaient les unités territoriales

fondamentales de l'administration hongroise. L'abandon de ce terme fut imposé par le régime communiste dictatorial, qui souhaitait rompre avec l'ancien système constitutionnel et administratif hongrois.

Depuis plus d'une décennie, le gouvernement hongrois s'emploie à imposer la réécriture d'une histoire nationale glorifiée. Sur le plan idéologique, il s'agit de réactiver le vocabulaire et l'imaginaire d'un empire féodal idéalisé. L'aspect le plus frappant de ce nouveau récit réside dans sa cohérence artificielle : une narration fluide et homogène, soigneusement épurée de ses vides, de ses pertes, de ses paradoxes, et des zones d'ombre d'un passé sombre et ambigu. Un exemple particulièrement révélateur de cette stratégie est le remplacement du terme « collaboration » — utilisé pour désigner la période de coopération avec l'Allemagne nazie pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale — par celui d'« occupation ».

Alliée de l'Allemagne nazie (1938-1945), la Hongrie nourrissait l'ambition de réannexer les territoires perdus à la suite de la Première Guerre mondiale et la chute de la monarchie austro-hongroise.

Il y a une dizaine d'années, le gouvernement actuel a fait ériger un monument commémorant « les victimes de l'occupation allemande », inaugurant ainsi une *nouvelle* version de l'histoire.

Depuis, sur le plan urbanistique, on assiste à un effacement progressif des traces architecturales postérieures à la Seconde Guerre mondiale et à l'ère communiste. Ce processus de reconfiguration du paysage urbain participe d'une volonté de réécriture symbolique de l'histoire.

En effet, les reconstructions urbanistiques menées par le gouvernement, avec l'exclusion des experts, historiens, architectes, etc. fabriquent une histoire imaginaire dans une géographie fictive. Cette géographie fictive se matérialise et altère la mémoire locale collective. Ainsi, notre accès aux lacunes du passé et à ses différentes strates disparaît.
Esquissons brièvement cette entreprise politique actuelle.

Le palais de Buda, *bourg* traditionnel de la ville de Budapest est particulièrement touché par ces transformations. Construit au XIII^{e} siècle sous le règne de Béla IV pour se protéger des invasions mongoles, le château a été une résidence royale importante à partir du XIV^{e} siècle, notamment sous le règne de Sigismond de Luxembourg et de Matthias Corvin (*Mátyás Király*). Sous ce dernier, au XV^{e} siècle, le palais a atteint son apogée en

devenant un centre de la Renaissance en Europe centrale. Après l'occupation ottomane (1541-1686), le château a perdu son rôle de résidence royale. Bien que les Habsbourg l'aient reconstruit et utilisé comme palais représentatif, aucun roi n'y a résidé de manière permanente. Lors de l'ère austro-hongroise, il servait principalement de résidence symbolique pour l'empereur-roi François-Joseph. Aujourd'hui, le château de Buda n'a plus de fonction monarchique et abrite des institutions culturelles comme la Galerie nationale hongroise et le Musée d'histoire de Budapest. Ce quartier historique aujourd'hui est au service du premier ministre hongrois qui – fidèle à la coutume féodale – y avait installé ses offices.

Par la suite, l'objectif du gouvernement est d'harmoniser l'environnement et de reconstruire les espaces vacants dans un esprit fidèle à l'esthétique d'avant 1945. Les victimes de ces transformations sont justement les espaces de la mémoire, les monuments érigés après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, désignés par l'architecture moderniste, soviétiques, avant-garde. Le quartier entier du château est sous des travaux de reconstructions. On y érige les édifices royaux dans ces formes pompeuses avant la Seconde Guerre. Aucune discussion publique et professionnelle n'a eu lieu concernant les démolitions des bâtiments protégés, historiques. L'action de l'autorité chargée de la protection du patrimoine est depuis longtemps entravée, et les décisions concernant la préservation – ou le plus souvent la destruction – des bâtiments sont prises exclusivement sur des bases idéologiques, c'est-à-dire gouvernementales. Du paysage urbain ainsi reconstruit émerge une identité collective fondée sur une histoire glorieuse complétement falsifiée, invalide.

Ainsi, l'urbanisme centralisé, dicté par la politique avec l'exclusion des professionnels, historiens, philosophes, urbanistes savants, devient une grammaire du pouvoir, et chaque intervention architecturale reconstruite un acte de langage structurant le discours collectif sur l'histoire, l'identité et la mémoire.

4. Monolinguisme urbain

Est-il légitime de dire que l'on aime le visuel d'une ville tout en ne supportant la rhétorique de cette image ? L'image et le langage ne se traduisent-ils pas l'un dans l'autre ? La rhétorique du visuel n'influence-t-elle pas celle du discours politique, juridique, communautaire ?

Lorsque le gouvernement hongrois réintroduit une terminologie néo-féodale pour désigner les comitats du pays, il ne se contente pas de manipuler les mots ; il reconstruit aussi les monuments. Parfois, il érige même des bâtiments neufs dans un style passéiste, comme si ces derniers avaient toujours fait partie du paysage urbain.

Pourquoi prêtons-nous attention à la manière dont la rhétorique politique s'inscrit dans l'urbanisme et l'esthétique de la ville ?

Parce qu'il est évident que les espaces jouent un rôle crucial dans l'identification collective et, à travers celle-ci, dans la mémoire collective d'une société. Modifier le paysage urbain par des moyens antidémocratiques revient à détourner et à bafouer le droit à la mémoire – qu'elle soit individuelle ou collective – car, en l'occurrence, l'État permet à un promoteur privé, disposant de ressources financières illimitées, d'opérer une sélection arbitraire parmi les souvenirs du passé, usurpant ainsi les mémoires partagées. Sans contrôle légal, les ressources financières et la volonté de transformer le paysage urbain peuvent, en elles-mêmes, supplanter les droits démocratiques collectifs, pourtant consacrés par la loi.

Parce que, justement dans ces « zone de contacts » fragiles que nous discernons un lien entre la traduction et les échanges culturels. En nous adaptant à un paysage urbain, en faisant une relation avec ce tissu urbain, nous intériorisons ce paysage comme un discours. Comme une série des micro histoires traduites en langue visuelle.

Ce discours, à la fois, raconte l'histoire et illustre la relation que nous avons avec cette histoire. Modifiant, déplaçant ce discours, on altère aussi le rapport avec l'histoire. Quand on désigne, refait, reconstruit l'espace de l'histoire, on désigne, refait notre rapport au passé. Ce passé est en permanent transformation. En comblant les vides urbains ou en effaçant les interstices laissés vacants, on fait disparaître les incohérences, les gaps et l'histoire qu'est en mouvement, des bâtiments porteurs d'une mémoire historique.

Retraduire le passé d'une façon autoritaire dans l'esprit d'une homogénéisation, rationalisation, c'est effacer la possibilité de vivre ensemble avec l'histoire, la faire face avec l'histoire et, de ce qui est le plus grave, efface la possibilité d'assumer la responsabilité de cette histoire, de la reconnaitre comme tel.

L'uniformisation, stérilisation du tissu urbain, l'oblitération, l'effacement des traces de l'histoire introduisent un monolinguisme autoritaire et une nouvelle normativité grammaticale dans la mémoire collective. La terminologie bermanienne nous propose en fait de nommer les tendances déformantes de la traduction. Berman l'appelle « systématique de la déformation » (Berman, 1999) comme l'ennoblissement, homogénéisation, destruction ou l'exotisation des réseaux langagiers vernaculaires, destruction des locutions, l'effacement des superpositions de langue, etc.

La mémoire d'une communauté n'est jamais homogène, mais stratifiée, et chaque strate possède une certaine autonomie symbolique, précisément parce que cet ensemble se compose de personnes et d'histoires différentes. La manipulation des syntaxes visuelles altère considérablement la capacité critique de l'ensemble de la collectivité, l'empêchant d'appréhender le passé dans toute sa complexité et sa profondeur, ainsi que d'en assumer la responsabilité.

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Improvising the Situation: Jazz as a Repeated Joke

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Abstract. This article examines the ideological trajectory of jazz in Romania from the interwar period through socialism and into post-socialist cultural discourse, using a Lacanian and Situationist lens. Rather than a linear history, the analysis traces jazz as a shifting symptom – first scandalized as racialized chaos, later appropriated as state-sanctioned cultural capital, and ultimately recuperated as a sanitized symbol of liberal modernity. Drawing on Guy Debord's theory of the spectacle, the text reads jazz improvisation as a *détournement* of dominant forms, revealing both its subversive and co-opted dimensions. The article contextualizes Romania's cultural policies through archival examples, such as the 1920s press, socialist-era debates, and post-1989 reinterpretations of Debord in Romanian criticism. Figures like Lucian Ban illustrate how improvisation functions as an encounter with the Real, a moment of uncontainable affect temporarily tolerated by ideological systems. Romanian jazz emerges not as a coherent genre but as a fragmented "constructed situation" – licensed, surveilled, aestheticized, and repeatedly misunderstood. In tracing these transformations, the article interrogates how rebellion becomes ritual, how improvisation is absorbed by structure, and how the joke of jazz, endlessly repeated, continues to haunt the cultural unconscious of modern Romania.

Keywords: jazz; improvisation; situationism; spectacle; *détournement*; Romania; Debord; cultural policy; psychoanalysis; Post-socialism.

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1. Jazz in Interwar Romania: Between Outrage and Swing

Jazz entered Romania not as a revolution, but as a scandal. In the 1920s and 1930s, it arrived through foxtrot bands, cabaret hybrids, and imported shellac. It was immediately marked – not by what it was, but by what it wasn't: it wasn't German, it wasn't national, it wasn't respectable. In Lacanian terms, jazz was the Real of modernity knocking at the symbolic door of interwar Romania: fragmented, syncopated, untranslatable. A body that does not understand itself and the symptom it embodies.

The first local reaction was moral panic disguised as aesthetic judgment. Jazz was decadent, black, Jewish, sexual, American. The press diagnosed it as a symptom of urban hysteria, not unlike the fate of the Situationist *dérive*: both were seen as symptoms of loosened borders and slipping discipline.

While the general belief is that, during the 1950s, it was a forbidden genre, and listening to jazz could land you in prison, the genre in question was already viewed extremely negatively during the interwar period. It was considered the music of the working-class African Americans that perverted the values of the local petite bourgeoisie and national culture. A phrase that has survived to this day, "black bar", originated in the interwar period and was frequently used in the literature of the time to describe disorder, fear, or dangerous situations that could end violently. The "black bar" a location intended for petty criminals from the poorest areas of the city, was also, and remains, the classic jazz club with origins in New Orleans. The association of jazz with promiscuity and its racist ties to the music of poor African Americans in the United States lasted for a long time.

The idea of a more positive "black bar", the room for jazz improvisation, is not very far from the recent explanations of an exemplary jazz musician, Lucian Ban, who, in 2024, explained the crucial element of jazz, improvisation, by returning to New Orleans in the 1920s:

> Not even having to take place in a room – it can be outdoors, under a tree, in a jazz club or any other space. What matters is the impulse to make music together, to share the surprise of the sound. Or "the sound of surprise", as someone called jazz.

From a Situationist perspective, this is the space of *derives* – those situations where the typical environment and context are transformed into new, unexpected, and collective experiences. The space for making jazz music should theoretically be always open, fluid, and transitory, just as the *situation* is in Situationist theory.

The *dérive* or the Situationist idea of a constructed situation – a moment of collective creativity in which the participants engage in a spontaneous exchange of ideas:

> For me, "the music of (rational) friends having a conversation" finds its definitive expression both as an idea and as a practice, in jazz. So, I am talking about a revolutionary concept, not just a practice with a rich and complex history. And at the centre of all of these things is something mysterious, present in many fields, but often misunderstood, and that is improvisation.

The "conversation" aspect mirrors the *Symbolic* order, where rational discourse and structure traditionally reign. However, jazz's improvisation disrupts the conventional logic of rational conversation by infusing it with the unsaid, the lack of words, and the spontaneous. In Lacanian terms, this precise conversation in jazz may represent the moment of *encounter* with the Other, where the performers, in their improvisation, come into contact with the unconscious, that which cannot be fully articulated but is expressed through sound.

And the idea of improvisation has a concrete place and time of historical emergence, a certain origin. The new language that merges the known with the unknown resonated with the later ideals of breaking through ideological boundaries:

> We would not be far wrong in saying that, as far as improvisation in jazz is concerned, everything started with Louis Armstrong's 1928 recording, West End Blues, but, as is often the case when we talk about a masterpiece, it's hard to explain what makes it a genius (Ban, 2024, p. 8).

Improvisation in jazz is a meeting with the *Real*, that ineffable dimension that cannot be fully integrated into the symbolic framework: the

impulse to make music together, as friends, to be surprised together by the sound we produce, without knowing what will happen next, although the framework is already set. In this very special context, "the sound of surprise" becomes a moment of rupture, a sound that cannot be anticipated or controlled, precisely that which refuses to be symbolized. Improvisation in jazz creates a space for spontaneous and ephemeral expression, interrupting pre-existing structures and offering us an almost unbearable experience, keeping us on the edge of our seats, a moment of unbridled desire, as Lacan described desire as always beyond complete symbolization. And then we begin to dance. And to move in space, to sway and take steps. This first gesture produced by sound is primordial: it is the gesture that changes a world, that completely transforms a society. Or which could have the potential to do so.

As Lucian Ban explains to us, improvisation is common to all people and is found in traditional music from all corners of the planet. But he also adds: "And yet, the way it is practiced by jazz musicians is unlike anything else in the entire history of music. Let's observe here that improvisation has long been absent in European classical music." The artistic practice of the jazz musician starts and retains its focus from the questions surrounding the spirit of improvisation, which defines this practice and can only function in the affective space of boundless friendship. From a Situationist and Debordian perspective, improvisation in jazz can be seen as an act of *détournement*, a subversion of traditional musical forms. Ban's definition, "[i]mprovisation means making music in real time, that's all", reiterates this break with established rules. Jazz refuses to follow fixed structures, offering creative freedom that contradicts the norms imposed by the Debordian spectacle.

Similar to a Situationist "constructed situation," jazz creates a moment of intense collective participation, where meanings are not imposed from the outside but emerge spontaneously, in a shared performance. In this sense, jazz becomes a form of resistance to what Debord calls the "spectacle" – a system that controls and mediates the environment in which culture is consumed. However, one of the founders of the Situationist International, Giuseppe Gallizio, may be closer to the meaning of this detoured aesthetic. He organized the Congress of Free Artists in 1956 in his hometown of Alba,

an event that led to the formation of the Situationist International in Cosio. Gallizio's experimental practice was crucial to Situationist theory, embodying the "shifted *détournement* from the arranging of preexisting aesthetic elements to the arranging of preexisting relationships among people." His artistic work, according to McKenzie Wark, "was like the group improvisations of jazz, or like a good cocktail, a chemistry of combination, a symphony of emotions, made by urbanists of the minimal, creating new kinds of *civitas*." (Wark, 2008, pp. 12-13)

Beyond music in real-time, that "more than that" specific to jazz is an approach to music itself by African-American musicians, from the beginnings of jazz in the 1920s, a completely different way of working with the spectacle, which has constantly influenced the evolution of the genre. However, jazz, like Situationist practices, is not immune to recuperation. This "practice with a rich and complex history" (Ban, 2024, p.8), in its subversive essence, has been absorbed into mainstream culture and has been, from the outset, a product of the spectacle, fit for consumption and devouring, including by other genres of popular cultures. Recordings of jazz masterpieces, such as Bill Evans' *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* or John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, had the power to "define the sound of a century," but even this "sound" has always been part of the cultural system, which in turn transforms it into a consumable product. Although these works are recognized as masterpieces, they are, in the end, recuperated and reintroduced into the controlled space of the culinary spectacle. Jazz, initially an act of subversion, thus becomes constantly integrated into a larger ideological framework. Even Armstrong becomes a political tool in his later years, a jazz ambassador for the empire.

Improvisation in jazz can also be seen as a reconciliation of opposites in a dialectical sense, and "[j]azz does this using an extremely complex and abstract language." This fusion of "improvisation with composition" breaks the distinction between composer and performer, creating a unified musical practice that allows for spontaneous creation in real-time. Lucian Ban does not exaggerate when he calls this appearance "a radical paradigm shift on multiple levels." Jazz, in this sense, is a specific form of *détournement* of classical musical traditions, recontextualizing European harmonic techniques and creating a new, distinct, and innovative musical form. Like

détournement, jazz transforms and reinterprets musical conventions, thereby contributing to undermining traditional power structures and the representation of culture.

A practice of continuous liberation and subversion not only reconfigures the relationship between performer and audience but also between composition and interpretation through the mechanism of improvisation. Jazz becomes, in this sense, a method of reconciling "heart and intellect," a spontaneous act of expression, an *acting out* that gives the subject a sense of uniqueness, even when absorbed by culture and its devouring. And this "fundamental belief – if you don't have your own voice, you don't matter" – is not accidentally rooted in a harsh global context of subalterns, former slaves, and all the exploited. For Ban, "the highest form of rhythmic expression in the history of music" does not come from nowhere and has a specific and well-marked history; it is that form "which comes from Africa (with a stop in the Caribbean) and was gifted to us by the genius of African-Americans" (Ban 2024, 8-10). This is exactly what conservative critics have observed for over a hundred years.

Initially, in Romania, in 1920, it was not even called jazz but *iazz*. At least that was the spelling used in the press organ of the National Liberal Party (PNL), *Viitorul*, directly coordinated by the party leader, Ion I.C. Brătianu. After they had just lost the elections, *Viitorul* firmly opposed the Averescu government, defending the values of stability, order, and the educated elite, which liberals saw themselves as the political representatives of. The PNL's politics were pro-European, aiming to defend the idea of Western civilization, in contrast to what they perceived as a "barbarization" of morals and urban culture after the war.

The social context was tense: the country had just emerged from the post-war and unification period; the economy was severely affected by the consequences of World War I and the integration of new provinces – Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina; and political and social tensions had reached a level that was difficult to manage, manifesting in major workers' movements, strikes, instability, and a rapid development of the pro-Soviet socialist movement at the local level.

The general sense of instability peaked on December 8, 1920, when an anarchist bomb attack in the Romanian Senate resulted in casualties. The

anarchists, led by Max Goldstein – a Basarabian-born anarchist – who included Sașa Rabinovici and Leon Lichtblau, were inspired by Russian anarchist and terrorist ideologies (such as *Narodnaia Volia*) and sympathized with Bolshevik ideas. While they did not directly collaborate with the Socialist Party, the latter suffered the most. Despite being involved in parliamentary debates and seeking a political path, it became the main target of repression. The attack – perhaps the most severe terrorist action in modern Romanian history – resulted in the death of Justice Minister Dimitrie Greceanu and several senators. As a result, the Averescu government used the event as a pretext for harsh repression against left-wing movements: the Socialist Party was dissolved, and several union and socialist leaders were arrested, even though most had no direct connection to the attack. However, the moral panic functioned: the fear of a "Bolshevik revolution" in Romania grew significantly, especially after communism had gained power in Soviet Russia.

In this very turbulent period, which set major directions for the following decades, articles in *Viitorul* sharply criticized the new forms of urban art, "exotic" influences (African, American), and moral transformations, which they saw as signs of the degradation of postwar Romanian society and the smoothing of the road to Bolshevism. *Viitorul* in 1920 was the voice of a conservative modernizing bourgeoisie – not necessarily reactionary, but primarily elitist – that saw jazz, frivolous fashion, new dances, and new social attitudes as symptoms of a civilizational crisis. At the same time, the newspaper was preparing the ground for the return of the PNL to power and for a return to "serious" governance, capable of controlling a society in disarray, according to the liberal vision.

This was the context in which jazz, as a new urban music, appeared in Romania. The "Iazz-band", as a structure, was denounced on the front page of *Viitorul* as a frightening transformation produced by the instability of war. Writers who wrote under pseudonyms, such as Petronius, were horrified by the music heard in Paris, which was to reach Bucharest soon (1920, 1923). Of course, in contrast to the fantasy of a settled, patriarchal world with clearly established values and non-mixed social classes.

Guy Debord's theory of the spectacle provides, again, an apt framework for understanding the cultural and ideological implications of

jazz's reception in interwar Romania. Debord's concept of the spectacle – the idea that life in a capitalist society has become a passive consumption of images rather than active engagement – helps explain the particular anxiety surrounding jazz. The music's association with racial "otherness" and its "savage" origins are representative of the anxieties of a society in crisis, as it faces the destruction of traditional cultural forms and an anticipation of fascism, ideas that were floating in the air of the time and were just channelled more violently. Jazz, like other modern cultural forms, disrupts the established order through improvisation by presenting a form of expression that cannot be easily assimilated into the bourgeois framework of order, harmony, and propriety.

In the case of Romania, this "savage" music symbolizes the chaos and instability that were already destabilizing the political and social systems. Jazz, in the same way as Debord's spectacle, emerges as a phenomenon that cannot be fully integrated into the dominant ideological and cultural structures, but rather stands as a symptom of an underlying crisis. The bourgeoisie's attempt to repress or tame jazz's wild energy echoes the way the spectacle attempts to mediate and control the forces of chaos that threaten its stability.

Moreover, jazz, as it was marketed in Bucharest, epitomizes what Debord might describe as a commodity that not only entertains but also anesthetizes the masses to the contradictions and violence of their social realities. As the elite began to consume jazz in an almost ritualistic way, it functioned as an escape, an aestheticization of suffering and alienation. The jazz club, like the spectacle, allowed for an engagement with reality that remained superficial and detached from the actual struggles taking place in society.

In a broader context, the introduction of jazz in Romania was part of the larger global cultural flow that was breaking down the boundaries of the local and national, contributing to the spectacle of modernity. The spectacle here isn't just an image but an entire system of control through which the bourgeoisie sought to maintain its authority over the masses, even as the very idea of that authority was being eroded by the cultural changes that jazz symbolized. The jazz band, as part of the cultural transformation, was not merely a reflection of modernity but a disruptive force that forced a

confrontation with the Real – what Debord would argue is the reality that the spectacle constantly seeks to obscure.

By embracing jazz, the Romanian elite engaged in a kind of passive rebellion, reflecting the deep contradiction of the time – one that, in Debord's terms, would be seen as the spectacle's self-subversion, whereby it simultaneously acknowledges the changes and continues to reproduce them in a controlled manner. Jazz was thus not just a form of entertainment, but a symptom of the complex, alienated relationship between culture, politics, and desire in the context of postwar Romania.

2. Improvisation under Eastern European Socialism: The False Situation

The early socialist years of the 1950s sought to ban the situation altogether: jazz was again officially contested as Western, not prohibited but pushed underground, or reduced to sterile and domesticated swing. Yet this very suppression produced a kind of situation – or at least a structure of non-institutional listening. Tuning in to *Voice of America* and the velvet baritone voice of Willis Conover became an act of *dérive* within the living room: a sonic wandering through crackle and static, a drift through forbidden soundscapes, and a quiet attempt to escape the tiresome coordinates of state culture.

By the 1960s and 70s, jazz was paradoxically rehabilitated. The Romanian state, ever skilled in *détournement* without irony, rebranded jazz as cultural capital: "See how open we are? We let them improvise".

Festivals emerged in Ploiești, Sibiu, and Costinești – each supervised, televised, and curated down to the last note. Yet what unfolded was not a constructed situation in Debord's sense, but rather a spectacular simulation, revived in the form of the "black bar". Musicians improvised, but always within pre-scripted conditions: who played, what was broadcast, and which solos pushed too far beyond the acceptable limits. Jazz, therefore, acted as an ideological alibi – a carefully controlled form of Otherness, safely packaged for consumption. This story mirrors similar processes in other musical genres, with jazz arguably standing as the proto-pop cultural genre that serves as the litmus test for the broader processes that took hold in the

1950s, with the mass consumption of popular culture and the rise of the consumption society in the West.

Meanwhile, the Situationist International – though influential within avant-garde and radical circles—remained largely excluded from institutionalized cultural exchange until the late 1980s in *the Free World*. As McKenzie Wark notes, it wasn't until the Pompidou Centre's retrospective (which later toured London and Boston) that the Situationists were granted official exhibition status. That same year, Greil Marcus published *Lipstick Traces*. In this work, Marcus positioned the Situationists not within the realm of art history but rather within the genealogy of oppositional popular culture – a lineage that, for him, began with Dada, flowed through Debord, and appropriately culminated in punk (Wark, 2008, p. 8).

The connection to punk music was reciprocal: the Situationists influenced musicians and producers experimenting with détournement and sonic rupture, while post-1989 reissues of post-punk albums increasingly cited Situationism as a key element of their conceptual framework. As Wark observes, "After 1989, it became obvious that the Situationists were part of the context for post-punk music, as the sleeve notes for the reissues rarely fail to mention" (2008, p. 8).

3. Licensed Situationism: Debord in *Scînteia*, 1971

In July 1971, the official newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party, *Scînteia*, published what appears to be the first Romanian reference to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*. The article, authored by film critic Florian Potra, introduced Debord's critique not as subversion, but as confirmation of the Party line. The text praised Debord's analysis of Western consumer society, quoting approvingly: "Spectacle is capital accumulated to such a degree that it becomes image" (Potra, 1971, p. 4; Debord, 1967). Far from censoring or distorting this phrase, *Scînteia* used it to illustrate what the Party had always claimed: that culture under capitalism had become a mechanism of domination.

Potra's essay reads *The Society of the Spectacle* as a Marxist pamphlet against the ideological control exercised by capitalist media. He describes Western films as instruments of distraction and depoliticization. "Just as brands of refrigerators or automobiles are imposed", he writes, "so

too are the ideas and ideologies of capitalist producers, their way of thinking, their way of understanding life" (Potra, 1971, p. 4). Spectacle becomes, in this formulation, a direct extension of class power. What Debord presented as a radical critique of all forms of image control – including those in socialist societies – is here reduced to a targeted polemic against American imperialism and Hollywood excess.

This selective reading served a specific purpose. In the early 1970s, Romanian cultural policy was navigating a transition. On the one hand, it aimed to denounce Western models of consumer culture. On the other hand, it sought to modernize its own aesthetic strategies, often by appropriating the very forms it officially rejected. In this context, Potra's instrumentalization of Debord opened a space for what might be called licensed situationism: the ability to quote from the avant-garde, as long as the critique pointed outward. This dynamic extended beyond cinema. In music, theatre, literature, and visual arts, the state began to tolerate – or even promote – select elements of global modernity. Experimental jazz, existentialist theatre, abstract painting, and cinematic realism were cautiously reintegrated into official culture. The logic was clear: cultural innovation was permissible, even desirable, as long as it could be ideologically contained. Dissonance, improvisation, and ambiguity were acceptable if presented as proof of Romania's cultural sophistication and its ability to absorb the world without being corrupted by it.

Potra's reading of Debord exemplifies this process. He cites Italian Marxist film critics G. Bettini and E. Miele, who argued that capitalist cultural production neutralizes critical ideas by aestheticizing them. According to Potra, this mechanism now defines the entire Western film industry, which recycles social concerns in ways that render them politically harmless. He offers *Easy Rider* and *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* as examples of films that simulate rebellion but ultimately affirm dominant norms (Potra, 1971, p. 4).

This narrative made it possible to incorporate radical concepts such as spectacle and détournement into state ideology. Once reframed as critiques of the West, they no longer posed a danger to domestic legitimacy. Indeed, they became part of its aesthetic arsenal. In this framework, Romanian cultural institutions could promote experimental or critical works – so long

as those works were seen to expose "false illusions" in the capitalist world, not in Romanian socialism.

But this strategy also revealed its contradictions. While Debord was used to condemn Western media, Romania itself was developing a media culture that relied increasingly on image, repetition, and choreographed access to freedom. Cultural festivals, television broadcasts, international exhibitions, and the selective inclusion of foreign artists became part of the national branding project. The state built its own spectacle – one that officially denied its spectacular nature.

Potra's essay thus marks an ambivalent moment. On the surface, it is a Marxist denunciation of capitalist culture. Underneath, it signals a shift in Romanian cultural politics: a turn toward modern forms, reframed as ideological proof. Debord's theory was not rejected. It was absorbed. His concept of the spectacle was not dismantled. It was used to name the enemy and hide the mirror.

The jazz performer in Ceaușescu's Romania is a split subject: hailed as a representative of Romanian modernity and simultaneously suspected as a cosmopolitan infiltrator. His solo is both enjoyed and surveilled. He produces jouissance, but it must be measured. In Lacanian terms, he becomes a sinthome: a stable but unassimilable formation in the symbolic body of socialism. He cannot be eliminated, because he anchors an official fantasy: that Romania, too, can swing.

4. Minor Key Freedom: Local Jazz Scenes as Ambiguous Aesthetic Zones

Following the small historical adventure, jazz clubs in 1980s Romania – often affiliated with trade unions or youth clubs – became micro-situations of suspended cultural experience. Neither openly dissident nor fully assimilated, these spaces produced ambiguous aesthetic communities that wavered between creative exploration and ideological containment. You listened. You knew. But you didn't speak. You drifted – but not too far. You improvised – but only for a couple of minutes.

By the early 1980s, the Romanian ideological apparatus had refined the strategy of containment by developing a rhetorically mature, self-legitimating philosophical discourse – one that absorbed external theoretical

currents while simultaneously neutralizing their political potential. A key illustration is Tudor Ghideanu's 1981 essay, *The Youthfulness of the Philosophical Spirit*, in which he implicitly responds to the growing influence of différentialist, pluralist, and situationist tendencies in Western thought. Without naming Debord or Deleuze, Ghideanu frames their critique as part of a broader "plural and anarchic situationism", ultimately condemned for its iconoclastic impulses and lack of patriotic rationality. "Authentic philosophy", he writes, "is necessarily pyramidal", anchored in a triadic temporal logic – national past, socialist present, and a rationally architected future (Ghideanu, 1981, p. XV).

Improvisational thought, whether in theory or music, could only be sanctioned insofar as it was integrated into this triadic architecture. Thought "cannot ossify", he claims, "because its freedom of creation does not degenerate into the ritual repetition of ahistorical dogma, nor into the arrogant gesture of anarchic iconoclasm".

Ghideanu expanded on this framework in a 1984 article published in *Cronica*, a sweeping synthetic analysis of Romanian philosophical development under socialism. He emphasized the Party's role in fusing philosophical production with ideological education, stating that "philosophy passed through a complex effort: simultaneously as class expression (Marxist-Leninist philosophy as the philosophy of the working class), as dialectical filtration of rationalist and humanist values from our national culture, and as critical rejection of reactionary conceptions ('trăirism', 'gândirism' etc.)". He frames Romanian philosophy as an "organic synthesis between action and thought," forged by the revolutionary energies unleashed after August 23, 1944, and guided by the "wise leadership of the Romanian Communist Party" (Ghideanu, 1984, pp. 1-2).

According to Ghideanu, the development of socialist philosophy was facilitated by a triple process: the de-dogmatization of early Marxist education, the reintegration of national traditions, and the transformation of universities into ideological training grounds. After 1971, under the ideological framework of the *Carta noastră fundamentală* and the Ninth Party Congress, Romanian philosophy was tasked with safeguarding "revolutionary consciousness" and providing "a clear orientation for the spiritual development of our people." Any philosophical tendency that

veered into "presentism," "suprapractical illusion," or "plural anarchic situationism" was deemed metaphysically invalid and politically dubious.

This framework of thought influenced not only philosophy but also experimental music and cultural practices. While improvisation in philosophy was domesticated, jazz – despite its ideological ambiguity – was not merely a genre of control, as seen in the 1920s. In a way, the circle was closed, yet there remained gaps in the structure. Particularly in the 1980s, Romanian jazz began to express its own national specificity, an aesthetic-political hybrid that adapted avant-garde techniques to local conditions. The Sibiu Jazz Festival, launched in 1974, became both a platform for institutional recognition and a site for aesthetic experimentation. Artists such as Johnny Răducanu, Aura Urziceanu, and Harry Tavitian developed distinct Romanian idioms of jazz, blending folklore, free improvisation, and political nuance. Their work did not exist outside ideological surveillance, but it also did not fully conform to it.

Rather than merely embodying an obedient "jazz of control", this period witnessed the paradoxical flourishing of what could be called a *national school of jazz improvisation* – an aesthetics of situated freedom, entangled with ideology yet not reducible to it. In this sense, Romanian jazz functioned less as a passive echo of Party doctrine and more as a dialectical space of resonance and ambiguity – where *détournement* happened, if only in minor key.

5. Recuperating Debord After 1989: From Socialist Spectacle to Anti-Communist Alibi

In the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution, Guy Debord's *La Société du spectacle* re-emerged in Romanian intellectual discourse not as a critique of late capitalism, but as a weapon against the defeated socialist regime. Perhaps the most illustrative example is Ovidiu Hurduzeu's 1994 article *The victory of generalized spectacle*, published in *România literară*. In this text, Hurduzeu redeploys Debord not to indict the liberalization and media saturation of the 1990s, but to reframe communism itself as the ultimate society of the spectacle. According to him, the Romanian regime functioned through a perfected simulation: a pseudo-reality maintained by ideological rituals, pageantry, and fabricated public consensus. He writes,

"Totalitarianism, especially in its Romanian variant, is a grotesque spectacle, with choreographed parades and rehearsed tears, culminating in the simulacrum of the Congress and the televised family visits" (Hurduzeu, 1994, pp. 14–15).

This interpretation is symptomatic of a broader post-socialist trend: Debord is no longer the prophet of anti-capitalist critique but a legitimizing figure for neoliberal moral superiority. Spectacle, once the form of commodity fetishism, becomes synonymous with authoritarian deception. In this move, the complexity of Debord's dialectics is flattened into anti-communist denunciation. The ritual of critique is itself spectacular: an endless replay of 1989 as media myth, with revolution turned into visual inventory, and dissent repackaged as democratic performance.

The jazz scene, in parallel, underwent a similar transformation. Once carefully curated by state officials as a domesticated version of Western freedom, post-1989 jazz became the aesthetic shorthand for freedom itself. Festivals multiplied, venues opened, but the political dimension of improvisation was evacuated. What remained was the mythology of rebellion, with jazz offered as evidence of cultural liberalism, both under socialism and after it. This continuity, however, masks the shift: from a jazz tolerated under surveillance to a jazz instrumentalized in the service of global capital and national branding.

Debord's recuperation reflects the trajectory of jazz in post-socialist Romania. Once oppositional, both have since been transformed into symbolic capital. In Romania, for over a hundred years, jazz was never merely performed; it was tolerated like a joke that various regimes never fully grasped – yet continued to laugh at, just to be safe. And, like a familiar jazz theme, it persists, endlessly repeated, adapted through minor variations, but never quite transcending its initial ideological containment.

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Cosmodrom files: Investigations on (non)resistance

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Abstract: One major concern of the past two decades is automation, namely the hurdle of automation towards engulfing more and more abstract realms of work. In this regard, one can trace at least two modes of approach. One is critical, conservative, or *decelerationsist* as we will call it in this text. The other side. Of the coin is addressing the issue through a situationist lens. There are obvious and silent signs of technological development's impact on humanity's trajectory. The *hokey stick* of the population growth imposed by the early Industrial Revolution is of the obvious kind. On the more silent side, or even unconscious project of humanity, we have what we might denote as *cosmic situationism*. Imagine a whole ecosystem that grows between the cracks in the walls of a well. Now imagine this well is the existential abyss and the micro-ecosystem is humanity. Existence against the odds. Now turn this image into a 360-degree expansion or rather an infinite one, where the abyss is the all surrounding cosmos and in the center of this model is a species that works with the urge to transcend it's illusory central (read *fixed*) position towards a cosmic trajectory, in space and nature. By 2025 the new Amish are academics that write and do research without the aid of chatbots. The new horse and carriage are done by reading with a pen-in-hand strategy. On witnessing this shift from standard to choose, one might, as is the case here, use the classical methods of research and adapting only the presentation, the form of the final text. This decision comes from the belief, also backed by recent neuroscience, that the method defines the mind disposition in order to allow for a more palatable result. The presentation can do away with established academic safety and authenticity protocols as are precise citation with page number and text edition at every reference. This can be done in seconds via a quick overlay. By automating this, the text is liberated for a smoother and clearer reading. Becomes more vulnerable in this manner, being stripped of all the immediate recourse to authority moves. Footnotes become appendices where the author can deposit further explanations that might otherwise alter the flow of reading. This will be an essential dissolution in the years to come.

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Where we draw, the line is between what we keep and what we innovate, as non-material work is being automated. The new horizon opens the possibility for academic work to become more like a performative art, a theurgic act of modeling the self rather than knowledge production.

Keywords: accelerationism; teleoplexy; theurgy; museum; cosmism; mutant; resistance.

1. Opening remarks

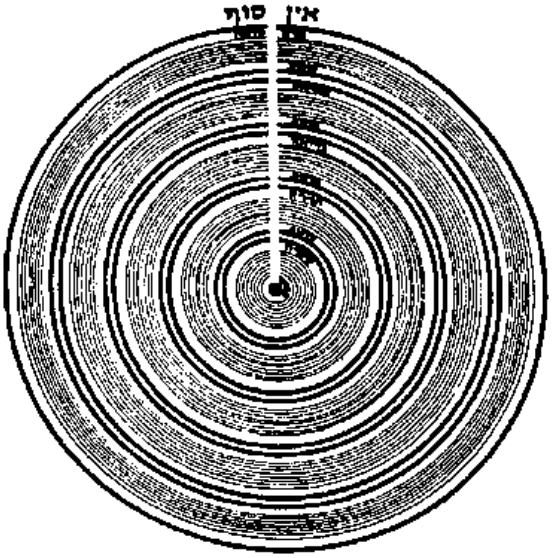
One might gasp at the (over)flow of text production, information and clusters of opinion regarding a special niche of the more general problem of *automation*. AGI, or artificial general intelligence is, as at the time of writing, building up a *capture apparatus* for popular imagination. The key concept is mutated into a buzzword and the slippery note is on regulation. There is something about this situation that might remind one of the early Renaissance. The discussion is slipping through the academic fingers of caution as is ascribed to young start-up free thinkers like Guillaume Verdon, alias Beff Jezos, *patron saint of techno optimism* and promoter of *e/acc* (effective accelerationism) and *doomer* Connor Leahy. This and the more academic developments initiated by Bernard Stiegler and crystalized, as *cosmotechnics* by Yuk Hui, will be, for this text, honorable mentions. What the following short investigation will try to trace is a particular occurrence, from which the main discussion stems. For the sake of simplicity, we will call this a *resistance principle*. A resistance to accelerated development that captures and guides social imagination, the structures of which are made more visible through literary devices, in this case Hard Science Fiction. On one side of the discussion, we have the discourse of resistance that argues for regulation, on the other we have the accelerationist skeptic view that would not trust any closed (established) institution for this task.

The aim of this short investigation is to look into the alternatives to *cocaine-capital* or *war-machine-capital* that *accelerationist escape velocity* might provide. Once launched, the rocket does not decide. If the flight is still to be continued, it must push full throttle (accelerations stance) but still can correct trajectory (teleoplexy). In a more general note, one can start from this perspective put forth by Battaille, that the excess energy accumulated on the planet and made accessible will be translated either into art or war.

Progress and resistance. Both sides run under the star of some ecological crusade. The intuition is correct in being radical: these things hint at evolutionary endings, of final transition points from *the organic* to *the machinic*. Not as much by extermination as through annihilation by becoming. All classical religions and modern programs of education, all try to provide functional means for a controlled epigenesis. Enlightenment, liberation, etc. are all add-ons that activate after an installment process culminating in some (identity) reset. In this context of end-times scenarios, one can see how a dualism developed, between decelerationists, who push for regulation, and accelerationists, that would not trust any regulatory institution and rather assign the further development to an *open source* / *open access* system. This is the new battle for what it means to be natural. The accelerationist view states that mutation and *escape velocity* are the only natural consequences of cultural progress. If moving to slow, the whole project might fall. It needs to escape expectations and fears. Any interference, by slowing down, analyzing and filtering through social critique might only further perpetuate the actual structures of war-capital, hence establishing *resistance*. Hope comes in the form of a teleoplexy, where the ontology of process substitutes the inclination for fixation (onto death). From this perspective, automation serves only as the means to externalize the machinic, exposing life structures to radiation (the general decay of cultural structures) and the flux of transcendence. An ecology of mind that rather than disciplining or jumping into the black hole, works with emergence.

2. Cosmism

The build-up starts from theology as technology of mind. Nothing more progressive than this: God is the source and constant provider of means in humanity's process of becoming. Earthly life is a Chrysalis for the *new man.* This idea is not new; it is present in the tradition of *zimzum.* God is stuck in Being, recurrence of just-being (I am that I am) for whom humanity is the line of flight for witnessing and participating in existence. God becomes human, gets appointed to the cross for the ultimate meditation of *kenosis*, or the total reduction of god-nature. Like an inescapable trope, humanity follows this cosmological line where The Earth is the first Cosmodrom.



Isaac Luria, the 16th century founder of Kabbalah, explores the idea of creation as preceded by and ontological act of retreat by the creator. God makes way, cuts a slit in Being, the ultimate miracle.

When one says Hard Science Fiction, the reference is made for nuances in content, not as much as cannon of novels. The Star Trek universe is firmly rooted in the task of portraying ideals about societal open structures under the umbrella of scientific exploration, while the Star Wars universe is leaning heavily towards fantasy fiction. Even so, with magical structures like *the force*, every science fiction story is attached to the core of hard science. The SciFi cannon is now set to begin somewhere around 1818; Merry Shelly's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, a novel about a golem type character that goes through the process of educational mutation. Reads Goethe, finds melancholia, a subconscious yearning for the Edicharan[1] paradise that cannot be processed; becomes the archetypal case of a misanthropic dark ecologist. The two main poles of SciFi literature can be

[1] In Geology, a standard period before the Cambrian Explosion. 635-538 Mya, there was this period when life was silent, blind and soft bodied. The Cambrian development came with eyes, claws, teeth and shells.

traced to: a) space exploration and b) what it means to be human. *Moby Dick* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In this regard, the other source of exploratory literature or *anticipation* is what is now being established as Russian Cosmism.

Before talking about accelerationism one must take this little tour of the 19th century *imaginarium* that might make Nick Land seem pretty decent in his proposals. After all, this cosmist preamble might prove to be an excellent curatorial exercise. In fact, the key point of cosmism is the idea that the new ontological and morality model is the museum. *The Common Task*, is a curatorial one. Nikolai Fedorov, scientist, librarian and ascetic figure. A true patristic figure in behavior, a cynic in regarding social skills and a very original (*read* heretic) Christian thinker.

In a dialogue between Hito Steyrl and film maker and art curator Anton Vidokle published by e-flux in the *Art Without Death* volume, one finds precision cuts into Fedorovian ethics:

> Financial capitalism does not care about the dead because they do not produce or consume. Fascism only uses them as a mythical proof of sacrifice. Communism also is indifferent to the dead because only the generation that achieves communism will benefit from it; everyone who died on the way gets nothing. It seems that only indigenous cultures at this point keep some reverence for the dead. Fedorov writes that a true religion is a cult of ancestors. (Steyrl, Vidokle, Cosmic Catwalk and the Production of Time, 2017).

The cosmos is a museum, a gallery in waiting and the true aim of all technological development should gravitate around this goal of *universal resurrection*. On a more moderate note, we get the story of Ender, in the series by Orson Scott Card. To be a Fedorovian cosmist is to be a *speaker for the dead* (Orson Scott Card). After destroying the home planet of the insect race, Ender finds the Queen and wonders trough the galaxy, all of his long life, looking for a suitable planet. Ender was a 12-year-old kid, highly trained in special combat strategies who executed the Little Doctor operation, a planet level bomb, unbeknownst to him. They let him think it was a simulation, for they knew nobody could pull the trigger on such a scale.

Adrift for a sufficient period, people start to develop the need to engage in identity (re)building. Afrofuturism the sort of movement that startles the anthropological imagination. The Zambian Space Program is such an example. Absurdity is an ally when people are engaged in fighting historical tides. From the outside observer perspective: people in barrels, rolling downhill. From the inner wound perspective, the aim is to rekindle the flame of imagination at any apparent cost. The main tool is the narrative so other costs can be minimized. The Sun Ra Arkestra is another occurrence of afrofuturism that one should take into account. Sun Ra, an Afro-American jazz musician that builds a colorful and inspiring identity around the idea that he is actually a space traveler, from Saturn. The third, and last for this endeavor, is the case of Drexciya, an electronic music (techno) project from Detroit, centered around the mythos of descendants of Africans that drowned while crossing the Atlantic on slave ships. A re-writing of a deep social ecology that states the possibility of a space fairing nation that started as an undersea population of mutants. In the fedorovian future anthropology, human bodies should be modified to support indefinite life extension as well as the ability to fly and the ability to feed on electromagnetism or photons. Part human, part butterfly, part plant. Anton Vidokle also observes that:

> … death is capital quite literally, because everything we accumulate – food, energy, raw material, etc. – these are all products of death. But there is something else which seems to be fully in the realm of the living – labor, reason, love. I think maybe if the digital disruption you mention could be directed to amplify the latter and reduce dependence on the former, then this could be a step in the right direction. One of the scientists in the cosmist movement was Vladimir Vernadsky, a geologist who developed the notion of the noosphere in the decades before and up through the middle of the Second World War. It's a profoundly optimistic theory of how life on the planet will be transformed by an emerging sphere of reason and communication whose relationship to life will be similar to the relationship that the biosphere has to the geosphere.

In the 19th century, one can observe *an almost Hegelian* thinking that proposes human life as unfinished. On the one hand we have the theosophical developments that propose the acquirement of a soul by the basic machinic

(instinctual) human. This is done mostly in a platonic fashion, by accusing something that was already there, the Akashic Records for instance. What is more innovative is the cosmist stance, where the task is related to production. Man has to do theurgy, or more accurate God Building. The *new man* becomes the rational producer of the noosphere. That which is beyond death and instinct and basic machinic life is co-creation, radical novelty item.

Distinguishing cosmism from different offshoots of Blavaskian thinking (Agharta, Vril, Shambala, Atlantian-Hyperborean spirals of history, via theosophy and anthroposophy) is like tracing the thin line between Kandisnky and Malevich. If we look at *Victory Over the Sun* we might glimpse beyond obvious metaphors, a link with a transhumanist line which stems from cosmism. A body transformed to live on or perhaps in the sun rather than an armor/barrier. Transformation versus preservation. We are talking about a new version of Anastasia and a (radical) meta-morphosis as metabolic *telos*. In short, cosmism is running on these two tracks: radical transformation of the cosmos and the human body. In this context, contemporary transhumanism seems a walk in the *human park.* In effect, *transhumanare* is what the protagonist must do in order to ascend to the heavenly realm in Dante's tragedy.

The cosmists did not call themselves that and neither of them used the term *zimzum*, but after binding ideas together and more or less poetically linking essential points, one can say that: in cosmist ideology, theurgy is just following the invitation operated by the *zimzum*, the slit opened by the first God, a space opened for humanity to produce it's transcendence. This is the logical way for a created species to imitate and create by also stepping aside.

3. Acceleration. / regulation is resistance

The bastard, western, child of cosmism, *accelerationism* has, as of recently, a two-stage system. Classical Accelerationism, as developed by Nick Land and the CCRU study group, and *e/acc* or Effective Accelerationism as manifested by Guillaume Verdon (alias Beff Jezos).

In SciFi literature, accelerationism appears in a 1967 novel by Roger Zelanzy, *Lord of Light*. In this modern peace of mythos, Sam, recognizable as the Gautama Buddha is fighting the classical Vedic (Hindu) gods. Sam is an *accelerationist* and his goal is to liberate humans from the protectorate

that in actuality restricts their access to higher technology, mostly technologies connected to energy production. This accelerationist trope can be found in the 1995 *Hair Carpet Weavers* novel by Andreas Eschbach. Less popular but far more precise in social critique, Eschbach portrays a society hooked on producing meaningful but rather useless objects. This system of capital-production is recognizable as a classical Marxian model. As stated in the *Communist Manifesto* and later developed in *The Capital*, the capitalist system is oppressive in that its means are superimposed on its extensions. Capital needs to expand, constantly.

4. Intermezzo / manipulative meditation:

> Once adopted into the production process of capital, the means of labour passes through different metamorphoses, whose culmination is the machine, or rather, an automatic system of machinery (system of machinery: the automatic one is merely its most complete, most adequate form, and alone transforms machinery into a system), set in motion by an automaton, a moving power that moves itself; this automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages (Karl Marx, Fragment on Machines, 1858).

In exactly this point one can observe the main key of Nick Land's idea of accelerating capitalism to anywhere beyond its limits. This is the source of what later became the *Dark Enlightenment.* Anti-cosmist to its core, CCRU accelerationism aims at *teleoplexy.* The new revelation has to do with escaping existential traps. The body, the social and economic structures and the cognitive entrapments that can be overpassed only by means of accelerated technological development. To have a fixed teleology is one example of ethical and ontological entrapment. Benedict Singleton notes:

> The escape attempt tutors a view of oneself as an object within a nested structure of traps, and converts this knowledge into an active resource. No wonder, then, that '[s]laves in the French colonies had a word for it: escaping one's master was called "stealing one's own corpse."' Rendered thus, freedom from entrapment is *not freedom from but through alienation***,** and

this creates a pernicious stowaway in the project of extended escape from the perspective of any unreconstructed humanism (Benedict Singleton, Maximum Jailbreak, 2014).

The new Gospel of Dark Enlightenment has to do with continuous transformation, most importantly kept unchecked. Not freedom from but rather freedom through alienation. We look at *Angelus Novus*, not necessarily the one painted by Paul Klee in 1920, but rather the one pictured in Walter Benjamin's posthumous text as *angel of history*. In accelerationist terms, the horrors of history are paling in front of the *hockey stick* moment (radical population growth easily seen in graphs as a hockey stick shape) brought about by the industrial and medical revolutions. The angel of history loses the object of bewilderment. Humans have conquered death and not fear. In contrast to Fedorov, Tolstoi and Dostoievsky have a deeper inclination towards *teleoplexy*, towards embracing radical uncertainty or, more popularly known as *death*.

The dark (hidden) side of Enlightenment comes from the fact that freedom is the engine of progress, but as freedom-from-death. Body mutations might soon follow cultural and cognitive-technological mutations. The body is already a thin layer, a signifying surface, much like the discarded skin of a snake. Art has the urgent and dangerous task of supplementing this fissure with a surplus of meaning production (Miglietti, *Identita Mutanti*, 2023). Indicated by the difficulties to understand and the actual hardships to invent a new type, up to date symbiosis with this body. The human body is already strange to the human, this time around not by way of spiritual-material dualism but rather by a discronicity due to technological and cultural acceleration. *It is now defined as human the species characterized by flesh, sickness and death.*

In the pre-history of SciFi one finds traces of this idea of mutation trough culture. Merry Shelly imagined the death drive of the monster as being activated by cultural endeavors, by being exposed to a literary apparatus consisting of European romantic and pessimist flavors that would trigger the urge to play on the tensions of the reality of death. The consciousness of solitude and exclusion from bliss were not innate. Death drive fueled by nurture, not nature.

In Asimov we find hope; hope of in a regulatory system that would protect humanity. This is a main trope in popular Science Fiction. But there is also a gradient, that might go through Stanislav Lem and Wisniewsky-Snerg, with pushing more towards the idea that the machinic can be nurturing, not only in an economical but also, or rather, in a ontological sense.

The only fear of *teleoplexic accelerationism* is *resistance*. If things do not develop fast enough, if capitalism is not accelerated enough through technological development, we might miss *escape velocity.* As Nick Land explains in his short text on *teleoplexy*, one needs to take into account:

> the model of the "governor" or homeostatic regulator, abstracted through the statistical-mechanical concept of equilibrium for general application to perturbed systems (up to the level of market economies). In evolutionary biology, it is adaptation, and the theoretical precedence of selection relative to mutation (or perturbation). In ecology, it is the climax eco-system (globalized as Gaia). In cognitive science, it is problem-solving. In social science, it is political economy, and the alignment of theory with adaptive policy, consummated in technical macroeconomics / central banking. In political culture, it is "social justice" conceived as grievance restitution. In entertainment media and literary or musical form, it is the programmatic resolution of mystery and discordance. In geostrategy, it is the balance of power. In each case, compensatory process determines the original structure of objectivity, within which perturbation is seized *ab initio* (Nick Land*, Teleoplexy: Notes on Acceleration*, 2014).

Tan Andreessen and several dozen other Silicon Valley luminaries have also begun aligning with a movement that "Jezos" claims to have founded: "effective accelerationism", or e/acc. At its core, e/acc argues that technology companies should innovate faster, with less opposition from "decels" or "decelerationists" – folks like AI safety advocates and regulators who want to slow the growth of technology. (Who *Is @BasedBeffJezos, The Leader Of The Tech Elite's 'E/Acc' Movement?*Forbes, 2023, daily cover)

At first blush, e/acc sounds a lot like Facebook's old motto: "move fast and break things." But Jezos also embraces more extreme ideas, borrowing concepts from "accelerationism," that argue we should hasten the

growth of technology and capitalism at the expense of nearly anything else. On ”X”, the platform formally known as *Twitter* where he has 50,000 followers, Jezos has claimed that “institutions have decayed beyond the point of salvaging and that the media is a “vector for cybernetic control of culture.”

5. Resistance

Much of 20th century psychology developed around reactionary attitudes. It is common for psychoanalytical or psychotherapy jargon to talk in terms of *progress* and *resistance*. Mediated consciousness is produced trough impoverished hints of the noosphere. It is now the watermark of humanities to address the production of consciousness to environment, cultural or technical. Dominant schools of psychotherapy try to work with resistance and set the individual on the path to becoming a good citizen. By restricting the flow of electricity or societal values, resistance provides a key point in interpretation. On a cosmological scale, resistance is just a hermeneutic *techne*. The analysand can manifest resistance to analysis as proof of organic preservation instincts kick in. The analyst might not like this post-work perspective. This is the point where the fantasy of resurrection (of analysis) might take root. *Let us start again. Let us reboot.* It might be only due to some hermeneutic fluke that analytic therapies are not restricted more. *State resistance to analysis*.

Resistance to Utopia comes into play when the state or other popular organization steps in and protects the general (unable to grasp the whole picture) population. Frank Herbert produced one of the most enduring narratives generated during the height of the Middle East conflicts Era. In the Dune Universe, there were hints to be developed in the further volumes and prequels. *Mentants, bene jezereth, guild navigators;* this societal structure was generated by the so called “Buttlerian Jihad” .... the liberation war when the machines were restricted to physical realms. Computing power was taken from what we now would call AIs or even AGI, and ascribed to *mentants*. Not only that *Dune* is the realm where Hard Science Fiction and magical thinking crossfade, but where the liberty of humans is payed by new mutant races that must take on the tasks of machines. The explanation, given by Brian Herbert is of a very soft nature. Computing machines became evil. The AGI from *Dune* just got the idea to study humans by means of torture;

vivisection and various mental tensions. This script is so soft (as in opposite of what a hard SciFi would require) that it might invite the reader to do some instant psychoanalytic speculations. Why is the thinking machine so interested in pain and in so many details, in so many pages, one wonders where the sadistic impulse resides? A *Brave New World* mutant working class ant colony style scenario; why is this preferable to other alternatives?

What is the root of xenocide? Coming back to the Ender universe, one faces the question of *Why would a humanoid species dream of killing off an insect species?* Here is a hint, in the *Biosphere 2* experiment put forth (read: financed) by Steve Bannon, *H*e actually managed the Biosphere 2 experiment for a while. People were locked into a greenhouse sphere and had to be completely self-sustaining, including the production of food and atmosphere. It was an oligarch-funded experiment, a test for space colonization. Could they produce oxygen? Sustenance? Social bonds? The answer is that it all failed and that cockroaches and ants were the species that turned out to be best adapted to the oligarch space colony. Oxygen dropped to dangerous levels. The climate was unendurable. I think it's a great metaphor for techno-fascism. That's what happens if you try to breed a superior race – say, storm troopers with tentacles for faces. You get many cockroaches, which actually in terms of Darwinist survival abilities are probably one of the most superior species on Earth. You actually get cockroaches in a huge filtered bubble – the perfect isolationist master race.

Decelerationism comes in many forms. Harmut Rosa provides trough many of his texts a clear view on how one might become dizzy by a society that is moving too fast and too much towards further neurosis. The pace of technological development overpasses the pace of life, of natural life. This is the main theme in the social critique of Rosa and his allies. This is a romantic or heart melting neoludite perspective that radically avoids the idea of accelerated adaptation, or mutations. Basically, an excellent exercise in avoiding the cosmist Fedorovian strain. Technological acceleration must be avoided at all cost.

The machine wars or B*uttlerian Jihad* of the *Dune* universe is a sort of anti-promethean war, in accelerationist terms. Samuel Buttler must be noted as the forgotten father of this technological evolution concern, developed from the letter to the editor titled *Darwin Among the Machines* (in

1863) to the literary and anonymous *Erewhon* from 1872. For Buttler, the logic is simple: if machines evolve so fast, it will take them just decades or centuries to jump from the mollusk state to the self-replicating and upgrading principle. In this vain, machines are a strange presence, a new category, brought into the world to fight of classical biological life. From slow and self-evolution to the apocalyptic dawn of machine supremacy. A slit is open in ontology and

> the prospect of synthetic life jeopardizes the metaphysical principle of the identity of indiscernible precisely insofar as the difference between the living and the non-living is taken to be essential in the most radical sense: not just a difference in kind, but another kind of difference. This is what is disturbing about Prometheanism: the manufacturing of life, of another kind of difference, would be the generation of a rule for the rule-less (Ray Brassier on Jean-Pierre Dupry, in *Prometeanicism and its Critic*s, 2014).

Nick Land puts it another way by drawing the consequences:

> It is not only possible, but probable, that advances towards Techonomic Singularity will be obscured by intermediate synthetic mega-agencies, in part functioning as historical masks, but also adjusting eventual outcomes (as an effect of path-dependency). The most prominent candidates for such teleoplexic channeling are large digital networks, business corporations, research institutions, cities, and states (or highly-autonomous state components, especially intelligence agencies). Insofar as these entities are responsive to non-market signals, they are characterized by arbitrary institutional personalities, with reduced teleoplexic intensity, and residual anthropolitical signature. It is quite conceivable that on some of these paths, Techonomic Singularity would be aborted, perhaps in the name of a 'friendly AI or (anthropolitical) "singleton". There can scarcely be any doubt that a route to intelligence explosion mainlined through the NSA would exhibit some very distinctive features, of opaque implication. The most important theoretical consequence to be noted here is that such local teleologies would inevitably disturb more continuous trend-lines, bending them as if towards super-massive objects in gravitational space. It is also possible that some instance of intermediate individuation – most obviously the state – could be

strategically invested by a Left Accelerationism, precisely in order to submit the virtual-teleoplexic lineage of Terrestrial Capitalism (or Techonomic Singularity) to effacement and disruption". (Nick Land, 2014)

The Dune Universe is so irresistibly appealing for it proposes annihilation of the ontological other. The thinking machines can be only human, on a human genomic base. Moving through the galaxy with the aid of some technologic interventions but still enjoying some socio-cultural aesthetic of antiquity.

6. Synthesis

At the time of writing, things tend to point at a proliferation of anachronism. Histories that repeat, but more at one time. Proxi-wars, transnational rockets, rogue drones and poverty-migration and planetary scale plagues all seem to fade in front of a new, fast growing discussion: on acceleration and deceleration of technological singularity. We seem to face a stage of overproduction in prophecies of technological bliss and doom. It is in this context that one needs to assess the threats and possibilities. Automation will engulf various kinds of production, including intellectual. This means a recalibration, a rerouting of the path. By understanding the subsidiary unconscious structures that shape attitudes towards what a machine, a tool or a technique, one can feel the calming effect of structure itself brings. Nevertheless, looking in the shadows, looking at cosmism, accelerationism one might also find a deeper, darker meaning to cultural resurrection. Culture must have a reboot button, it always did. AND, a new way of conjunction in place of fatality, as Bifo Berrardi proposes, humanity can move from a place of digital entrapment (soul at work, when even the mental and poetic functions of a homo sapiens are put to use as connectors in the greater production-machine). From END to AND: (maybe) contemporary fear of singularity is just a measure of stagnation.

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Varia

The Intermediacy of Judgment: The Architectonic of Teleology in Kant's Third Critique

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Abstract: Kant is a founder through the way he separates, but profound through the way he unites. The true measure and legacy of Kantian philosophy is not so much the *separation*, that is, the *grounding*, but the *unity* and its *order*. The gesture of separation is, in a sense, the result of a methodological compromise necessary to grounding, but which is always recovered *at* and *as* the limit of a unity of another order, through an *als ob* that makes the very logic of separation possible. The function of a dynamic of intermediation takes shape within the system of critical philosophy in the form of the possibility of a *grounding that opens*, in contrast to one that would *confine* thought within the conditioned and freedom *outside* of nature. Kant acquires *truth*, but not at the cost of a finished and closed nature in a mere categorical coherence with itself and nothing else. The *Second Critique* acquires *the good* (*das Gute*), but not at the cost of a hope that can't be realized in this world. Lastly, the rational will gains the possibility of a harmony between nature and freedom, which, determined as aesthetic experience (which is not mere separation) shapes nothing else than the sense of its own supersensible vocation. The power of judgment, by means of which the fracture between the universal and the particular can be overcome in the form of an architectonic of the beautiful, has also produced, through its reflecting judgment, the sense of a purposiveness of nature in which the final end of creation is established in the form of the rational will itself as the subject of morality, closing the Kantian system with the possibility of a hope that the *final end of nature can only be freedom.* The complete management of the architectonic debts can thus only take place within the framework of the *Third Critique*, through the articulation of the topic of a power of judgment, which was articulated as the point of mediation between the particular and the universal, and between the conditioned and the unconditioned, within discursive understanding. The aim of this effort will be to reconstruct the manner in

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which the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" constitutes the true conclusion of the Kantian system, by outlining the possibility of a reflecting power of judgment that must involve, in its assessment, and in order not to enclose truth within a lifeless nature, a different type of causality, namely that of final causes. It will also try to trace how the architectonic of purposiveness not only succeeds in managing the rupture between the particular and the universal within the framework of discursive thought, but also how, by establishing the final end of creation as the unconditioned rational will, the "Methodology" permanently closes the enduring architectonic debt of systematicity and moral faith, producing the meaning of a nature whose final end is freedom itself. Finally, it will seek to show how the true closure of Kant's system lies in the meaning and possibility of a hope through which humanity becomes, in a sense, the very *als ob* of the unconditioned that determines itself as nature.

Keywords: Kant; architectonic; Critique of the Power of Judgment; teleology; unconditioned; reflective judgment; systematicity; purposiveness; final end; methodology.

1. Teleology

The "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" seems, at first glance, to emerge as a secondary task within the *Third Critique*. If the first part, dedicated to the aesthetic power of judgment, positively established a sense of the beautiful and the sublime produced by reflecting judgment[1], then the part dedicated to teleology seems to only negatively (i.e., coercively) outline the meaning of a purposiveness of natural ends (*Naturzwecke*)[2], where the type of causality involved (i.e., *nexus finalis*) by the latter becomes merely a regulative principle of the reflective power of judgment. The Idea is, therefore, severed from any possible connection with the determinative power of judgment and from any legitimate claim to constitutivity.

Understood in such a register, the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" appears as a mere extension of the "Transcendental Dialectic" from the *First Critique* over the faculty of judgment's claim to be able to

[1] Because it addressed the relationship between the form of the phenomenon and the faculties of thought. See Mircea Florian, *Studiu introductiv*, in: *Critica facultății de judecare*, I. Kant, trans. by Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu and Alexandru Surdu, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București 1981, p. 28

[2] Which, unlike the beautiful and the sublime, involves the consideration of the actuality of objects, not their mere representation (i.e., form). See Ibid.

presuppose the objectivity of causality in accordance with ends based on (and dogmatically presupposing) a determinate end of the existence of nature, where the antinomic tension between the concept of *nexus effectivus* and *nexus finalis* is overcome by decoupling the *possibility* from the *actuality* of its objects in discursive thought[3]. This decoupling overcomes the antinomy, both concepts being able to coexist as regulative principles of judgment within its reflecting power, but at the cost of transforming teleology into a "guideline" or, more precisely, into a mere heuristic principle "for the complete rational unification of phenomena"[4].

Nevertheless, the architectonic of the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" differs substantially from the critical method outlined thus far in the Kantian system. Such a method presupposed, in an initial step, the outlining of the pure principles of the faculties of thought through an analytic that metaphysically deduces the form of the principle, and subsequently transcendentally deduces its legitimacy of application. The analytic is then followed by a dialectic which initially exposes an architectonic contradiction and then overcomes it by introducing the distinction between the phenomenal and the supersensible, as well as that between the constitutive and the regulative. Moreover, the dynamic of an architectonic of intermediacy also captures the manner in which, throughout the entire demonstration, that which is separated for the sake of grounding is always recovered as a unity at a different level from that of the logic (and topic) in which the initial separation took place. Kant "intimately unites, after essentially separating"[5]. The architectonic of judgment, in its teleological

[3] "It is absolutely necessary for the human understanding to distinguish between the possibility and the actuality of things" KU, 5:401. All references to Kant's texts were based on the standard citation system, indicating the page number from *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, hg. von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 28 Bde, Berlin, 1910-1972. The English translation of the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (KGS 5) used was: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. by Paul Guyer, trans. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000

[4] The English translation is our own. Original text: „pentru deplina unificare rațională a fenomenelor" M. Florian, *op.cit.,* p. 32. For all references to Romanian sources, where the original text is cited in the footnotes, the author's own English translation is provided in the paper.

[5] „unește intim, după ce desparte esențial" Ibid., p. 33

reflecting power, will therefore deviate from such a structure, both in its exposition and in the nature of its object[6].

The concept of a final cause does not entail the removal of a transcendental illusion from the series of objects of possible experience through an appeal to the regulativity of the principles that presuppose it; rather, already within the "Analytic", it asserts itself as a concept without which an entire series of natural objects cannot be coherently thought. The experience of organized nature, in the form of an organism, is that which, within the "Analytic", leads to the concept of causality through ends, not the other way around. Moreover, the "Dialectic" of the *Third Critique* presupposes a transgression of the antinomy of the principle, not by treating the thesis and antithesis as simultaneously false, as was the case in the first two antinomies of speculative pure reason, nor as simultaneously regulative, nor, as was the case with the third antinomy, by limiting the antithesis to the sensible and the thesis to the supersensible, but rather through the reconciliation of the mechanical and teleological principles of judgment in the supersensible[7]:

> In the present case Kant does not attempt to argue that the mechanical principle may be true of […] [the sensible] and the teleological true of the supersensible; rather he argues that both can be applied to […] [nature] without contradiction, because it is possible (that is, not self-contradictory) that both are reconciled in the supersensible.[8]

Finally, Kant himself points out that although the predicate of a natural end is only a regulative principle for the empirical investigation of nature, nevertheless "the consequence that answers to it (the product) is still given in nature [...]; and in this [aspect] it differs from all other ideas"[9]. All these particularities of teleological judgment thus shape the second part of the *Third Critique*, already from its first two sections, as more than a mere "critical containment" of the transcendent claims of purposiveness. The

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[6] i.e., *nexus finalis*
[7] See John D. McFarland, *Kant's Concept of Teleology*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1970, p. 121
[8] Ibid., p. 130
[9] KU, 5:405

entire series of these particularities stems from the fact that the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" is not merely an appendix to the first section dedicated to Aesthetics, added solely in the name of a complete analysis of the reflecting power of judgment. Its "Analytic" is not a predictable exposition and deduction of the principle of purposiveness, nor is its "Dialectic" a mere "containment" of the latter in the form of presenting it as a regulative and heuristic guide for reflective judgment.

Insofar as, for Kant, matter is most often a consequence of form, the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" becomes the point in which the problem of the unity of the system and all the ruptures presupposed by it are managed in the form of an intimate synthesis between the domain of nature and that of freedom, made possible by the dynamics of the power of judgment. All the more so, the section dedicated to teleology serves as such a point because it is, in a sense, the first moment in the system in which the very rupture between the form and matter of the architectonic implies a matter that is a consequence of form, but also vice versa.

The "Dialectic" is not a closure, but rather the point of maximum openness of the Kantian system. Through the limit of the archetypal (i.e., intuitive) understanding, which it reaches in its final sections, it becomes not only the portrait of a reflective faculty of judgment that recovers the discursive unity of thought (for which the possibility of objects is separated from their actuality), but also the very point from which the entire history of German idealism and speculative philosophy (Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Schiller, etc.) will emerge. The "Methodology" of the "Teleological Power of Judgment" will, in turn, become the very closure of the system of critical philosophy, reconciling the system's fundamental rupture between nature and freedom (or, more precisely, between the conditioned and the unconditioned), through the form of the meaning of the final end of creation itself.

An effort to portray the dynamic of intermediacy within the Kantian system must therefore capture the role of the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment," not so much in establishing the possibility and legitimacy of the pure principle of purposiveness involved in reflective judgment, but rather in unifying the system through a closure that is, in essence, radical openness. Such a role can thus be grasped by articulating the

manner in which, through the form of the limit of intuitive understanding outlined at the end of the "Dialectic" (specifically in "§76: Remark" and "§77: On the special character of the human understanding, by means of which the concept of a natural end is possible for us"[10]), reflecting judgment becomes a constitutive *triton genos* of the discursive unity of thought in which possibility does not imply actuality and the contingency of the particular is not necessarily contained within the universality of the concept. Alongside the establishment of the topic of reflecting judgment around the problem of the archetypal understanding, it is also necessary to articulate the manner in which the "Methodology" shapes the unity between the conditioned and the unconditioned through the form of nature's final end, thereby closing the system through a radical openness that sets in motion the entire subsequent history of speculative philosophy.

These two problems neither have nor can claim to compose a comprehensive analysis of the stakes involved in the possibility of teleological judgment. Nor can they claim to outline all the architectonic consequences implied by it. Nevertheless, their analysis can at least outline how Kant understands the moment dedicated to the teleological power of judgment as the point in which the task of managing all the separations necessary for grounding can be brought to completion. Therefore, the task of outlining the dynamic of the architectonic of intermediacy will not claim to provide an exhaustive analysis of nature as a system of ends or of the antinomy between the teleological and the mechanical. Rather, it will focus solely on presenting the fact that one of the intimate problems of the critical system is that of achieving a grounding that seeks not to enclose, and on the fact that Kantian thought is engaged in a continuous management of such a problem through a discourse that can be recovered and reconstructed.

2. The Topic of the Power of Judgment

Considering the possibility of an objective natural end, Kant describes teleological judgment, from the very beginning of the *Critique*, as belonging to the reflecting power of judgment in the form of regulativity, and not in the constitutive sense of determinative judgment: "teleological judging

[10] "§76 Anmerkung" and "§77 Von der Eigenthümlichkeit des menschlichen Verstandes, wodurch uns der Begriff eines Naturzwecks möglich wird". See KU, 5:401 and KU, 5:405

is rightly drawn into our research into nature, at least problematically, but only in order to bring it under principles of observation and research in *analogy* with causality according to ends, without presuming thereby to *explain* it"[11]. The central concept of the "Analytic" will take shape through the form of the purposiveness implied by a natural end (*Naturzweck*), initially defined as an object which "[…] is cause and effect of itself (although in a twofold sense)"[12].

Kant exemplifies such an object through the type of natural end that can be thought in organized nature, specifically in the case of plant life. Kant will argue, for example, that a tree exhibits three characteristics that incline judgment to consider it as an object engaging the concept of a natural end. First, it produces itself as a species: "[...] it generates itself as far as the *species* is concerned, in which it, on one side as effect, on the other as cause, unceasingly produces itself"[13]. Second, it produces itself as an individual as well, not merely as a species; more precisely, it can grow through a process that cannot be determined solely by a mechanical law of increase in magnitude: "This sort of effect we call, of course, growth; but this is to be taken in such a way that it is entirely distinct from any other increase in magnitude in accordance with mechanical laws, and is to be regarded as equivalent, although under another name, with generation"[14]. And finally, the parts of this object produce themselves, serving the form of an object in which the parts are a cause of the whole, and vice versa: "it is required […] that its parts be combined into a whole by being reciprocally the cause and effect of their form"[15].

A natural end thus implies a purposiveness through which the object is "related to itself reciprocally as both cause and effect"[16]. The part is not a mechanical component of the whole; it is its *organ*. The whole, in its relation to the part (as well as the part's relation to the whole), is organized nature, more precisely, it is *life*. The purposiveness of a natural end is internal, not external. Life is neither a mechanical nor a technical product, but rather an

[11] KU, 5:360
[12] KU, 5:370
[13] KU, 5:371
[14] Ibid.
[15] KU, 5:373
[16] KU, 5:372

organized being, i.e., an organism. Kant uses the example of a clock to highlight the distinction between a *technical* product and a product of *nature*, or, more precisely, between the external purposiveness and the internal purposiveness proper to organized nature. In a clock, the part relates to the whole, but it cannot produce itself as a species or as an individual. The parts determine each other, but they cannot determine themselves as their own efficient cause:

> […] one part is the instrument for the motion of another, but one wheel is not the efficient cause for the production of the other: one part is certainly present for the sake of the other but not because of it. Hence the producing cause of the watch and its form is not contained in the nature (of this matter), but outside of it, in a being that can act in accordance with an idea of a whole that is possible through its causality.[17]

Hence, organized nature cannot be fully investigated in accordance with purely mechanical laws. The organism is the only part within possible experience that must be conceived as a natural end, entailing a productive internal purposiveness whereby the part and the whole mutually determine one another and "in which everything is an end and reciprocally a means"[18]. However, the principle of purposiveness it arrives at must remain regulative and not constitutive: "It is self-evident that this is not a principle for the determining but only for the reflecting power of judgment, that it is regulative and not constitutive"[19].

The dynamic of this regulative limit of thought is, in a sense, radically distinct from that of the unconditioned within the *Critique* dedicated to speculative reason. Within the "Dialectic" of the latter, the Idea necessarily and unconditionally tends, albeit only asymptotically, toward the form of possible experience, yet it cannot constitute itself as an object of the latter. The Idea tends toward objectivity infinitely, yet unsuccessfully, producing at most a transcendental illusion if it attempts to find its place in nature as one of its possible objects. In the section dedicated to teleology, however, the

[17] KU, 5:374
[18] KU, 5:376
[19] KU, 5:379

dynamic is almost reversed. Thought endlessly approaches the organism mechanically, yet it cannot establish its causality in a determinate way. A part of nature (the organism) eludes any mode of inquiry that would presuppose solely mechanical lawfulness. The dynamic of thought no longer presupposes (as in the case of pure speculative reason) an asymptotic movement of the indeterminate toward the determinate as an object; rather, in the case of nature's purposiveness, thought cannot reach the latter by means of mechanical determination alone. In the first case, the unconditioned cannot objectify itself; in the latter, the conditioned[20] is not sufficient for the object. Regulativity arises, in the first case, as a consequence of the fact that a possible object cannot be found for an indeterminate principle; in the second, from the fact that the object requires one that cannot be determined. Kant himself will argue that "absolutely no human reason (or even any finite reason that is similar to ours in quality, no matter how much it exceeds it in degree) can ever hope to understand the generation of even a little blade of grass from merely mechanical causes"[21].

The "Analytic of the Teleological Power of Judgment" thus establishes that a mode of investigation relying exclusively on mechanical laws cannot fully and consistently account for the lawfulness of nature without losing sight of the nature of purposiveness as shaped by the experience of an organism. The concept of a *natural end* calls for an investigation of nature that involves, alongside mechanical laws, a teleological dynamic, that is, an inquiry that presupposes and relies to some extent on the concept of final causes. Such a principle is clearly strictly heuristic and regulative; it serves investigation, not constitutivity. Nevertheless, to capture how the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" becomes the moment in which separation is overcome through the topic of the intermediacy of reflecting judgment, what matters is not so much apprehending the heuristic character of the principle of purposiveness, but rather understanding the dynamic[22] through which it is attained within the "Analytic". Such a dynamic is, in a sense, the result of the architectonic

[20] In this case, of the determining power of judgment.
[21] KU, 5:409
[22] We are here referring to the dynamic that arises from the fact that the rational unconditioned cannot reach objectivity, as well as the fact that the conditioned, assumed under mechanical lawfulness, is not sufficient for the object.

debt arising from the separation of the determinate from the indeterminate within discursive (i.e., non-archetypal) thought. The separation cannot be absolute: the unconditioned *cannot be fully realized*, but neither can the conditioned. The incompleteness of the mechanical model is a shadow left in the discursive architectonic of the subject by the fact that its thought is not an intuitive understanding. Purposiveness thus becomes a transgression *at* and *as* a limit, an *als ob* of the fact that the power of judgment must mediate between nature and the intelligible, between understanding and reason. Its topic is a consequence of the *supersensible* degree of the unity of thought[23], as well as of the fact that, nevertheless, the separation cannot be carried through to completion as determinate[24], nor can it be overcome by an appeal to a supersensible and supernatural[25] cause of nature's final end (about which thought cannot claim determinate knowledge). Therefore, in teleology, we will speak of nature *as if* purposiveness intentionally existed within it:

> In order to avoid even the least suspicion of wanting to mix into our cognitive grounds something that does not belong in physics at all, namely a supernatural cause, in teleology we certainly talk about nature as if the purposiveness in it were intentional [*spricht man in der Teleologie zwar von der Natur,* als ob *die Zweckmäßigkeit in ihr absichtlich sei*], but at the same time ascribe this intention to nature, i.e., to matter.[26]

Therefore, the "Analytic" outlines the meaning of a purposiveness that is heuristically necessary for the investigation of nature. At first glance, such a causality through ends seems to lead to a dialectic and an antinomy. The thesis of such a dialectic takes shape through the argument according to which "all generation of material things and their forms must be judged as possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws"[27], in opposition to an antithesis that would instead maintain that "some products of material nature

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[23] "Now, however, the common principle of the mechanical derivation on the one side and the teleological on the other is the *supersensible*, on which we must base nature as phenomenon." KU, 5:412
[24] In the form of an idealism of purposiveness: a lifeless matter. See KU, 5:392
[25] In the form of a realism of purposiveness: hylozoism (living matter) or theism (intelligent cause of nature). See Ibid.
[26] KU, 5:383
[27] KU, 5:387

cannot be judged as possible according to merely mechanical laws"[28]. The antinomy, however, is merely apparent. It emerges because, in both the thesis and the antithesis, a *maxim* of the reflective power of judgment, which ought to serve as a *regulative principle* of investigation, is instead turned into a *constitutive principle* for the possibility of objects in nature: "The two statements contradict each other if they are transformed into principles of things; however, they are reconciled if they are considered as transcendental principles or as maxims of the faculty of judgment"[29].

Therefore, the two principles of reflective judgment contradict one another and give rise to a dialectic only if a maxim is illegitimately considered and transformed into a constitutive principle. Transformed into maxims, the thesis and antithesis would only imply that the production of objects *can be considered* both according to mechanical laws and according to the teleological laws of causality[30]; in contrast with their determination as constitutive principles, which would not only *consider* objects in one way or another but also objectively *determine* them as such, thereby introducing a disjunctive relation between the two types of causality. The first maxim thus only presupposes that nature can be considered and investigated in accordance with mechanical causality, without presupposing that its objects "are possible only in accordance with such laws (to the exclusion of any other kind of causality)"[31]. Nor does the second maxim imply that objects of nature are not possible through another type of causality, but only that "human reason, in the pursuit of this reflection [of the mechanism of nature] and in this manner, can never discover the least basis for what is specific in a natural end, although it may well be able to discover other cognitions of natural laws"[32].

Nevertheless, the solution of the "Dialectic" only demonstrates that the terms of separation[33] do not necessarily have to contradict each other.

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[28] Ibid.

[29] „Cele două propoziții se contrazic, dacă sunt transformate în principii ale lucrurilor; ele se împacă însă, dacă sunt considerate ca principii transcendentale sau maxime ale facultății de judecare." M. Florian, *op. cit.*, p. 31

[30] See KU, 5:387

[31] See Ibid.

[32] KU, 5:388

[33] We are here considering the two types of causality.

What it does not demonstrate, however, is the possibility of knowing their unity. The possibility of such a unity involves the register of the *supersensible*, more precisely the idea that the two types of causality may be united under a single principle at the level of an inner and unknown ground (i.e., supersensible) of nature (*unbekannten inneren Grunde der Natur*[34]), which cannot be determined as a possible experience by discursive thought. However, even if the horizon of such a possible unity escapes thought, what the "Dialectic" nonetheless outlines is that the separation is a consequence of the discursivity of thought, of the fact that, through judgment, it must always move either determinatively or as reflecting judgment between the particular (given in intuition) and the universal (concepts of spontaneity).

The "Dialectic of the Teleological Power of Judgment" thus resolves the antinomy, though not by presenting the thesis and antithesis as simultaneously false, nor by restricting the former to the supersensible and the latter to the sensible (as was the case in the "Dialectic" of pure speculative reason). Instead, the resolution occurs by treating them not as principles of the possibility of objects, but as heuristic maxims of inquiry, which do not necessarily contradict one another, and by outlining the possibility of a unity of the two types of causality in the supersensible. The problem of the unity of the two principles will be further developed by Kant in "§76: Remark" and "§77: On the special character of the human understanding, by means of which the concept of a natural end is possible for us", by contrasting the architectonic of discursive thought with that of an archetypal understanding, and by ultimately shaping the topic of the power of judgment as the final degree in which the ruptures of the critical system are mediated under the form of intermediacy.

Angelica Nuzzo argues that the possibility of thinking an intuitive understanding emerges as the highest point of transcendental philosophy and, at the same time, as the seal of its closure[35]. The meaning of such an understanding is introduced by Kant in the "Remark", arguing that: "It is

[34] See KU, 5:388

[35] "So formulated, the possibility of thinking of an intuitive understanding is the highest act of transcendental philosophy and the seal of its closure." Angelica Nuzzo, *Kritik der Urteilskraft §§76 77: Reflective Judgment and the Limits of Transcendental Philosophy*, in: Dietmar H. Heidemann (ed.), *Kant Yearbook – Teleology*, 1/2009, De Gruyter, New York, p. 160

absolutely necessary for the human understanding to distinguish between the possibility [*Möglichkeit*] and the actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] of things"[36]. Possibility is understood here as "only the position of the representation of a thing with respect to our concept and, in general, our faculty for thinking"[37]. Actuality, on the other hand, is defined as "the positing of the thing in itself (apart from this concept)"[38]. Therefore, it becomes clear that the distinction Kant has in view is nothing but the consequence of the discursive separation between the receptivity of sensibility and the spontaneity of the understanding or, more precisely, between the particular (i.e., the contingent) and the universal (i.e., the necessary). An architectonic collapse of actuality into possibility would therefore produce the meaning and portrait of a form of thought for which knowing an object necessarily implies its existence, or more precisely, for which knowledge is ontologically productive: "For an understanding to which this distinction did not apply, all objects that I cognize would **be** (exist)"[39]. In discursive thought, the particular will always remain contingent in relation to the universal; in other words, the particular is subsumed under the universal, not contained within it[40]. Therefore, since the former cannot be analytically and productively derived from the latter, discursive thought will require a reflective power of judgment, not just a determinative one:

> Thus, conclusively, the reference to an intuitive understanding, allows us first to recognize that the antinomy between mechanism and teleology is valid only subjectively for the human mind; second, it suggests a situation in which no contradiction would subsist between the view of nature as mechanism and the view of nature as an organic and systematic whole (i.e., a situation in which no antinomy would arise); finally, it leads us to assume a way of reflecting in analogy with an intuitive understanding and to refer both our

[36] „Es ist dem menschlichen Verstande unumgänglich notwendig, Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit der Dinge zu unterscheiden." KU, 5:401
[37] KU, 5:402
[38] Ibid.
[39] KU, 5:403
[40] See Angelica Nuzzo, *op.cit.*, p. 166 and KU, 5:404: "But now since the particular, as such, contains something contingent with regard to the universal, but reason nevertheless still requires unity, hence lawfulness, in the connection of particular laws of nature"

maxims to a «supersensible substrate of nature» in which they may find their unification.[41]

The power of judgment thus takes shape following the possibility of thinking an archetypal understanding, as that which, in a certain sense, recovers the rupture between sensibility and understanding, and therefore between the particular and the universal. Judgment becomes the site of an intermediation in which the fact that, in discursive thought, the particular is not contained in the universal (i.e., the concept), and therefore cannot be analytically derived from it, is addressed; alongside the fact that, a form of thought which would presuppose a total separation would amount to an architectonic impossibility. Thought is neither absolute unity, nor absolute separation. The power of judgment, especially through its reflecting power, is a *triton genos* that recovers (at a different level than that of the logic of separation) the unity of thought, in the form of a kind of thinking that can nonetheless see the universal in the particular, and, through its determinative judgment, subsume the latter under the former, only not analytically and productively. The intermediation acquires the architectonic dynamic of an *als ob*, more precisely, in this case, of the purposiveness of nature (*die Zweckmäßigkeit der Natur*), but also of its systematicity (*systematische Einheit*). The problem of systematicity, opened in the "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic" of the *First Critique*, thus finds its final treatment and conclusion around the limit of the archetypal understanding that closes the "Dialectic of Teleology". It therefore becomes a recovery of the fact that, in discursive thought, the whole must *contain* within itself a contingency of the connection between the parts, since the particular is only *subsumed* under the universal, not *contained* within it:

> Now, however, we can also conceive of an understanding which, since it is not discursive like ours but is intuitive, goes from the *synthetically universal* (of the intuition of a whole as such) to the particular, i.e., from the whole to the parts, in which, therefore, and in whose representation of the whole, there is no *contingency* in the combination of the parts, in order to make possible a determinate form of the whole, which is needed by our understanding,

[41] Angelica Nuzzo, *op.cit.*, p. 170

which must progress from the parts, as universally conceived grounds, to the different possible forms, as consequences, that can be subsumed under it.[42]

The "Dialectic of the Teleological Power of Judgment" is therefore not merely an delineation of the regulativity and subjectivity of transcendental purposiveness, but rather, through the very possibility of thinking the archetypal understanding which it outlines, it becomes the site where the intermediary nature of the power of judgment is described as the very final point at which the architectonic debt of the separation between the particular and the universal is addressed through the *als ob* of purposiveness and systematicity. This moment becomes the highest point of transcendental philosophy and, at the same time, the seal of its closure[43]. All the more so, this moment can be read as the very point from which the Kantian system initiates the entire lineage of German Idealism and speculative philosophy. It "confirms the move from Kant to Hegel's notion of an absolute subjectivity that encompassing all conditions is itself unconditioned"[44].

3. The Methodology of the Teleological Power of Judgment

The "Analytic" and the "Dialectic" have outlined the fact that purely mechanical laws cannot, on their own, suffice for the complete investigation of nature, as organized matter necessarily implies the concept of a natural end; as well as the fact that reflective judgment can and must involve a principle of purposiveness for such an investigation, in a manner that does not antinomically exclude mechanical lawfulness. The conclusion of the "Dialectic" described the power of judgment as a *triton genos* that bridges, as an intermediary, the gap between understanding and sensibility, and as a dynamic of discursivity that must always move from the *analytic* universal to the particular, and not from a *synthetic* universal[45], as one might think an intuitive understanding would be able to. This intermediation takes place in

[42] KU, 5:407
[43] See note 35
[44] "The conclusive act of reflective judgment [...] confirms the move from Kant to Hegel's notion of an absolute subjectivity that encompassing all conditions is itself unconditioned." A. Nuzzo, *op.cit.*, p. 171
[45] Discursive understanding proceeds from concepts to empirical intuition, whereas intuitive understanding proceeds from the intuition of a whole to the particular. See KU 5:407

the form of the *als ob* of teleology and systematicity, thereby concluding the first two sections of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* through a final and ultimate settlement of the problem initially raised in the "Appendix" of the *First Critique*, namely the systematic unity of nature and thought, as well as the radical opening outlined around the possibility of thinking an absolutely unified intelligence.

If the "Analytic" and the "Dialectic" conclude the problem of the separation between the particular and the universal in the manner described above, that is, in the form of a radical opening, then the "Methodology of the Teleological Power of Judgment" will represent, in a sense, the conclusion of the entire critical system and the final point of the management of the rupture between the domain of nature and that of freedom. The "Methodology" also marks the point at which the foundation that will eventually become the political and religious philosophy in Kant's philosophical project is outlined. The concept of the moral proof of the existence of God and of moral theology will lead to the *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (1793)[46], and that of civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), outlined in §77[47], will mature under the form of the project described in *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795)[48].

Describing the manner in which the *Third Critique* is engaged in the management of the fractures within the system of critical philosophy therefore involves not so much an exposition of the relationship between teleology and the natural sciences, through the form of the problem of the origin and production of living matter[49], nor a presentation of the contrasts between ethicotheology and physicotheology[50], or the limits of the latter, but rather an understanding of the manner in which, by establishing a final end of creation and the existence of a world, as well as by establishing the possibility and meaning of moral faith, Kant will articulate, within the

[46] *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793): published three years after the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.
[47] More specifically, in "§77 On the special character of the human understanding, by means of which the concept of a natural end is possible for us". See KU, 5:432
[48] *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (1795).
[49] See "§81 On the association of mechanism with the teleological principle in the explanation of a natural end as a product of nature". See KU, 5:421
[50] See "§85 On physicotheology" and "§86 On ethicotheology"

"Methodology", the definitive management of the rupture between the domain of nature and that of freedom.

The determination of the final end of creation and the existence of a world, in the form of the human being as the rational subject of morality, is the fundamental act of the "Methodology" and, at the same time, the final grand gesture of the system of critical philosophy, an act that also brings it to its conclusion. Kant defines a final end (*Endzweck*) as "that end which needs no other as the condition of its possibility"[51]. Since the principle of pure mechanism (*der bloße Mechanismus*) proved to be insufficient for conceiving an organized nature, the rational subject therefore requires a distinct principle of its reflecting judgment in the form of the possibility of final causes. Furthermore, as this principle is extended by thought to the systematicity of all nature, it leads to the problem of the *als ob* of an intelligent cause of nature. Kant will then conclude that the whole of nature implies a final end, which can no longer be part of the series of its conditions (because otherwise, thought would fall into an infinite regression) and must therefore have unconditioned value. Or, in other words, if we consider the whole of nature as a system (which the architectonic of the discursivity of thought necessarily implies), then such a nature will involve a final end of the system and its purposiveness. Such a *final end* can be nothing other than the unconditioned freedom of a rational being, that is, nothing other than *humanity itself*:

> Now we have in the world only a single sort of beings whose causality is teleological, i.e., aimed at ends and yet at the same time so constituted that the law in accordance with which they have to determine ends is represented by themselves as unconditioned and independent of natural conditions but yet as necessary in itself. The being of this sort is the human being, though considered as noumenon: the only natural being in which we can nevertheless cognize, on the basis of its own constitution, a supersensible faculty (freedom) and even the law of the causality together with the object that it can set for itself as the highest end (the highest good in the world)."[52]

[51] KU, 5:434
[52] KU, 5:435

Therefore, within the critical system, the domain of truth is not violently or artificially separated from that of freedom, but rather, in a sense, *the final end of nature is freedom itself*. If the conclusion of the "Appendix" of the *First Critique* is actually found within the "Dialectic of the Teleological Power of Judgment", then the fundamental conclusion of Kant's moral philosophy actually takes place within the "Methodology of the Teleological Power of Judgment". More precisely, the latter outlines not only the hope of a rational will to be able to establish and pursue moral goals within a nature compatible with its autonomy, but also the fact that the final end of the system of nature is *the moral fulfillment of human (rational) freedom*. The highest good (*das höchste Gut in der Welt* or, more precisely, *summum bonum* itself) is not only possible, but can and must be realized in nature. *The human being becomes, in a sense, the very als ob of the unconditioned that determines itself as nature.*

Freedom is therefore intimately bound to nature through a teleological and reflecting power of judgment that outlines the possibility of the highest good and the final end of creation in the form of the rational will, where unity occurs through a topic in which freedom allows hope to have a place within conditioned nature, and nature allows for the unconditional systematicity of freedom. The highest good can not only be pursued in nature by a rational will but must, therefore, be pursued *systematically*. The will must be articulated as a system of duties, through which the unconditioned folds back into itself, as differently conditioned, within a finite nature, in order to *systematically* realize the highest good[53]. And, since systematicity, as defined through teleological reflecting judgment, has revealed itself to be always undetermined, it becomes evident that the will can neither compose its system of duties nor pursue the highest good in a determinate (i.e., mechanical) manner. The system of duties must remain open and undetermined, in order to be able to constitute the moral vocation of a rational being within a nature that must remain equally open, that is, whose systematicity is equally undetermined. The power of judgment thus becomes the only dynamic capable of making possible, as an intermediary, the very architectonic of unity in the critical system:

[53] See P. Guyer, *Kant,* Routledge, Londra 2014, p. 414

> All we can say is that sometimes it may seem obvious what our duty to realize the highest good for mankind within the world of nature requires, and sometimes it may not seem obvious, but in neither case will we be able to find determinate rules that can make such decisions mechanical. That is what follows from the premises that our duties must comprise a system, that they must be fulfilled in a nature that we must conceive of as a system, but that our knowledge of a system is always incomplete and always a problem of the reflecting rather than determining use of judgment.[54]

The possibility of the highest good (as the necessary connection between virtue and happiness), within a nature whose final end has been articulated as "the existence of rational beings under moral laws"[55], will therefore lead toward a moral theology (ethicotheology) and a moral proof of the existence of God, thereby completing the argument of the *Second Critique* through the dynamic of purposiveness. Kant argued, in the *Second Critique*, that the very nature of the moral law of a rational being, by generating a duty to strive toward the highest good, is what outlines both the possibility and the subjective necessity of moral faith. More precisely, if reason commands, then, in a sense, the object of the law must also be possible; and since the possibility of a necessary connection between virtue and happiness cannot be articulated with certainty within a finite and conditioned nature, a *moral faith* becomes necessary, a faith that the world is structured *as if* it had been created for the moral ends of a rational will. The very dynamic of the moral law thus produces the practical necessity of faith in a moral author of the world, not in the form of an objective proof, but in the form of the fact that "if [...] moral thinking is to be consistent, [..] [the rational will] *must include* the assumption of this proposition among the maxims of his practical reason"[56].

The "Methodology" completes the moral argument by stating that, through identifying the human being, in its capacity as practical reason, as the final end of nature, we acquire the primary condition for the possibility of considering the world as a "whole interconnected in accordance with

[54] Ibid. p. 412
[55] KU, 5:449
[56] KU, 5:451

ends"[57], that is, as a "*system* of final causes"[58]. Such a dynamic of the relationship between the final end and the systematicity of the world outlines the principle of a first cause, which is not merely an *intelligence* that mechanically prescribes the conditioned laws of nature (i.e., a physicotheology), but can be conceived as a supreme ground within the realm of ends: "On the basis of the principle of the causality of the original being thus determined we must not conceive of it merely as an intelligence and as legislative for nature, but also as a legislative sovereign in a moral realm of ends"[59]. The true measure of the moral argument for the existence of God is therefore shaped only through the teleological power of reflecting judgment, in and through the management of the rupture between the conditioned and the unconditioned, by means of the *als ob* of the moral final end of the world. The Methodology thus *closes* the critical system in the form of a power of judgment that *opens* an intimate relationship between truth, the good, and the beautiful. Following the "Methodology", happiness is not only intimately connected to virtue within a nature that can accommodate the moral vocation of the rational will, but it is always a happiness that arises from being able to see in the conditioned the unconditioned as *beautiful* and to determine the latter through the former as *good*:

> Consequently, we must assume a moral cause of the world (an author of the world) in order to set before ourselves a final end, in accordance with the moral law; and insofar as that final end is necessary, to that extent (i.e., in the same degree and for the same reason) is it also necessary to assume the former, namely, that there is a God.[60]

4. Conclusion

The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is therefore not merely a simple articulation of an aesthetic theory, accompanied by the more or less secondary effort of outlining the regulativity of teleological reflecting judgment. The teleological power of judgment has shown, through its

[57] KU, 5:444
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] KU, 5:450

"Analytic", that thought cannot account for all objects of a possible nature by means of a judgment that would assume the production of objects solely in accordance with mechanical laws, that is, where thought could only consider a *closed* and *lifeless* nature. It has therefore become necessary to consider the possibility of a reflecting judgment that involves, in its assessment, another type of causality, more precisely that of final causes. The "Dialectic" of the latter outlined the manner in which the two principles, if considered maxims of the reflective power of judgment rather than as objective principles of the determinative one, do not exclude each other antinomically, but instead remain simultaneously possible as modes of investigation of nature.

The consideration of the supersensible unity of the two types of causality produced, within the "Dialectic", the possibility of thinking an archetypal understanding in which separation no longer occurs. This shaped the power of judgment as the degree in which the architectonic debt of the separation between the particular and the universal, through the *als ob* of purposiveness and systematicity, takes place in the form of a radical opening, which will launch the entire history of German Idealism and speculative philosophy.

The "Methodology" closes the system of critical philosophy and is articulated as the final point in the management of the architectonic unity of the three *Critiques*, by identifying the final end (*Endzweck*) of creation with the unconditioned will of a rational being:

> The end is freedom (the intelligible) within nature (the sensible). Being natural, the end differs from freedom; as an end (freedom), it differs from nature. Teleology is neither nature nor freedom, but the unity of both; as such, it is neither theoretical nor practical, but a third form of knowledge: reflective judgment, contemplation, evaluation.[61]

Such a final end, within the architectonic of teleology, will bring closure to the problem of systematicity opened in the *First Critique*, as well

[61] „Scopul e libertatea (inteligibilul) în natură (sensibil). Fiind natural, scopul se deosebește de libertate; fiind scop (libertate), el se deosebește de natură. Teleologia nu e nici natură, nici libertate, ci unirea amândurora; ca atare, ea nu e nici teorie, nici practică, ci a treia formă de cunoștință: judecată reflectantă, contemplare, evaluare." Mircea Florian, *op.cit.*, p. 28

as to that of moral faith from the second, through the dynamic of a power of judgment by which *the final end of the world becomes freedom itself*, understood here as the unconditioned that folds back into itself, as differently conditioned, in the form of a moral vocation and a hope that the highest good can be realized in this world. The entire *Critique of the Power of Judgment* thus intimately binds a nature that is not closure to a beauty that is not separation, within a faith and hope that the unconditioned can be realized in nature. The system concludes by demonstrating, in a certain sense, that *the human being is itself the very als ob of the unconditioned that determines itself as nature*

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Translations

PROLEGOMENA TO ANY FUTURE CINEMA

by Guy-Ernest DEBORD

Love is only valid in a prerevolutionary period.
When I made this film, the time was still right to talk about it.
It was about revolting with the utmost violence against an ethical order that was soon to be surpassed.
Since I do not like writing, I will not waste my time on a work that will not prove to be eternal. Through the terrorist dismantling of the discrépant, my film will take its place among the most important works of the history of cinema's reductional hypostasis.
The chiselling of the image, and Lettrism (which were both given starting points) are to be understood here as the very expressions of revolt.*
*Chiselling the film erases certain moments that turn a blind eye to the exorbitance of disaster. Lettrist poetry howls for a shattered universe. The commentary [of the film**] is called into question by:*

The censored sentence *or the erasure of words (cf.* Appeal for the Destruction of Theoretical Prose***), *which serve to expose the forces of oppression.*

The decomposition of words into letters, *foreshadowing a total dislocation.*

The destruction is further intensified by the overlaps of image and sound, with:

The torn visual-sonic phrase, *in which the image overwhelms verbal expression.*

The spoken-written dialogue, *whose sentences are inscribed onto the projection screen, then continue on the soundtrack and then answer back and forth to each other.*

Finally, by aligning the two 'nonsenses' *(the perfectly insignificant image and speech) – an alignment which itself constitutes the surpassing of the howl – I arrive at the very death of discrépant cinema.*
But all this belongs to a vanishing epoch, which no longer interests me.
The values of creation shift toward the conditioning of the spectator, which I call three-dimensional psychology*, just like Marc, O.'s* nuclear cinema*, which marks the beginning of a new amplic phase.*
The arts of the future will be the overturning of situations, or nothing.

NOTES

*Literally "given elements" (*éléments donnés*). Here Debord is likely pointing to the fact that it was historically evident that Lettrism, along with its iconoclastic impulses, became intertwined with the very notion of revolt. He perhaps also suggests that this connection was not strictly necessary, and that it was due to historical reasons that Lettrism (which in his later reading degenerated into a conformist, liberal current) was the most authentic symbol of rebellion in the postwar cultural scene.

**Here, "*commentaire*" should be understood as "narration", since it refers to the content of the soundtrack of his film *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*, for which the Prolegomena was written as foreword.

***The influence of James Joyce was particularly strong on the Lettrist group during its early period and precisely these cinematic years (1951–1952), shaping their works with the syntactic experiments of disorganization. One of Debord's first ever Lettrist texts, *Appeal for the Destruction of Theoretical Prose* (*Appel pour la destruction de la prose théorique*), stands as a striking document of this influence. This text also served as a key reference for Marc, O.'s ION contribution *First Manifestation of a Nuclear Cinema* (*Première manifestation d'un cinéma nucléaire*), in which following Debord he proposed the emergence of an 'art of critical prose' which was mainly based on the syntactic dislocation.

HOWLS FOR SADE

by

Guy-Ernest DEBORD

HOWLS FOR SADE

SOUNDTRACK

IMAGES

The words appear in capital letters
in white, on a black screen.
The term **encounters** consistently
refers to every image in
which eroticism can be softened
only by the scandalous
and barely believable
existence of the police.

At the beginning of our story, there were people, who were made to forget about it; and the good times, as if in a labyrinth, were ever more lost.

Parade of Indian Army troops,
from the previous century.

(Long silence.)

Black screen.
Close-up of Guy-Ernest Debord.
Black screen.
Close-up of a girl licking
an ice cream.

He thought the evening would unfold entirely through his mouth. But the impossibility of being understood sickened him; and through the fortuity of encounters and ruptures he slowly came upon a metaphysics of refusal.

Upward tilt of the Tour *Saint-Jacques*, repeated several times.

What has become of him?

(The last verse of the poem *Marche* by François Dufrêne, recited very softly.)

Arthur Cravan, deep under water.

Shots of a battleship from the Battle of Tsushima.

(Recited by an Afro-American.)

Not long after, he vanishes in the Gulf of Mexico, to where he ventured at night on a small boat.

Encounters.

(Apollinaire: *Hunting Horns*, accompanied by a supersonic improvisation by Marc'O.)

Parade of Indian Army troops.

Emmanuel Dieu awaits the sidereal hour so that he can finally loose his head.

Encounters.

A science of situations must be established, appropriating elements from psychology, statistics, urbanism, and ethics. These elements must strive for an entirely new objective: the conscious creation of situations.

Scenes of riots.

I do not like cinema. I like the uprising promised to me every morning, when I see Violette Nozières, or the monument erected in the memory of Serge Berna.

(A Vivaldi-aria starts.)

He suddenly remembered the bar, where he was waiting for the second half of the century to begin, wondering about everything that was about to end once again

(Long silence.)

always at that very same hour, awaiting the last seconds, all the way until midnight.

(The music continues for just a moment, then stops.)

He stepped out to the cold street and the sirens began to howl.

(Spelled-out words.)

S,O, E,M,P,T,Y,
M,U,S,T, H,O,W,L,
H,O,W,L,
(Blasts of whistles.)

She kept reappearing in his memory again and again with blinding fireworks, just like when sodium meets water.

Encounters.

A twelve-year-old girl smiles as
she passes and goes down
into the metro.
Shots of the Notre-Dame from
different angles.
Black screen.
Close-up of Guy-Ernest Debord.
A girl sitting,
face against a table,
her hair spread out in front of her.

Black screen.
Close-up of a pair of eyes.
Black screen.
Boxing match.

Parachuters descending.

A filmstrip scratched
to the point of total
destruction of the image.

Face of a sleeping girl.

Black screen.

He was fully aware
that nothing would remain of these
moments in a city that turns with the
Earth, as the Earth turns within the
Galaxy, and this Galaxy is just an
insignificant part of a tiny islet,
drifting away towards the infinite
beyond us.

Close-up of Guy-Ernest Debord.
Black screen.
Boxing match.

(Spelled-out words.)
B,O,D,Y, T,O, B,O,D,Y,
L,O,S,T
He was walking around, and
(Silence.)

Black screen.
Cowboy shot of Guy-Ernest
Debord, knocking back a glass.

ever so desperate as

Black screen.
Images of factory chimneys.

(Fragments from *François Dufrêne: I question and I condemn*, a poem to howl.)

Scratched filmstrip.

The first wonder is when
you walk up to her, not knowing
what to say. You try to touch her
mouth, her breasts – in all innocence
– yet your captivated hands cannot
move faster than racehorses in slow-
motion. The knots dissolve into
water, and we drift together towards
the day.

Telescopic images of the night
sky.

(The underlined sentences are said by a girl with a Bulgarian accent.)

I think we'll never see each other again.

Close to a kiss, the winter streetlights fade away.

At this moment,
it is dawn on Tahiti.

Due to the transport strike, Paris was a real delight.

Jack the Ripper was never caught.

The telephone is fun.
Such a love struggle, as Madam Ségur would say.

I'll tell you some really scary stories from my home country, but they must be told at night to be truly frightening.

Ivich, my dear, there are fewer Chinatowns than you think. You're fifteen.
Even the brightest colors go out of fashion one day.

I've already known you.
Seoul and other nebulae.
Even the virgin forest is less untouched than you, miss.

Guy, I'm cold.

Encounters, in slow motion.

Gun Crazy – remember?
That was it. No one was enough for us. What will incest and the schoolgirl mean one day on Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle?

(Howls.)

Scenes of riots.

And yet…

Hail beats against the glass.
We will remember this planet.

A world of cries
has been lost.
(Repeated three times, mechanically, with a slight crescendo.)

Close-up of Isou, smiling at the audience.

Black screen.

he recalled a few lines from a newspaper, back from 1950.

Close-up of Guy-Ernest Debord.
Black screen.
Scenes of riots.

(In a monotonous voice.)

A young radio star throws herself into the Isère.
Grenoble. The little twelve and a half years old Madeleine Reineri, who hosts the program Beautiful Thursdays on Alpes-Grenoble station under the alias 'Pirouette', threw herself into the Isère on Friday afternoon,

Encounters.

leaving her schoolbag on the riverbank.

(Softly.)

VARALINE
VARADALINE
SIANE MARIALE
MALIVOLANE

My little sister,
we look terrible. The Isère and the misery *[misère]* keeps flowing on.
There is nothing we can do.

Youth Uprising…
(Deafening blasts of whistles; then a Lettrist chorus starts in the background, dominated by cries and whistles.)

Reflections on sexual life in France at the end of the Christian era.

Almost all girls under fifteen are forbidden to us.
Most perversions are ill-viewed by the general public.
The Paris police is armed with thirty thousand batons.
There are still many for

Bodies of young men killed in the streets of Athens.

AND YOUTH WILL
DECOMPOSE A LITTLE
MORE.

Close-up of Marc, O.

Interior of the Mabillon, with its regulars.

Boxing match.

whom the word ‘morality’ provokes neither laughter nor outrage.

(End of the lettrist choir.)

Christiane is in prison.

Order rules, but does not govern.

(Mechanically.)

Three-dimensional psychology, or the architectural complex defined as the means of knowledge.

Exterior images of the Cluny Museum.

Like a strangled Argonaut, the Andalusian Dog enclosed itself in the house of dreams.

The amount of indulgences, and the victory of Kosovo – the secret wounds. On the corner of the night sailors wage wars; and the ships in the bottles all sail for you, who once loved them. You would fall back onto the beach as into hands more loving than those that the rain, the wind, and the thunder slip each evening beneath your dress.

Life is beautiful in Cannes in summer.

Rape – though forbidden – becomes almost banal in our memories.

When we were on the Chattanooga.

Scenes of riots.

Yes. Of course.

And those faces buried in the sand, – once bright, cunning mad stars – faces on which desire spread across like paint on the wall.

Let the gin, the rum, and the brandy flow like the Great Armada.

So much for the eulogy.

But all these people were vulgar.

Scratched filmstrip.

(Applause and whistles simultaneously.)

DISORDER
FOR THE SAKE OF
DISORDER.

The torment of the caress returns with her, weakness denies itself and begins to gather strength.

Boxing match.

A vertical fall empties the barrel of the Danaïdes – a barrel of frost and of lips.

The carpet twists into another dimension of time, and gets stained.

Like a dissolving sugar cube.

Music bounds the red and green of the signals.

The night is all yours.

Triumphant music swells.

He plunges into a burning river, a sea of oil.

By now, it is only a matter of hair.

I never really liked vodka, nor confidences.

Scratched filmstrip.

Parachuters descending.

Encounters.

(In a monotonous voice.)

The little Madeleine Reineri, twelve and a half years old, who under the alias 'Pirouette', hosted the radio program *Beautiful Thursdays* on the Alpes-Grenoble station, threw herself into the Isère…

Parachuters descending.

Mademoiselle Reineri, from the Europe quarter, your astonished face, and that body – finest of the promised lands –
will always remain yours.

Street sign of the rue de Lisbonne.

Progression of the French infantry in Indochina.

The dialogues repeat their definitive truths like neon signs.

(Lettrist solo improvised on a death rattle.)

I LOVE YOU.
IT MUST BE TERRIBLE TO DIE.
GOODBYE.
YOU DRINK FAR TOO MUCH.
WHAT DO CHILDHOOD LOVES MEAN?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU.

I always knew. In another epoch I really regretted it.

WOULD YOU LIKE AN ORANGE?
THE BEAUTIFUL RUPTURES OF THE VOLCANIC ISLANDS.
ONCE UPON A TIME.

I have nothing left
to say to you.

Telescopic images of the night sky.

(The Lettrist improvisation ends.)

After every ill-timed response, as youth grows old, the night falls once again – and from great heights.

(Cries of François Dufrêne:)

Scenes of riots.

VI

XIII (ad lib.)

KWORXKE KOWONGUE KKH
WOZ BU WONZ GGH
WEXPI GWÈGNS
PIV
HIGNS CHTABUHI
HIGNS
STOBOHU STOBOHU KAX
GONX
KWORXKE KOWONGUE KKH
WOZ BU WONZ GGH
TIYNDOLLF, TIYNDOLLF,
TIYNDOLLF (bis.)
GLILEUS, GLILEUS, GLILEUS,
GLILEUS, GLILEUS (bis.)
CHTAM, CHTAM, CHTAM,
CHTAM, BAOUMPE (bis.)
KFRACHIKANNKLE
KLEX

Scratched filmstrip.

XIV

KLWATWORZZ…
CHFARBONR CHFIDRE,
CHFIDRE, CHFIDRE (bis.)
CHFARBONR CHGLIFT!

VI

Reminded of these memories, I have destroyed the cinema, because it was easier than killing the passers-by.

(Here the narration is limited to the citation of various articles from the Civil Code and excerpts from a French literature textbook.)

The rest of the film consists of the succession of absolutely insignificant images; without any intention of humor, montage, or provocation.

The poetic worlds close in and forget themselves.

A girl's face masked by her hair.

On Gabriel-Pomerand Square the fog conceals encounters that turn into suicide.

The square Saint-Germain-des-Prés, deserted.

Like lost children,
we live our unfinished adventures,
our adventures immeasurably small.

Encounters.

Each day, the drifting of the continents carries a beautiful girl further away. She could have been a beauty of Gilles de Rais.

You know, none of this really matters.

(A short silence, then very violent cries in the dark.)

Guy-Ernest Debord comes out of l'Escapade and strolls down the rue Dauphine.

Black screen.