



DOCUMENT

UFD009 Gilles Châtelet Robin Mackay, Matt Hare, Saint Huître (trans.)

A Martial Art of Metaphor: Two Interviews with Gilles Châtelet

In these interviews dating from 1998, Châtelet amplifies the major themes of To Live and Think Like Pigs, discusses his method of dramatisation and the crucial importance of style; and touches on subjects from dialectics to dope smoking, from Yoplait to slavery, along the way introducing some of the book's key concepts: cybercattle, the average man, the tapeworm-citizen, and of course the pitiful couple Cyber-Gideon and Turbo-Bécassine.

Introduction

An all-guns-blazing philosophical assault on the ideology of 'market democracy' which opens with a mordant analysis of social *faux pas* in a trendy Paris nightclub, proceeds through brisk demolitions of sociology, economics, and finance punctuated by frequently hilarious broadsides against chaos theory, 'petronomadism', and media panics (among others); and ends up lampooning the fatuities of game theory by applying it to a coy urbanite's attempts to get her boyfriend to fix a hairdryer.... *To Live and Think Like Pigs* was, to say the least, a surprise bestseller. All the more so given that this controlled explosion was detonated by a fairly obscure mathematician and philosopher whose only previous publication had been a book on the conceptual underpinnings of mathematics and physics—an unlikely candidate for a succès de scandale, even if we consider that Châtelet's singular intelligence was recognised by now-celebrated contemporaries such as Badiou and Deleuze, and that apart from his academic activities,

he was involved in the militant gay activist movement and was apparently renowned for his wild parties....

Combining the incandescent wrath of the betrayed comrade with the acute discrimination of the mathematician, Châtelet scrutinizes the pseudoscientific alibis employed to naturalize 'market democracy'

Châtelet's scathing polemic opens at the end of the 70s, when the liberatory dreams of '68 are beginning to putrefy, providing fertile ground for a new breed of self-deluding 'nomads' and vogueish 'gardeners of the creative'. Gulled by a 'realism' that reassures them that political struggle is for anachronistic losers, their allegiances began to slide inexorably toward the 'revolutionary' forces of the market's invisible hand, and they join the celebrants of a new

order governed by boredom, impotence, and envy. Combining the incandescent wrath of the betrayed comrade with the acute discrimination of the mathematician, Châtelet scrutinizes the pseudoscientific alibis employed to naturalize 'market democracy'. As he acerbically recounts, 'chaos', 'emergence', and the veneration of cybernetics and networks merely impart a futuristic sheen to Hobbesian 'political arithmetic' and nineteenth-century 'social physics'—a tradition that places the atomised individual at the center of its apolitical fairy-tales while stringently ignoring the creative political process of individuation.

What undoubtedly contributed to the notoriety of *To Live and Think Like Pigs* was its success in offending almost everyone. Neither mellowing 60s radicals nor the upwardly-mobile global nomads of the 90s took kindly to the book's pitiless satirical takedowns; and while rightwingers were predictably appalled by Châtelet's radical denunciations, the Left didn't much appreciate being called to account for their tacit capitulation to capitalist realism. The cacophonous theatricality of Châtelet's presentation was an affront to 'reasonable' political thinkers of every stripe, and certainly cut a swathe through a climate of 'political correctness'. In spite of the offence taken—or because of it—*Pigs* was read by all; and the author found himself becoming something of a minor celebrity, soon troubled as much by sycophants and hangers-on as by his newfound enemies.

Packed with what Alain Badiou, in his preface to the English edition, calls Châtelet's 'fulminating abstraction', the energetic interventions translated below confirm the startling prescience of *To Live and Think Like Pigs*. When first published in 1998, Châtelet's dystopian tragicomedy was a fierce revolt against the 'winter years' and a mordant theory-science-fiction of the future portended by the reign of Reagan-Thatcher-Mitterand. Today its diagnoses seem wholly contemporary: the 'triple alliance' between politics, economics, and cybernetics; the contrast between the self-satisfied 'nomadism' of a global overclass and the cultivated herds of 'neuro-livestock' whose brains labour dumbly in cybernetic pastures; the arrogance of the 'knights of finance'; and the limitless complacency and petty envy of middle-class dupes haplessly in thrall to household goods and openly hostile to the pursuit of a freedom that might demand patience or labour. What would

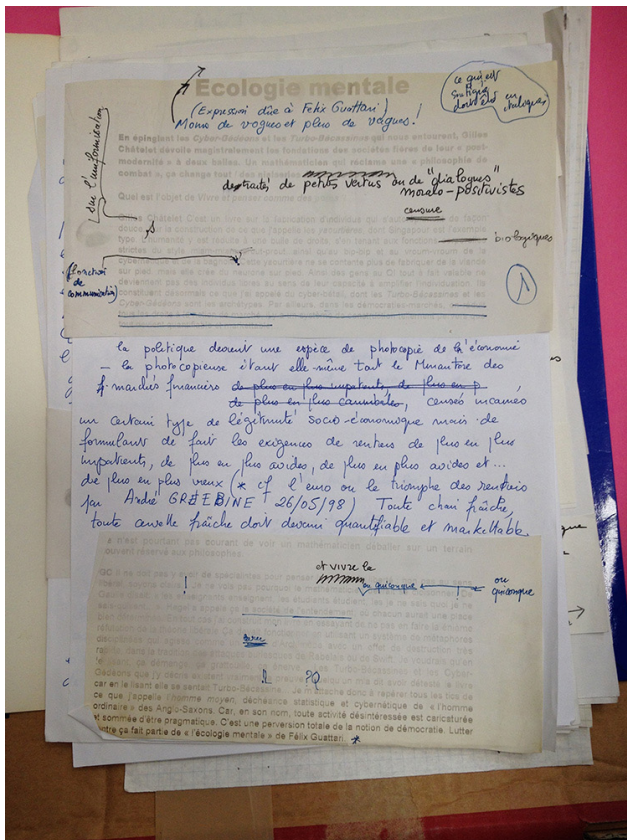
the writer who made a dystopian burlesque of the 90s have made of a twenty-first century in which all of the tendencies he describes have accelerated almost beyond parody?

The two texts below, discovered in a Paris archive, were translated from a series of pages that Châtelet had reordered and collaged, using his preferred 'cut-up'-style working method, out of typewritten, printed, photocopied, and handwritten fragments. The provenance of the first is uncertain; the second is an interview conducted by Christine Goémé, a version of which was published in the magazine *ArtPress* (no. 236, June 1998). [RM]

1. Mental Ecology

Less vogues, more waves!

—Félix Guattari



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Skewering the Cyber-Gideons and Turbo-Bécassines¹ who surround us, Gilles Châtelet masterfully strips bare the foundations of societies proud of their paltry 'postmodernity'. A mathematician who demands a 'philosophy of combat'—quite a change from the pabulum of treatises on the minor virtues and moralo-positivist 'dialogues'.

1. [Bécassine: one of the first nationally popular comic book characters in France, Bécassine first appeared in 1905 in Parisian girls' weekly magazine *Le Semaine de Suzette*, and later, as her popularity grew, was the subject of separate albums of long-form *bandes dessinées*, by 1950 amounting to over 25 volumes. The stereotype Bréton housemaid's provincial naivety is the butt of most of the humour in her early adventures, but her penchant for sincere plain-talking later becomes a more positive trait, making her something of a latter-day *Candide*. In the late 70s Chantal Goya recalled the character to national awareness once again with the hit song 'Bécassine, c'est ma cousine' ('Bécassine, she's my cousin'). Gideon: Anthropomorphised duck, star of an animated children's TV series that aired in France in the late 70s (as *Gédon*) and later appeared in a dubbed version in the UK (*Gideon*). Gideon is an abnormally long-necked specimen who avoids the fated ugly-duckling narrative by using his wits to solve problems and help his animal pals out of various scrapes.—trans.]

All fresh meat, all fresh brains, must become quantifiable and marketable.

— *What is To Live and Think Like Pigs about?*

It's a book about the fabrication of individuals who operate a soft censorship of themselves; on the construction of what I call yoghurt-makers, of which Singapore is the typical example. In them, humanity is reduced to a bubble of rights, not going beyond strict biological functions of the yum-yum-fart type... as well as the vroom-vroom and beep-beep of cybernetics and the suburbs (the function of communication). This yoghurt-maker is not content to fabricate livestock; it creates *neurolivestock*. So people with entirely adequate IQs don't become free individuals, in the sense of their having the capacity to amplify individuation; instead they constitute what I call cyber-livestock, of which the *Turbo-Bécassines* and *Cyber-Gideons* are the archetypes.

Furthermore, in market democracies, politics becomes a kind of photocopy of the economy—the photocopy itself being the whole Minotaur of financial markets, which supposedly incarnate a certain kind of socio-economic legitimacy, but which in fact formulate the necessities of a rentier class that is more and more impatient, more and more greedy and...older and older. All fresh meat, all fresh brains, must become quantifiable and marketable.

— *It's quite unusual to see a mathematician set out his stall on a terrain often reserved for philosophers.*

It can't be the preserve of specialists to think and to live liberty (not in the liberal sense, let's be clear!) I don't see why the mathematician, or anyone else, should partition themselves off. De Gaulle said: it's time for the teachers to teach, the students to study, the I-don't-know-what to do whatever... Hegel called this the society of the Understanding, where everyone has their well-determined place.

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In any case, in constructing my book I tried not to make it the *n*th refutation of liberal theory. It had to function by using a series of disciplined metaphors which work like an Archimedes' lever with a very rapid destructive effect, in the tradition of the burlesque attacks of Rabelais and Swift. I wanted to write a book that made the reader irritated, itchy, pissed off. The Turbo-Bécassines and Cyber-Gideons that I describe really exist. You want proof? Someone said to me that they hated the book because when they were reading it, they felt they were a Turbo-Bécassine. So I try to identify all the tics of what I call the average man, a statistical and cybernetic degradation of the Anglo-Saxons' 'ordinary man'. Because in the name of the average man, all disinterested activity is caricatured, and commanded to be pragmatic. It's a total perversion of the notion of democracy. To struggle against that is to participate in Félix Guattari's 'mental ecology'.²

– *Democracy? But you speak of the necessity of a 'cultural aristocracy'!*

As I specify, an aristocracy that would not be coopted by birthright or by money. Let's not forget that Nietzsche wanted anyone whatsoever to have the right to receive an excellent education. Every 'little guy' should have a chance to access the highest degrees of thought, of knowledge, and of power. That's the absolute minimum we can ask of a modern society. And we're a long way from that, both as absolute value and as relative tendency! And above all, don't give me these stupid stories about IQ. Naturally, the agility of the body is part and parcel of intelligence: the instructive and inspired geometry of the dancer or the mountaineer!

Naturally, the agility of the body is part and parcel of intelligence: the instructive and inspired geometry of the dancer or the mountaineer!

Paradoxically, the system at one and the same time aims to uniformize, and to accelerate inequalities tremendously. The market makes a claim to rationality, and a nice festive equilibrium. A whole fringe of the middle classes have even taken up the slogans

of '68. This is what I call festive mercantilism, the society of the cellphone, where you can call yourself a nomad even while you remain trussed up in your ego, in your own house, and keeping among your own.

– *You speak of an imperative of fluidity which seeks to govern society. How can we put a spanner in the works to counter it?*

If only I knew.... For now, there is a whiff of revolt against the 'spirit of Davos'. But as for the spanner, that's your work, that's for the next generation. The intellectual's role is to show how, underneath a veneer of seriousness, all of these people are essentially grotesque. That's a work of militancy, it's a matter of identifying the tics, the postures and the poses of the spirit of *contemporary seriousness* and of all those other Diafoiruses³ of socio-economic 'pragmatism'. The model of this would be Barthes's *Mythologies* (at the end of the 50s—the Jacques Tati period).

– *To attain the patience-work that you oppose to indentured work and performance-work?*

Patience-work, in fact, is directly opposed to an increasingly cyber-volatile money, money that dreams only of making more money. To be impatient is to scorn others as mere puddles of inertia or, strictly speaking, as raw material to be manipulated or formed. This is perhaps the secret of the impatience of the service society, which scorns matter and the hand (and in particular understands nothing of the dignity of manual work!) Remember that a society like this privileges the optimal manufacture of services, that is to say of goods consumed at the very moment of their production; and thus induces totally impatient psychologies. Making a burlesque of them is a part of the interrogation bearing upon patience-work, work that would articulate the production of something and the fact that you take it to heart, that it plays a part in the intensification of your liberty!⁴ To each his singular! It's the problem of socialist and communist revolution: already, making a start by eroding these psychologies is not so easy.

3. [Diafoirus: character from Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid*, a doctor who is more concerned with impressing with elaborate scientific terms than helping his patients.—trans.]

4. See Gilbert Simondon's fine book *L'Individuation Psychique et Collective* (Paris: Aubier, 1989).

2. See F. Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, tr. I. Pindar and P. Sutton (London and New York: Continuum, 2005).

Because it can only be done by twisting language upon itself, by throwing off all the habits and postures that increasingly oppress and petrify the ordinary man! The faster it goes, the more it turns to stone. Take the example of people who walk as fast as possible in the street. It's not a matter of taking the time to live, in the sense of 'leisure', but of beginning to question one's own practices. This is not just a matter for the intellectual. If I were to say that we should do this and that, it would be absurd.

Nothing is more priggish and 'Sciences-Po'⁵ than those people who ask you: 'If you were in power, what would you do?' If you're stupid enough to answer, then they suspect you of wanting to become a European deputy...which would end up just as pathetic as Cohn-Bendit with the Euro.⁶ It would be decidedly more worthwhile to advise people to read Desanti, Badiou, Pètrèlla, Vatin or Rancière (to mention only those who are still alive!) These people help one to think!

The work of the 'left intellectual' is more tiring than you might suppose. One has to spend all one's time shouting 'This or that emperor has no clothes.'⁷ And as for the work of the militant....

– But if you're cut out for the job...

If only I were! This is why we must assure ourselves of a minimum of social comfort—not to satisfy egocentrism, but so there's some kind of influx of air. Because otherwise, there will be a generational war, which would be a bad way of posing the problem. We can read as much in certain rightist newspapers. Obviously, they have every interest in shuffling the cards, claiming to have found 'sociological criteria'. But it remains a notion of the proletariat and the exploiter. Indeed, it's far less visible a problem than the homeless. But the response can't just be a new humanitarianism. We can no longer say: 'in any case, even so we have to learn to live together'. That's all over.

5. [Sciences-Po: Paris's Institute of Political Studies, a highly selective institution specializing in social sciences, which has traditionally been the training ground of France's political elite—trans.]

6. [Daniel Cohn-Bendit: A radical known as 'Danny the Red' during the upheavals of '68, in the 90s he joined the European parliament and became leader of the French Green Party (Les Verts), becoming an advocate for the Euro and the free market.—trans.]

7. Roger Penrose's book, *The Emperor's New Mind*....

– *The solution is not Abbé Pierre.*⁸

Well, there are worse things than Abbé Pierre! Even so, we should follow his example! The problem is that he said stupid things afterwards. I don't want to play the doddering old man, but it's not always easy not to say stupid things. Once you begin to have any power, any notoriety, or whatever, immediately there is something that impels you to say stupid things.

– *So perhaps we'll push you to say something stupid: When you talk about cannabis, you mention a narco-consensus; do you actively resist against this?*

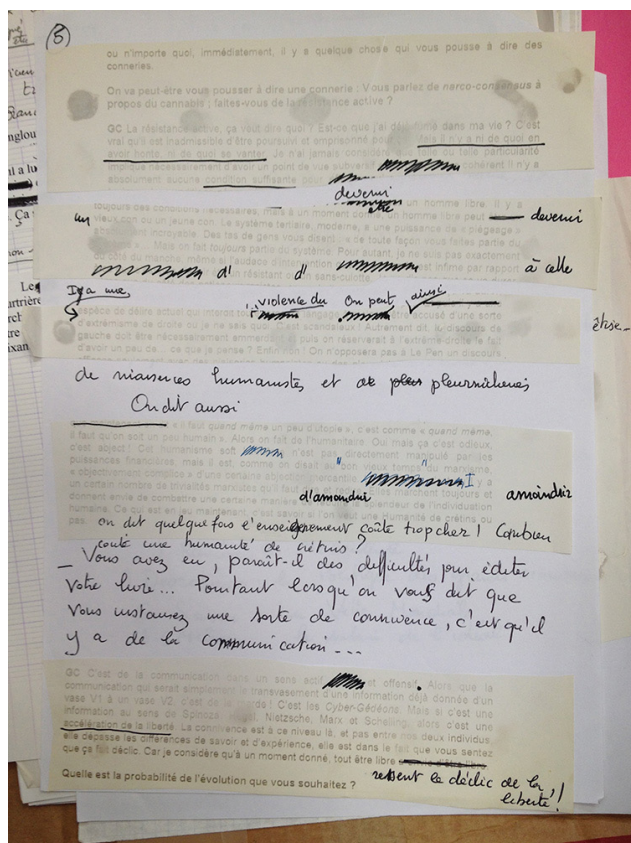
Active resistance, what does that mean? Have I smoked in my life? It's true that it is not right to be hunted down and imprisoned for doing so. But *just as there's nothing to be ashamed of in it, nor is it anything to be particularly proud of*. I've never thought that doing this or that particular thing necessarily implies that one has a coherent subversive point of view; there is absolutely no *sufficient condition* for becoming a free man. There are always necessary conditions, but at any given moment, a free man can become an old fool—or a young fool. The modern, tertiary system boasts an absolutely incredible power of 'entrapment'. So many people will tell you: 'in any case, you're part of the system'.... But one's *always* part of the system. Even so, it's not as if I'm lining up with the stronger side, even if the audacity of my intervention is minute compared to that of someone from the Resistance or a sans-culotte.

There's currently a kind of delirium in play that serves to prohibit any violence in language. In other words, left discourse must necessarily be boring as shit

There's currently a kind of delirium in play that serves to prohibit any violence in language. One can be accused of a sort of rightwing extremism or whatever. It's scandalous! In other words, left discourse must necessarily be boring as shit, so only the extreme Right has any kind of.... What do I think? Ultimately, no!

8. [Abbé Pierre: Catholic priest, member of the Resistance, who founded the organisation Emmaus, dedicated to taking care of the poor and homeless.—trans.]

You can't stand up against Le Pen with a discourse of humanist pap and whinging.



They also say 'even so, we need a bit of utopianism,' just like 'even so, we must be a bit human.' And then one becomes a humanitarian. Yeah, but that's odious, it's abject! This soft humanism isn't directly manipulated by the powers of finance, but it is, as they said in the 'good old days' of Marxism, 'objectively complicit' with a certain mercantile abjection. There are a certain number of Marxist trivialities that need to be stated and restated. They always stand, and give us the will to struggle against a certain way in which the splendour of human individuation is diminished. What's at stake now is to know whether we want a humanity of cretins or not. Sometimes it's said that teaching costs too much! Well, how much does a humanity of cretins cost?

– It seems that you had some difficulties in publishing your book.... However, when you are charged with setting up a sort of connivance, it's because there is communication....

It's communication in an active and offensive sense. Whereas communication that would be nothing but the decanting of an already-given information

from jug 1 to jug 2, that's just shit! That's the Cyber-Gideons. But if it's information in the sense of Spinoza, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx and Schelling, then it's an *acceleration of freedom*. Connivance is on that level, and not between we two individuals; it surpasses differences in knowledge and experience, it lies in the fact that you sense that something is being unleashed here. Because I think that, at any given moment, every free being feels the unleashing of liberty!

– How probable is it that the developments you hope for will come about?

It's not a problem of a choice between possibilities that faces us here. It's a history of the virtual. I saw on TV someone who was one of those festive neo-conservatives: he said that we must expect a legal ruling on rights for virtual entities! And that, after all, people who refuse to buy computers are abortionists.... So, if you start to ask yourself the question of action, saying to yourself: 'perhaps, yeah, in the end, I mean, perhaps,' then you're trapped. All self-censorship consists in asking oneself: 'but at the end of the day, is this probable or not,' or 'but in the end, even so'....

- *This is the principle of the gameshow Une famille en or, where the aim is not to find the right answer to the question, but the one that's given most frequently by a panel....*

We need to build devices for the implosion-explosion of cyber-stupidity.

Nowadays we singularise ourselves best by guessing what the majority thinks. One no longer thinks at all, since one no longer thinks oneself as a breaking out from the self! It's a psychology of permanent anticipation, but then that means that one remains in the same place. Paradoxically, this projection is a self-immobilising mystification. The more one has the impression of being free, the more binds oneself, and the more one has the impression of being a nice guy, of being convivial—and takes pride in it. It's totally twisted! This is precisely why we need to build devices for the implosion-explosion of cyber-stupidity.

Interview by Aquilès, Dr. No and Gros.

Books to read (the living authors!)

J.-T. Desanti, *La Philosophie silencieuse*.

Badiou, *Ethics*.

Vatin, *La Fluidité industrielle*.

Rancière, *Disagreement*.

Desrosières, *La Politique des grands nombres*.

Sassen, *The Global City*.

J.-C. Milner, *Le salarie de l'idéal*.

2. Interview with Christine Goémé

A mathematician and philosopher, Gilles Châtelet has just published a book on the question of market democracies and the great World Market—that tidal wave that risks swallowing up states, knowledges, bodies, and thoughts. It is well-informed (he has read many current theorists on the question, in particular the ‘anglo-saxons’) and vicious (it’s a declaration of war). Taking leave of all goodwill, he proposes in a vigorous style to mobilise thought. The book is called *To Live and Think like Pigs*.

– Postmodern capitalism is an incredible, complex, and extremely deadly machine, ready to swallow up everything. No one seems to really be armed against the world Market, this new and sophisticated version of the death drive. But your book begins, in the first chapter, with an evening at the nightclub *Le Palace*, in the seventies....

Firstly let me remark that the very fact of speaking of the ‘50s,’ ‘60s,’ ‘70s,’ ‘80s,’ already falls into the trap of ‘self-evident truths’ that go without saying—who would dare to challenge the objectivity of a ‘number’? There’s very little historical legitimacy to such periodisations, except that set up by a whole mania for the fabrication of media-economic aggregates and marketing strategies. Every event, every authentic historical inflection, is flattened out, as belonging to one ‘decade’ among others. That means that all decades are equal, and in any case are relegated to the Great Museum of past *trends* always on the way to a soixant-huitardisation: the 2CV years, the Yoplait years, the Reagan years, the *Star Wars* years.... History is nothing but a series of surprise parties: such and such a war or such and such a famine or massacre, such and such a length of pants or style of sneakers is associated with this or that date....

[The first chapter of *To Live and Think like Pigs* ‘The Palace’s Night of Red and Gold’ seeks to wager at once upon the burlesque, the romanesque and the conceptual. It’s a matter of grasping a very particular but very revealing aspect of the spirit of the times in ‘the late 70s’—that of post-leftism and of the victorious offensive of the Liberal Counter-Reformation and the great success of ‘setting the record straight’. In France we had the burlesque

breakfasts of Giscard with the garbagemen, the intellectuals, the prisoners, imagining the era of the shrinking state and of market-democracy in a tracksuit.

The observation of everyday practices can detect ultra-sensitive and very revealing aspects of the social transformations that are underway

Thanks to Wilde, to Proust, to James, we know that there is a political way of grasping the mundane and the frivolous. There was indeed a magic to these evenings at the Palace and the cocktail of Money, the Street, Fashion, the Media, the University, which would soon collapse into the Global City of the equation City=Market=Money=....

The observation of everyday practices can detect ultra-sensitive and very revealing aspects of the social transformations that are underway: the passage from the PD militant subversive style to the marketed, reasonable 'gay' (and more generally the purification of the dynamic of the liberation of bodies through dance, and a movement towards festive and electro-libertarian training via disco and the electro-libertarian gesticulations of the crowd).

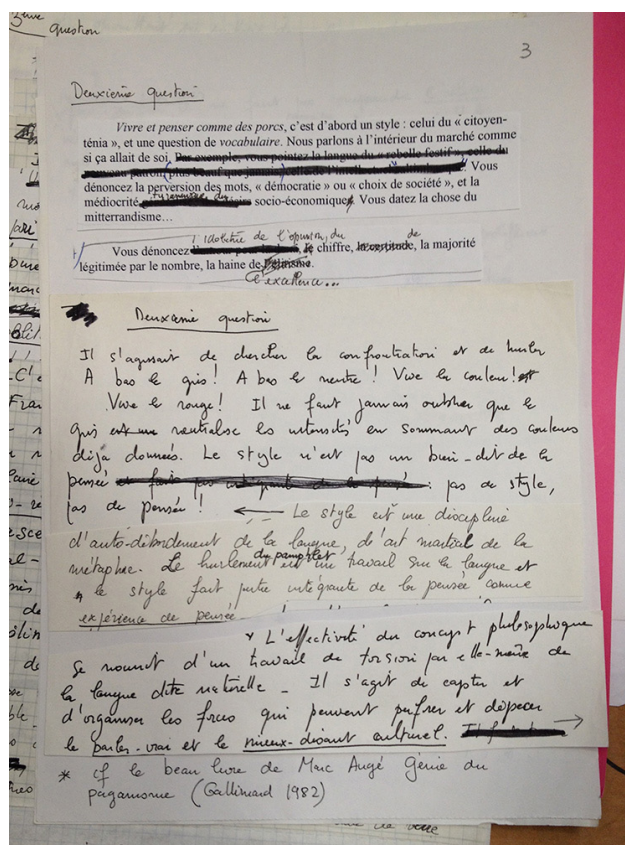
– Living and thinking like a pig above all concerns a style—that of the 'tapeworm-citizen'—and a question of vocabulary. We speak from the inside of the market as if it went without saying. You denounce the perversion of words—'democracy' or 'choice of society'—and the mediocrity of the socio-economic. You date this to the advent of Mitterandism.... You denounce the idolatry of opinion, of statistics, of the majority legitimated by numbers, the hatred of excellence....

It's a question of seeking confrontation and of crying *Down with grey! Down with the Neutral! Long live Anger! Long Live the Red!* We should never forget that grey neutralises intensities by mixing together all the colours that are already given. Style is not a polite way of thinking: no style, no thinking! Style is a discipline of breaking language out of itself, a martial art of metaphor. The haranguing tone of the pamphlet is a working on language, and style

is an entirely integral part of thought qua thought experiment.

Style is not a polite way of thinking: no style, no thinking! Style is a discipline of breaking language out of itself, a martial art of metaphor

The effectiveness of the philosophical concept is fuelled by a work of torsion of material language on itself. It's a matter of capturing and organising the forces that could break through and tear apart 'straight-talking' and 'promoting quality culture'.



Note also that, in order to break through, one must understand the Hegelian-Marxist helix not as a routine movement within History, but as a corkscrew that leverages a torsion of natural language.

To get rid of all the priggish scientific pedantry and humanist pap that proliferates like weeds, all these socio-communicative set-ups of orthopaedics and synthesised greyness, by inventing a *functional form* of metaphor that produces *effects of truculence*, a little like the great Elizabethan playwrights—this,

perhaps, is the famous 'superior empiricism' of which Hegel, Foucault-Deleuze, etc. dreamt—a dramatization of the concept.

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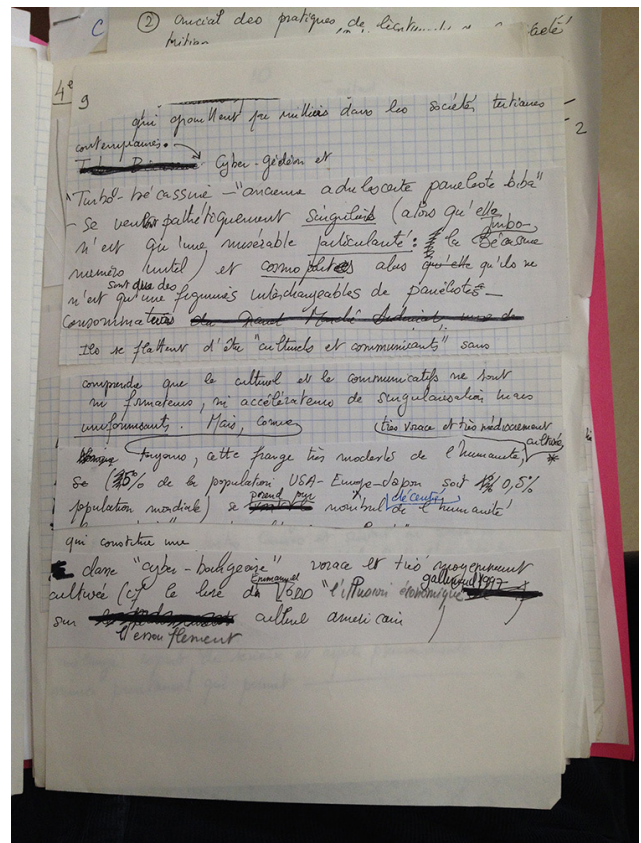
This takes place, no doubt, through a resurrection of the five senses—and especially those, so scorned, of taste and smell: now there's something positive about the pig!

We must also rediscover the *political tradition of burlesque paganism* (Renard the Fox, animal fables...).⁹

Terminology, syntax, and various technical media do indeed exert a political effect on natural language. There is a language of economic laws that takes itself for good sense, and which is supposed to entirely legitimate everything, by functioning as a type of *mercantile self-censorship of language* practiced outrageously by those who would be the elite of the tertiary society (the so-called 'service' society) and who I catalogue with my Turbo-Bécassines, Cyber-Gideons, and Neo-Topazes¹⁰—a curious mixture of pedantry and naivety: today Trissotin¹¹ and Diafoisus would be specialists in econometrics, or in the 'socio-communicational' or cognitive sciences. The sort of psychologies that combine the 'pragmatism' of the shopkeeper with that of the chief accountant, the arrogance of the Inspector of Finances and, of course, the humble spirituality of the stock market dabbler and the lottery player.

'Mercantile empiricism' must be understood as a highly degraded form of the great tradition of English empiricism, and an offshoot of the *English political arithmetic* of the eighteenth century, whose avowed objective was the domestication of contingency ('taming chance') for the ends of political domination. Mercantile empiricism claims to cherish, and loves to

speak of, the 'ordinary man', when in fact it idolises a ventriloquial entity, the average man of the polls.



The consequence of this is a total perversion of the word 'democracy': it is no longer understood as residing in *the excellence of the multitude*, but is taken as a pure and simple replica of the Market, as majority-market and as market democracy of *entrepreneur-politicians and panelist-consumers*.

In France, it was Giscard who was the first (with his book *Démocratie Française*)¹² to begin to establish democracy as a photocopy of the market. Following Jean-Claude Milner (see his book *La salarisation de l'idéal*),¹³ we can speak of the *auto-republican terms* of government (Giscard and Mitterrand), which were marked by the increasingly triumphant ascendancy of the mercantile-social in French politics: 'after all, ultimately France is only worth its value to the global market'—an ascendancy that sought to totally eliminate the role of the symbolic. Democracy thus becomes a kind of *thermococracy*, subject to the laws of what aspires to be a veritable *Social Physics*, managing hundreds of millions of little egos closed up in their spheres of formal liberties, like the pathetic mannikins in a Bosch painting held prisoner in their glass bubble.

9. See Marc Augé's fine book, *Genie du paganisme* (Paris: Gallimard 1982).

10. [Topaze: the eponymous schoolteacher of Marcel Pagnol's play (and later, film) who gradually learns how to get on in life by abandoning his naive moral scruples—trans.]

11. [Trissotin: mediocre and pretentious scholar-poet pursued by the titular ladies of literary ambition in Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes*—trans.]

12. (Paris: Fayard, 1976).

13. (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

Democracy becomes a synonym for mediocrity, and any disinterested activity that aspires to excellence is suspect and is charged with elitism

Here we are at the nadir of tartufferie: democracy becomes a synonym for mediocrity—the only ‘quality’ recognised by the average man—and above all, any disinterested activity that aspires to excellence is suspect and is charged with elitism. Thus a true tyranny of the lowbrow can establish itself, an envious hatred against anything that claims to escape from immediate social command and from the recordable equivalencies of the market.

It has never really been a question of ‘respect for the Other,’ of Democracy, of Rights, etc.; never has cyber-bourgeoisie pedantry been so giddy with categories and false concepts dressed-up with capital letters.... And never, meanwhile, has real power—the power to create the field of the possible—been so concentrated in the hands of such a tiny minority: Central Banks, private and totally inaccessible, ultra-confidential information networks, companies that have nothing to do with any election, entirely in the grip of operators capturing financial flows that rival those of a state.... But we need not despair! The scandal that has broken around the threat of the AMI¹⁴ is most salutary here....

– *You analyse the effect of the market through a telescope: technical texts on the question; and through the microscope: its repercussion on everyday life. You give us portraits in the manner of Bruyère: the Turbo-Bécassine: she is ‘singular and cosmopolitan’; and the Cyber-Gideon, who is ‘cultural and communicative’.*

In principle—for a philosopher of any consequence—there is nothing but ‘concrete life,’ and above all there is no difference between the social ‘microscope’ and the social ‘telescope’ (for a cosmologist, the infinitely small is welded to the infinitely large).

14. [AMI: Accord multilateral sur l’investissement—the OECD Multilateral Agreement on Investment, an agreement drawn up between 1995 and 1998 in order to streamline multinational investment. The MAI was the subject of international protests and in 1998 France in effect vetoed the agreement—trans.]

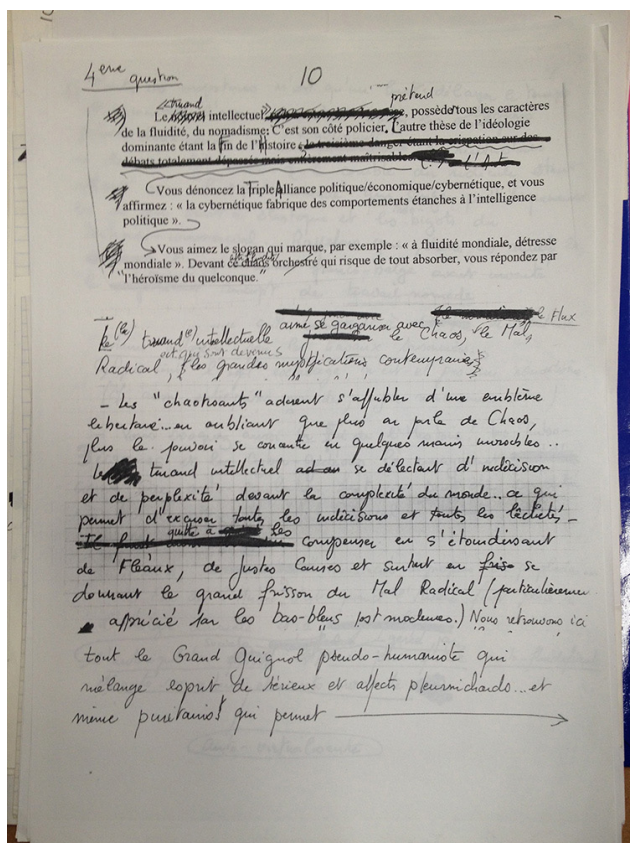
There are two mystifications—very intimidating mystifications: that of ‘calculations’ and that of the ‘everyday shopping cart’—between which the discourse of economics often oscillates. But we have to *walk on both feet* to attain a superior empiricism; it brings in both the macro (the Global Market) and the micro (the night at the Palace, the Turbo-Bécassines, etc...). The Great Market thinks far better and far faster than theories. It *spontaneously* articulates the micro and the macro; this is where its whole power lies, and its destructive cynicism.

For a philosopher of any consequence, there is nothing but ‘concrete life,’ and above all there is no difference between the social ‘microscope’ and the social ‘telescope’

This is why I’ve insisted so strongly on these prototypes, these clownish clones the Turbo-Bécassines and Cyber-Gideons, who swarm in their millions over contemporary tertiary societies. Cyber-Gideon and Turbo-Bécassine—‘old-adolescent Biba-panelist’—pathetically crave to be *singular*, when they are nothing but a miserable *particularity* (Turbo-Bécassine number *n*); and *cosmopolitan*, when they are nothing but interchangeable panelist-consumer figures.

They flatter themselves that they are ‘cultural and communicative’ without understanding that the cultural and the communicative are not what form or accelerate singularisation, but are *uniformising*. But, as always, this diminutive fringe of humanity, very vocal and mediocresly cultural (5 percent of the population of USA-Europe-Japan—that is, 0.5 percent of the global population) gazes upon itself as if it were the decentred navel of humanity, constituting a voracious and very mediocresly cultured ‘cyber-bourgeois’ class (see Emmanuel Todd’s book *L’Illusion économique* on the exhaustion of American culture).¹⁵

15. (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).



— The ‘intellectual crook’ claims to possess all the characteristics of fluidity, of nomadism: This is his policeman side, the other thesis of the dominant ideology being the End of History. You denounce the Triple Alliance between politics, economics, and cybernetics, and you claim that ‘cybernetics fabricates behaviours impervious to political intelligence.’ You like a striking slogan—for example: ‘for global fluidity, global distress.’ Before such a fluidity which risks absorbing everything, you respond with the ‘heroism of the anyone.’

Intellectual crooks love to crow over Chaos, Flux, Radical Evil, etc., which have become the great contemporary mystifications.

The ‘chaotisers’ love to adorn themselves with a libertarian emblem...forgetting that as we go on about chaos, power becomes more and more concentrated in a few invisible hands.... The intellectual crook is fond of indecision and perplexity when faced with the complexity of the world...which allows him to excuse all indecisions and laziness—unless he compensates for them by stupefying himself with Scourges and Just Causes, and above all by giving himself over to the great frisson of Radical Evil (particularly appreciated by the postmodern bluestockings). Here we rediscover the whole pseudohumanist

Grand Guignol, which combines the spirit of seriousness and a whining affect....

All of these impostures have but one aim: to delay time, to encumber space, and above all to avoid difficult decisions by stupefying oneself with second-hand metaphors—the nadir of ridiculousness being attained with ‘the nomad spirits’ who pathetically ape the aces who always bounce back and the neo-bigots of the technico-commercial. Remember that, in the 20s, it was Franco-Belgian imperialism that invented the concept of nomad-work, which consisted in ‘de-sedentarizing’ certain peasants for seasonal work. After all, isn’t slavery a nomadism? (See also nomad-companies, cyber-mercenaries, etc....)

You also mentioned the End of History? The Turbo-Bécassines and the Cyber-Gideons imagine it as a festive auto-regulation—perhaps spiced up by eruptions of Radical Evil...with its self-marketed riots in the USA, and its reciprocal massacres of peoples.... The End of History? It’s when History gives way to animal ethology and to social auto-regulation managed by a festive, auto-fluidifying auto-nomadising, auto-virtualising police.

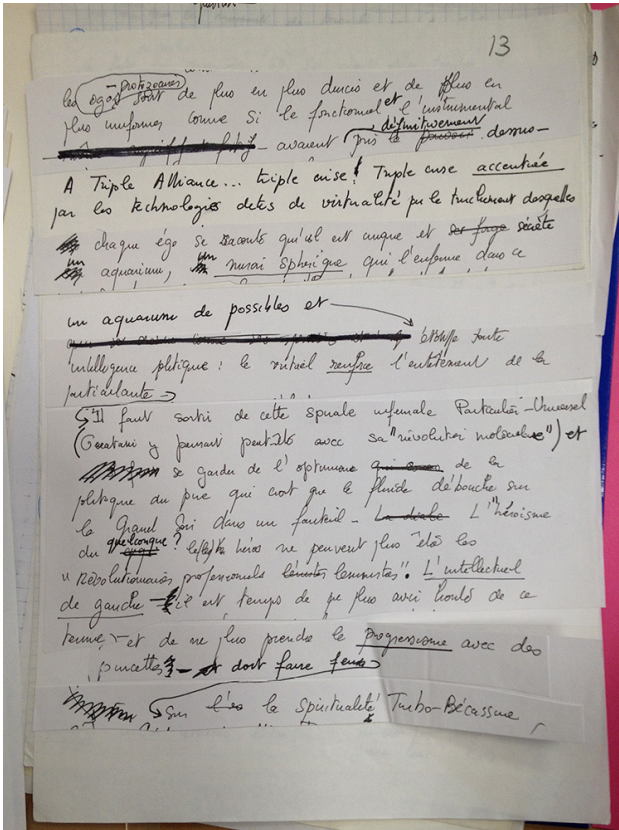
Remember Jacques Rancière’s very pertinent distinction between policing and the political: *Policing* distribute places and functions, and is to be opposed to the *political*, which ‘undoes the perceptible divisions of the police’ (‘Political activity [...] makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise’).¹⁶ Contrary to appearances, this festive social self-regulation falls squarely under policing—auto-policing—and not politics.

It’s not a matter of controlling neurons medically, but of developing a mass individualism by forming social protozoan psychologies

The triple alliance between politics, economics and cybernetics fuses the perfection of the auto-policing approach and the absolute zero of politics. It’s not a matter of *controlling* neurons medically, but of developing a mass individualism by forming social

16. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, tr. J. Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 30.

protozoan psychologies—a gigantic shoal of fish with a highly-evolved optimising technics at their disposal—via the Market, Opinion, Communication: a social *auto-resonance* where every individual claims to singularise himself by aping the self-censorship of the other. The protozoan egos become ever stronger and more and more uniform, as if the functional and the instrumental had definitively taken over.



For the Triple Alliance...triple crisis! A crisis that is exacerbated by technologies of the so-called virtual, by means of which every ego is rigged up to reassure itself confidently that it is unique, secreting an aquarium, a spherical vitrine that surrounds it, a closed aquarium of possibilities that stifles all political intelligence: the virtual *reinforces* the stubbornness of particularity. We must get out of this infernal spiral of the Particular-Universal (Guattari perhaps is thinking of this with his 'molecular revolution'), and we must beware of the optimism of a *politique du pire* that believes fluidity will lead us to the Grand Soir in a comfy armchair. Heroism of the anyone? The hero can no longer be the 'professional Leninist revolutionary'. The *leftist intellectual*—it is time to no longer be ashamed of the term, and to no longer hold *progressivism* at arm's length. We must take aim at the Turbo-Bécassine, Cyber-Gideon, Neo-Topaze spirituality, dissect and analyse

the 'major tendencies', ridicule the tics of urban populism—'We are all empowered Neo-Bécassines or Topazes'— with the patience of the mole and the beady eye of the eagle.

A heroism of the anyone to vanquish the neurocracy that is being sketched out by the coddled Global Middle Class

The heroism of the anyone—which supposes a non-instrumental relation to language—is what we must wager on to vanquish the *neurocracy* that is being sketched out by the coddled Global Middle Class, by those who we might well call neuro-politologists, who dream of merging 'the physical sciences with the human sciences' by identifying the political with the neuronal, and who just can't understand the coalition of the patient and the unique that constitutes the splendour of human individuation.

Chief Seattle's letter to the president of the United States (1894):

Your destiny is a mystery to us. What will happen when the buffalo are all slaughtered? The wild horses tamed? What will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills is blotted with talking wires? Where will the thicket be? Gone! Where will the eagle be? Gone! And what is it to say goodbye to the swift pony and then hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival.