

BERNARD STIEGLER:  
'A RATIONAL THEORY OF MIRACLES:  
ON PHARMACOLOGY AND TRANSINDIVIDUATION'

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*Bernard Stiegler (BS) was interviewed by Ben Roberts  
(BR), Jeremy Gilbert (JG) and Mark Hayward (MH)*

MH *There are two concepts which are at the centre of your work, the concept of technics and the concept of individuation. Could you say something about the role these two concepts play in your work and how your engagement with them has changed over time?*

BS Certainly. I'll try to do that. I've worked for nearly thirty years on the concept of memory. The starting point for my work is the question of memory in Plato; more precisely, in what Plato calls 'anamnesis', that strange memory recalling a time that has not been lived by my body. This is also a way of posing the fundamental transcendental question, because in the end Plato's concept of anamnesis is in a certain sense the concept of the origin of the transcendental. At the same time, I was asking this question as it had already been broached by Derrida. I was thus also interrogating the relation between anamnesis and hypomnesis; that is, between artificial memory and writing. In fact in the beginning I wasn't studying philosophy, but linguistics and poetics.

And then progressively things evolved rather quickly, in fact very quickly, because I started to read Leroi-Gourhan's work, which Derrida talks about in *Of Grammatology*. I read Leroi-Gourhan's theories very attentively, very deeply and I arrived at this deep conviction: that the problem needed to be rethought from the opposite pole from Plato's understanding of anamnesis (that is, from the very constitution of philosophy, since anamnesis is the basis of philosophy). What was needed was a return toward philosophical anthropology, a philosophical technology really: not only anthropology but technology, which Leroi-Gourhan proposes in a certain way even if, after *Gesture and Speech* [*Le Geste et La Parole*] he disclaims, disowning that book.<sup>1</sup> I don't know if you knew this, but after *Gesture and Speech* he said to his students 'Don't read that, it's madness, it's the work of a philosopher! We need to do prehistory!' (Not really, I'm just speculating!). But the question of memory became the question of technics, because Leroi-Gourhan's conclusion (it's the last part of *Gesture and Speech* - the first note of the last section) is that what constitutes the phenomenon of hominisation is the exteriorisation of memory, and that every technical object is a memory-object.

This was the point of departure for me, and from there I reread Derrida himself and I began to consider the issue of writing, which I had always found to be somewhat problematic. Derrida's idea of 'arche-writing' is a fundamental

1. Andre Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1993.

concept for me, but it had always slightly embarrassed me. A bit like Deleuzian concepts, such as ‘the abstract machine’, all these concepts are always for me in fact philosophemes that return us to Plato’s anamnesis. When Plato says ‘the soul lived another time’, Derrida says ‘arche-writing, but it is not writing’ ... in the end what does that change? That didn’t seem obvious to me. In reading Leroi-Gourhan, on the other hand, it appeared to me that there we were dealing with empiricity, empiricity posing truly philosophical questions; that is, posing questions about what I am calling ‘consistence’; that is, things which don’t exist, which aren’t empirical but which nevertheless could be thought on the basis of the empirical, in the empirical. So I then tried to abandon Derrida, to reinterpret all of Derrida: but from a point of view that was less that of an arche-writing than that of a *techné* or an originary default of origin. That’s what I called it: an original default of origin. Because technics is the (de)default (*défaute*) of the living being: fundamentally, before anything else, it’s that. It is incarnated into this or that technical object but it is at first not transcendental, but simultaneously something that doesn’t exist. When it transcends, the default doesn’t exist. On the other hand, it gives rise to things that do exist.

After that I tried to reinterpret Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and to revisit, or really to re-think, phenomenological concepts. So I began to develop the concept of tertiary retention in utilising the late Husserl against the early Husserl, as well as using Husserl in order to move away from Derrida. I published an essay in England (I don’t remember the title any longer; in any case it was in English) where I try to show how the problem with Derrida begins with *Speech and Phenomena*, when he says that the difference Husserl posits between primary and secondary retention is a metaphysical illusion.<sup>2</sup> This is, in my opinion, absolutely wrong. And I think that from the moment Derrida says that there is no difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary retention - but he doesn’t speak about tertiary retention, rather what he calls ‘writing’ I myself call ‘tertiary retention’ - from that moment we have returned to our point of departure. So for me, in saying that, Derrida is condemned to go round in circles. So, that’s the technics aspect.

MH *And after reading Derrida and Leroi-Gourhan you encountered Simondon’s work?*

BS After Derrida and Leroi-Gourhan I was in prison, as you know. When I left prison, Derrida asked me to lead a seminar. It was at the College of Philosophy. Among the faculty for this seminar I met other seminar directors, one of whom was François Laruelle, a French philosopher. And one day he said to me ‘Tell me about what you are doing in your seminar. Let’s go have a drink’. And I began to explain that I was interested in the process by which memories are constituted, but memories at several levels. I had already brought together Leroi-Gourhan, Heidegger, Husserl - well, Husserl

2. Bernard Stiegler, ‘Derrida and technology: fidelity at the limits of deconstruction and the prosthesis of faith’, in T. Cohen (ed), Richard Beardsworth (trans), *Jacques Derrida and the humanities: a critical reader*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

was still underway - anyway I was saying that all these were in process. “‘The subject’ doesn’t interest me”, I said. “‘The ‘psychic subject’ doesn’t interest me. The ‘national subject’ doesn’t interest me. Even the ‘technical subject’ doesn’t interest me, if it exists. However, the manner in which processes constitute themselves interests me and I call that (it’s a theory I haven’t yet made public but that I have been developing for a long time) the idiotext: how an idiocy (*idiocie*) in the original sense of the term, that is, a singularity, is constituted; it’s a theory of singularity. A theory of singularity that is not a theory of the subject”. And Laruelle said to me, “But that’s not your theory, that’s Simondon’s”.

So I discovered that I had a competitor who had been around much longer than I, since he produced his theory in the fifties. So I read Simondon, and at first I was disheartened because I thought there was nothing left to do. But it was this that finally gave me new direction. It was then that I began to speak of individuation. Previously I never spoke of individuation. I talked of idiotextuality, of how memory reified itself in permanence, as in Bergson (even if that’s conceptually Husserlian and therefore not Bergsonian properly speaking, but there it is). When I read Simondon, this became ‘individuation’. Because the theory of individuation for me is really a finished theory: not complete, but finished - I felt perfectly at ease in it - even if there are places where I also have difficulties, but it’s very, very operational (*opérateur*). It’s much clearer than Derrida, Deleuze, and the rest. It’s difficult but it’s much clearer. And on that basis I re-adjusted a number of things. I reinterpreted phenomenology correctly through Simondon. But at the same time I began to worry Simondon himself with Leroi-Gourhan. Because one little thing in Simondon that seemed very striking to me was that in all he published, psychic individuation had nothing to do with technical individuation. Moreover, he doesn’t talk of technical individuation; he describes it. He talks of technical individuals, but - perhaps one day a letter will be found where he talks about it - never about technical individuation. I think that for him it’s diabolical to talk of technical individuation, for the reason he lays out in his critique of Wiener, which is that technical individuation requires cybernetics: the cybernetic object is capable of individuating itself. For Simondon, that is impossible. He says consistently that only the living being can individuate itself in that way. However, I think he is wrong. I think that that one could say that in the same way that the coral reef is individuated as a dead structure through the work of the living beings that constitute the coral colony, it could be said that we, as living beings - and even the Macintosh, the iPod, the Sony camera are individuated as something other than us. And this is very important. So I started to develop a theory of what I call triple individuation (psychic, technical, and social), a general organology through which I try to analyse all of these processes. I’ve added two more now: the physical and the geophysical. I call the vital aspect of the biological level 0; there is a cosmic or geophysical that I call level four. General organology has three levels, the

psychic, the technical, and the social, and now I have added a level 0 and level 4. And that's my current work.

My theory now - I am bringing out a new book next week<sup>3</sup> - is that the relations between individuation and technics are the object of a pharmacology. This means that general organology describes relational processes in a manner I would call non-vectorised by politics; that is, by desire and, properly understood, by desire at the psychic and social levels, but not by a desire in particular. General organology does not mean libidinal economy in the Freudian sense. A pharmacological approach analyses how organological development will either short circuit psychic or social individuation and thus dis-individuate them, or, on the contrary, intensify them, to use Deleuze's term; and this inquiry makes much use of the Deleuzian viewpoint. It is obvious, meanwhile, that the other extremely important concept that has appeared is desire. Therefore, simultaneously with Simondon and against him, since in my opinion Simondon understands nothing about psychoanalysis, because what he writes about it is so poor and even hostile. I believe it is because he started out with Jung toward individuation, that he understands nothing Freud says.

But on the other hand, if one uses Simondon in order to read Freud and even Lacan, it's extremely interesting: individuation and technics led finally to the question of the object of desire. Because the object of desire is a technical object. At the moment I'm writing about Winnicott, trying to show that the point of departure for pharmacology is the transitional object. That is to say, it's not language but first of all exteriorisation and interiorisation: of the phantasm of the transitional object.

MH *Is this new book part of one of the series you're in the process of writing?*

BS No, it's a separate book.

MH *A new series?*

BS No (laughter).

BR *Although you are quite critical of Adorno and Horkheimer (for example in *Le temps du cinéma*<sup>4</sup>) your arguments about the 'industrialisation of memory' seem to share some of the concerns of the Frankfurt School. To what extent do you see your own position as building on their work, particularly that of Marcuse, whom you often cite approvingly?*

BS Yes, it's an absolutely fundamental subject. I'm getting closer and closer to the Frankfurt School. (I'm talking about the first Frankfurt School of course.) It interests me more and more. What interests me is that I believe that Benjamin, Adorno, and Marcuse in particular, others also but above all those three, truly

3. Bernard Stiegler, *Ce qui fait que la vie vaut la peine d'être vécue: de la pharmacologie*, Paris, Flammarion, 2010.

4. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, Stephen Barker (trans), Stanford C.A., Stanford University Press, 2010.

saw new things that they are the only ones to have clearly seen. And especially in France - I don't know what happened in other countries such as England, Germany and the United States - but in France in any case there has been - not for Adorno nor for Benjamin, but for Marcuse - there has been a kind of blackout. Marcuse is discounted. In my opinion this is a very, very serious mistake. He has been depicted as a philosopher of alienation. Deleuze's critique of the philosophy of alienation is well-known, Derrida was also interested in it. And it's true, it's quite obvious: it's a philosophy of alienation - a bit insufficient in my opinion, and I have explained why in my book - but nonetheless it's a philosophy that poses absolutely fundamental questions. In particular, it talks about the way in which the capitalist economy is going to make libidinal economy one of its foundations, destroying the libidinal economy. Walter Benjamin on this theme is very well-known in France, much appreciated and widely read, but often - I wouldn't say completely against the Frankfurt School, but somewhat so because there were conflicts with Adorno. I myself have written that Adorno had not understood Benjamin. But I think there is a continuity between Benjamin, Adorno and Marcuse which is very important, and that they saw the new things that were happening with regard to exteriorisation, whether it is the theory of general reproducibility in Benjamin, the discourse on culture industries in particular, but not simply that, in Adorno and Horkheimer, or the principle of production in Marcuse and all that he has to say about technics in capitalist industrial enterprises.

That's very important, but at the same time my problem with this theory - I'm not speaking about Benjamin, but about Adorno and Marcuse in particular, or Horkheimer - is that it's a non-pharmacological point of view; that is, there's a good side and a bad side. In fact it's an absolutely classic analysis. They introduce the politico-libidino-technologico-industrial problem and that's very good. I think they're the first to do so in a systematic way that includes being interested in both sociology and economics and I find that very important. But at the same time, it's not a pharmacological viewpoint. And, in the next book that I'm bringing out, I return to Adorno and Horkheimer and try to explain why what they call the destruction of the schematism by Hollywood is in fact exactly the same thing that Plato does in his critique of writing. That is to say that he denounces unilaterally the writing of the Sophists whilst practicing it himself anyway. And Adorno denounces unilaterally the image and industrial technology as unsustainable which means that, in fact, they don't ultimately return to the source of the problem, which is Kant and his relation with the prosthesis, the artefact and finally with the very origin of philosophy, which is the relation with technics.

For the Marxist - because they are Marxists - this is a bit strange, in fact very strange. Moreover, it's the same problem with Marcuse. Yet, with Marcuse there is still another problem added to that one, which is that he produces an interpretation of Freudian theory - of the Pleasure Principle, the Reality Principle - that is an absolute misinterpretation. He absolutely does not

understand Freudian theory. Freud never opposed the Reality Principle to the Pleasure Principle. What Freud says, on the contrary, is that in order for there to be a Pleasure Principle, there must be a Reality Principle. Because the Pleasure Principle is the product of a desire, not simply a drive. Therefore, there is confusion between pleasure and *jouissance*, and there Marcuse makes an extremely loose argument; it's surprisingly naïve. In France in particular, this interpretation produced political slogans. In 1968 Marcuse's theory was enormous. I myself was part of that generation. So you had the 'liberation of the drive' - that's an argument from Marcuse - the liberation of the drive. But it's a total misreading of what psychoanalysis means.

I myself am very grateful to the Frankfurt School because I think that without its analyses everything I talk about would be impossible; that's why I depend on it. But at the same time I think that one must - as always - critique this point of view. Because, if one doesn't critique it, it becomes dangerous. And that brings us back to the question of pharmacology, which we were talking about a moment ago. A pharmacological reading of the Frankfurt School questions is necessary. It's what today's Frankfurt School doesn't do. It's what you don't find in Habermas or Axel Honneth, etc. That's why theirs is a way of thinking that appears weak today, even if it has interesting aspects. For example, what Axel Honneth says on the question of recognition is very interesting. But at the same time, finally, what is new in this, except that one uses the philosophemes of Hegel, Saussure or others in order to analyse the young Germans of West Germany, their alienation, etc? That's useful. It's typical of the Frankfurt School to do that. But at the same time it doesn't really work. It builds on Hegel; it amplifies the centrality of the mind. In reality the problem is technics. One could object to what I'm saying about Adorno in particular; there are texts by Adorno that contradict what I'm saying, it's true. In the sixties, near the end of his life, Adorno revisited his critique of the culture industry and of recording. He began to complicate many things. He becomes extremely interesting at this point. His writing from this time is not generally known; it's primarily music criticism. It was because of those texts that Adorno was defended by Jean-Francois Lyotard, who used to say that Adorno was very important. Lyotard relied greatly on Adorno, notably because of the texts of that period.

MH *You've already talked a little bit about pharmacological critique. I wonder if you could say more about what you mean by the pharmacological critique, as a mode of critique, as a mode of reading?*

BS Yes, it is a big question that I deal with in my next book which is also a debate with Jacques Derrida. To me, Derrida considered that critique itself was passé. It's not so simple, though, because there are some canonical texts in which Derrida says one needs to make a critique in such or such a situation - though he says very clearly that deconstruction is not a critique.

5. See J. Derrida, 'No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)', C. Porter and P. Lewis (trans), *Diacritics*, 14, 2 (1984): 20-31, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/464756>

6. Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986.

The critical project, including what the Frankfurt School calls social critique, is a metaphysical project, which means that one must overcome it. So why does he say it? First, because he presupposes that critique inevitably means the pure autonomy of the critical subject. In my new book, *De la pharmacologie*, I discuss a talk he gave at Cornell University where he had been invited to speak by some people who had created a department of 'Nuclear Studies'.<sup>5</sup> It was a literature department but one in which this group said that today one can't study literature as before because of the existence of the H bomb. One can't understand Kafka, Beckett - in short all modern literature - in the same way one was able to before the Second World War. They therefore launched a programme of research they called 'nuclear criticism'. They claimed that it was necessary to reconstruct the critical subject faced with the nuclear danger. Anyway, Derrida says that the H bomb is the *pharmakon* par excellence. He describes how some say that it is thanks to the atomic bomb that there is no war, how the atomic bomb is simultaneously the possibility of total war and thus, he says, we are confronted by the *pharmakon* (I prefer the 'absolute *pharmakon*').

And in this talk he claims that nuclear pharmacology, the nuclear *pharmakon*, explodes the critical subject. Why? Because one can no longer master nuclear pharmacology. He says this for a very precise reason that he doesn't explain himself but that Paul Virilio does in one of his best books, *Speed and Politics*.<sup>6</sup> At the time when he was writing his great books, Virilio had written a text on the famous Cuban missile crisis and what had happened there, as well as what had happened between the Cuban crisis in 1962 and Nixon and Breschnev in the seventies. Because, between the Cuban crisis and the seventies, speed, vectors, missiles, nuclear warheads had made human decision-making impossible in the event of a nuclear war. It was impossible to imagine that the Head of State could decide on war. In fact, it was necessary for an automatic system to make the decision before it was even possible to tell the Head of State that the war had started, and before anyone on either side had decided anything. Of course, it was necessary that someone had originally decided something in order for the war to be triggered, but the decision no longer belonged to human time. We were placed in a system I call the total proleterianisation of politics. Because, for me, proletarianisation means short-circuiting the subject, short-circuiting knowledge, and so on.

It is in the face of that situation, then, that Derrida can talk of the absolute *pharmakon*. But does that mean that there is no longer a critical subject? Not at all. On the contrary, it means that it is needed more than ever - though I wouldn't say 'the critical subject', because in philosophy the subject is the absolute subject, an absolutely autonomous subject, an original subject. And I have no theory of the subject as point of origin. For me, the subject or subjectivation is something that is produced in an originally heteronomous process. But one can very well imagine a critique that relies on a heteronomous origin and really that's what I'm trying to do. But, from a certain point of view

that is what Kant was already saying: that an absolutely free critique is not possible. (And I would even say that Aristotle had already said this, though obviously he wasn't saying it in the sense in which one can say it after Derrida) or in the way I myself am trying to say it today, specifically not on the basis of what Derrida calls 'the supplement' or what I call 'tertiary retention'. But it doesn't stop Derrida from speaking of a conditional critique.

I think that Derrida isn't alone in taking this position because Deleuze, too, laid the idea of critique to rest, most notably in the artistic domain - which is in my opinion a catastrophe for the artistic, literary criticism, cinematographic criticism, and so on. I believe that today it is possible to build a new critique that rests on a point of view saying that 'autonomy is always relative and limited, but that doesn't mean that because it is limited it doesn't exist'. There is autonomy; we have a limited autonomy. We can't fly like the birds, we can't disintegrate and immediately recompose ourselves. (That's what the Epicureans say God can do.) But we have a relative autonomy. The question is: autonomy in relation to what, and what is it that we call heteronomy? What creates autonomy is the development of autonomy. That's the problem Adorno and Horkheimer deal with in *The Dialect of Enlightenment* when they say that the social development of reason has engendered alienation; that is to say, the opposite of reason. It is a pharmacological reality, though they don't come to that conclusion because they don't offer a critique of Enlightenment: they don't make a critique of Kant - Hegel would be more useful anyway - in order to understand finally that reason is inscribed in a logic that is not Hegel's master/slave dialectic; one can interpret it as such but in my opinion it's much more complex. On the other hand, this means that reason, in developing its autonomy, always concretises a heteronomy, that is to say, a new heteronomy that is a technical cretinisation. All philosophical operations, in Plato for example (I'm running a seminar on Plato right now), do this. Platonic theory is the pre-condition of cybernetics. In reality, if one looks closely, it depends on which of Plato's dialogues you're looking at; but with respect to 'The Sophist', Theaetetus, etc., Plato constructs a propositional theory of the logos: he says everything is in the proposition. And that is the condition moving through Leibniz to the development of cybernetics. This means that what Plato works out against heteronomy - because his is obviously a discourse against heteronomy - will construct a hyper-heteronomy, since cybernetics is a hyper-heteronomy.

Following this question, what I myself call a critique, a new critique, consists in saying that out of this hyper-heteronomy one can invent a new form of autonomy, what I call the therapeutics of the *pharmakon*. In other words, what I call a critique is in fact a therapeutics. But this critique has two dimensions. It is first of all a critique I call pharmacological, a critique that consists of analysing the specifics of pharmaka, their toxic possibilities and their possibilities for individuation, through an approach that is both theoretical and absolute and that is without a context, though not completely



context-free since it is an organological approach and organology is always within a context (what Nietzsche calls a genealogy) but independent of any particular political situation. And from this pharmacological critique in other areas in which I'm currently working - on the internet, the web, on what I call relational technology etc. - one can develop therapeutic critiques. This is not the work of philosophy: for me it's work in the political sphere. I think that one of the great problems arising from philosophy is that it has always wanted to substitute itself for the citizen, that is to say to become a pure autonomy which rids politics of the citizen, which I think is not possible. What I call the 'new critique' has two dimensions: a critical pharmacology that addresses not simply philosophy but theoreticians, researchers, those who occupy themselves producing concepts, in the Deleuzian sense of the concept. And on the other hand, a therapeutics, the problematic of technics of self, of the development of regulations for behaviour, how one lives with such difficulty. And though that is not the business of the philosopher, it's something that the philosopher can take up because the philosopher is also a citizen and as a citizen he can obviously make propositions. But he has no special privilege.

MH *This second point is politics for you?*

BS It's politics. It's also political economy. I think that one must restore the figure of political economy. What I call 'new critique' is also a new political economy.

BR *Is it for elaborating pharmacological critique that you founded pharmakon.fr?*

BS Yes, absolutely.

BR *Can you talk about this project?*

BS It's a project with many, many purposes. But in effect the first goal is to develop a pharmacological theory and practice: a theory, because I believe that now there are a sufficient number of people who are interested in it. We were together last week in Sweden. The week before that I was in Germany. I see now that there are many people who are interested in this type of reflection. I think the theoretical world is now ready to organise itself around these questions. Which returns us to a concept I have not yet used today: the concept of transindividuation. The goal of pharmakon.fr is to produce a theory of transindividuation. A pharmacological theory, of course, because transindividuation is always pharmacological and organological. Currently it is a project located not in Paris but in the Ardèche, where I live. It is a territorialised project, because I think today that the question of territoriality has arisen anew in terms absolutely different from those of *A Thousand Plateaus*,

for example (which one must read on these questions; it's very important, very interesting).<sup>7</sup> But nonetheless neither Gilles Deleuze nor Félix Guattari knew about the phenomenon of territorial technology developing at the moment (digital networks etc.). I propose that what is happening with digital networks is enormous: as immense as what happened in ancient Greece with the appearance of its writing system. It is a technology of absolutely and radically new processes of collective and psychic individuation, processes with a capacity to absorb all other technologies of individuation: writing is absorbed, cinema is absorbed, absolutely everything is absorbed and reconfigured. As such it is very urgent to elaborate a critique of the political economy in that situation. People in the world of classical political economy are completely left behind, as much in the United States, England, and Germany as in France. They are totally left behind because all of the concepts on which they base their critical capacity emerge precisely from a pre-pharmacological approach, which is to say that they cannot integrate the pharmacological approach into their political propositions.

That's the reason why I've organised my project around three activities (there are others, but basically three). There is a philosophy course addressed to everyone, that is, as Plato would have said, an exoteric course. This means that it is addressed to non-philosophers, to non-specialists, to those who have not chosen the philosophical vocation: like Michel Foucault, like Pierre Hadot, I consider that philosophy is a way of life (*mode de vie*) before being a theory. As a philosopher, one fashions a particular life, which requires working through theorems since that is the specific rationale for the life of the philosopher, but it's a way of life first. One can therefore study philosophy without having adopted its way of life, like people who study religion without believing in god or without practising one. And that's what they teach in French schools. I proposed - it's also a way for me to get back in close contact with my home region - that all the regional schools send pupils to take the course. That interests me a great deal, because it's not a typical school course at all. It's a course on the philosophy of Plato but, on the other hand, it's a way of working closely with this new generation, a young generation who pose very new questions in relation to which I think traditional courses, parents, child psychiatry, and child psychology in general are totally, critically out-of-touch. I know this because *Ars Industrialis*' work in all those sectors and all the professionals have told us, 'We are confronted with behaviours that we don't recognise', new pathologies which are closely linked to those mutations of pharmacology we were just talking about. The course: that's the first activity. It will be accessible on the internet because it is filmed; it will even be searchable. But it will only be accessible for those people who are members of the *Ars Industrialis* network, because one has to pay for the server. So people searching for the videos will need at least to subscribe to the association: the servers are very expensive and we have no other means of supporting them.

7. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi (trans), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987.

The second element is a seminar, what we call an *école doctorale* in France, which is open to doctoral students preparing their theses, or doing postdocs, with whom we are going to work on the theory of individuation, the theory of pharmacology. Not reading Plato directly, but working on the same basic course given to the younger students and their questions but taking Plato's theory to a much more complex level. The first seminar is really an introduction: the students are not expected to know anything. Obviously, the seminar assumes that people have read Kant, Hegel, Heidegger and are highly developed. Nonetheless, the seminar's goal is to have the doctoral students and the school pupils work together. I believe very much in what one calls the tutor, that is, the educational model practised by Rousseau and Hegel, who taught the children of princes; here, instead they teach the children of the poor. I believe very much in this. This seminar is going to be run online as a videoconference. I want to use these video recordings to create an archive of all the problems and the discourses around Plato. That is the very question that Plato himself poses, in fact. In reality *'ti esti'* in Greek, means 'what is it', how do I categorize 'this is virtue, that is not virtue', 'this is *aletheia* that is not *aletheia*' - that is categorization, indexing. Here what interests me is to make school children work together with very astute researchers. Moreover, I wanted to have computer scientists, geographers and economists come, not simply philosophers or people doing literary studies, in order to create a group that is experimental and at the same time theoretical, in order to try to build a global theory of transindividuation in the digital age. 'Digital studies' forms part of it but with a non-philosophical approach.

The third element of the project we call the school's 'summer academy': we invite all the students who have participated in the seminars to spend six weeks on-site to meet the young school children, but also to meet people that we will invite from everywhere, researchers worldwide in order to have six weeks of reflection on the questions dealt with in the seminars at a very high level, at the same time meeting the local population in order to have a discussion with the citizens because for me, philosophy is itself the source of 'the civic', before anything. This will also be the occasion to reflect on what a 'technics of self' is in the digital age. This will be a school in the Greek sense of *skole*; that is to say, a way of living. For example, I will ask people to not talk until midday, because I think that when one abstains from talking - and even from listening to a message, communicating on the web etc, it's very important - one can do things that one can't do if one doesn't abstain from speaking. This will also be a chance to experiment with ways of life. This will also be the time to propose that all the doctoral students give presentations or have group discussions and thus really do construct a doctoral school. The ultimate goal it is to create a federation of universities through which I want to create and develop an international laboratory, not only for students but also for research directors who agree to a networked research programme, as is done separately in universities worldwide, over three, four or five years. So

it's quite an ambitious project which begins slowly. We will see. Because it's not easy to build a system, a network of lectures across four continents. There are problems with time differences, for example; it's always very difficult. Working at a distance is always more complicated. But we can do it. We are working with the University of Tokyo like this and after having got used to it, it's going very well. It takes time: at the beginning one must learn. So that's the project of 'pharmakon.fr': the goal is really to become a centre of resources on pharmacology, on pharmacological questions.

JG *We're interested in some of the comments you made in Mécréance et Discredit about Boltanski and Chiapello.*<sup>8</sup> *The book was translated into English three years ago; it is just starting to be read, and there is a great deal of commentary on their work. (We published a round table in Soundings about them recently).*<sup>9</sup> *So we're interested in returning to these comments you made, particularly your criticism of them for neglecting the role of the media and also your questioning of their notion of a 'new spirit'. Can you speak to this?*

8. Bernard Stiegler, *Mécréance et Discredit: 3. L'esprit perdu du capitalisme*, Paris, Galilée, 2006; Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Gregory Elliott (trans), Verso, 2007.

9. Nick Couldry et al., 'The new spirit of capitalism', *Soundings*, 2010.

BS I find this book very important, very well documented with a great deal to say on many things. I think it's an essential book that must be read, but one that poses a problem for three reasons, perhaps. The first great problem for me is that when Boltanski and Chiapello talk of 'desire', they don't understand what 'desire' means. Their definition of desire is absolutely pre-Freudian. That is, they talk about desire as Kant talked about desire: desire is the craving I have to eat some tomato; it's an extremely vulgar conception of desire. And this is not a peripheral element out of context: it's the heart of their subject! They work out their idea of desire through Max Weber, who didn't use Freudian theory himself because he published his book at the same time Freud was publishing his own, so though perhaps Weber knew about it, he didn't internalise it. It's quite clear that what Weber describes is a capitalist libidinal economy. So, in sum, what Boltanski and Chiapello say is that capitalism cannot happen without adherents, that is, without the desire of those who participate in capitalism, be they entrepreneurs, workers or consumers. But at the same time they have a conception of desire which is stupefyingly naïve. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that from there they demonstrate the role, which is very interesting in any case, of what they call 'artistic critique'. This artistic critique occurs through '1968', that is through Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Barthes and everything 'Frankfurt'. They conceive of a French philosophy that is completely superficial: one has the impression that they've never read it. This is extremely disappointing. I detest philosophers who talk about sociology without having read sociologists. But I also don't like sociologists who talk about philosophy without having read philosophers. It's very annoying. That doesn't prevent their book from having all sorts of good aspects. But in this aspect, it's bad, very bad.

Third, they talk of ‘a new spirit of capitalism’, which is very naïve for the same reason, because there is no ‘spirit of capitalism’. My own book is called *L'esprit perdu du capitalisme*; what they describe is in fact the loss of any spirit of capitalism. But they believe it's a new spirit, which means that they believe, for example, when they describe false authenticity - you know, the pseudo-systems of restaurants offering Spanish, Japanese, whatever - in an artificially-constructed authenticity. They believe what they say. There isn't much distance between that and what the people who put this into practice in business believe. It doesn't function at all in reality; it has nothing to do with authenticity. And moreover one would have to take account of all the critiques of authenticity made by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, by Derrida in *Of Grammatology*, by everyone, by nearly all philosophers in the twentieth century. This seems to me to be extremely prejudicial to their analyses. On the other hand, what they have to say about the lead-up to 1968, in France in particular, is correct: it was a revolution of capitalism in the end, extremely useful to capitalism: how the destruction of barriers, of the superego, of idealisation etc. has brought about a general Americanisation of French capitalism. That's very interesting, fascinating. So it's a book that one absolutely must read, all the same. Finally there is what they say about the media: they are extremely naïve about it, and therefore about what I call the *pharmakon*. I think they don't see for one second the pharmacological character of all this. Those are four points that greatly limit the scope of their book.

JG *Lazzarato says that the distinction between the social and artistic critique doesn't work , that it's the result of a moralism.*<sup>10</sup> ...

10. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Expérimentations politiques*, Paris, Éditions Amsterdam, 2009.

BS Yes, absolutely: I'm quite in agreement with Lazzarato. There are some points on which I am in profound disagreement with him, notably in his political economy in the name of Gabriel Tarde etc. or in his ignorance of Freud, but on the other hand on this point, on the critique of Boltanski, I am quite close to him. Because Lazzarato has written several books now, three very interesting books in the last three years, of which there is one in particular, about '*intermittents du spectacle*' (casual workers in the performing arts) where he shows that it is precisely not that artistic critique Boltanski talks about but on the contrary the invention of what we, *Ars Industrialis*, call a new industrial model, an 'economy of contribution'. We invited Lazzarato to *Ars Industrialis* to talk about that.<sup>11</sup>

11. Antonella Corsani and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Intermittents et précaires*, Paris, Éditions Amsterdam, 2008.

BR *Freudian concepts seem to play an increasingly important role in your analysis. What is the idea of the self or the subject which informs your thinking? Does it represent any kind of departure from the Freudian conception? In particular how do you understand the libidinal economy of intersubjective relations and what are the political implications of this? And perhaps you could say a bit about how your idea of libidinal economy differs from that of, say, Deleuze and Guattari, or Lyotard?*

BS In relation to Lyotard, it is completely different. Because I like Lyotard very much, I've read him a lot and I was very friendly with him. But I never liked *Libidinal Economy*, which I didn't find to be a good book. It's a book that is very confused and which in my opinion created a lot of confusion about Freudian questions. With Deleuze and Guattari, it's more complicated. I should tell you that I don't really agree with their point of view, with what I think of as their libidinal economy. I am annoyed by a type of imprecision in what they say about the abstract machine or the desiring machine - which is a little too vague to satisfy me. I am sceptical about these metaphors. I understand, however, that in the twentieth century, in the 1950s/1960s, against a certain academic phraseology, it was necessary to use metaphoricity, whether it came from Artaud, from Raymond Roussel, from Proust or from Mallarmé, and that elsewhere in the theory of language of the age enormous questions were posed at the same time by Jakobsen and Lacan on the role of metaphor in the work of the signifier. All this I understand. I am not doing a critique of that time; it was necessary to pass through it. But I think that today one cannot continue, one cannot be satisfied with that terminology - it's a bit like what one reproaches Lazzarato for. One is obliged to go further. Therefore, in what I am concerned with, on the question of libidinal economy I think that one must first profoundly disambiguate an enormous confusion on the relation between drive and desire that exists equally in Deleuze and Derrida, perhaps in Lacan even if I am not absolutely sure about that. On the other hand it is obviously exactly the problem with Lyotard. Lyotard describes the drive under the name of desire, absolutely not distinguishing the two, whilst all the same it is extremely evident that, in Freud's second period in any case, the drive only becomes libido because it has been bound, which Derrida calls 'stricture', the 'bind', and that is libidinal economy. Economy means to retain, to contain, to prevent etc. But in the sixties, and really since the fifties with Marcuse, we find a conception of Freud there suggesting that on one side there are bourgeois phantasms and the neurosis that come from the weight of a superego preventing desire from expressing itself and, on the other side, there is this desire which can liberate itself ... And of course as much as Deleuze and Guattari critiqued Marcuse's alienation theory, they go back to more or less exactly Marcuse's proposition on the liberation of desire. The difference between desire and drive is not at all clear there. There are moments where they use it, because Félix Guattari was a doctor after all, he treated people, he had a practice in which he obviously made use of that difference. But in the texts, above all in the reception they had, it isn't clear at all.

So the foundation of the problem for me is still technics. I was just saying to you a moment ago that technics and individuation lead to the question of desire. For me the problem of libidinal economy is that, as with all economy, libidinal economy poses as the libido's means of production. The critique one must make of the Marxism that considers technics to be merely a means to an end is that it is obviously not only a means. Marx himself knew very

well that it was not only a means. But if there is a libidinal economy, there must be an apparatus for libidinal production. Freud describes it very well: primary identification, the idealisation of the ego. So it's there that Deleuze and Guattari say 'No, he doesn't describe them well at all. He calls that the oedipal triangle'. But that is not a serious problem. They had their reasons: to denounce familialism etc., and I agree. But I would say, Freud's model is not all that bad. Freud developed it in his time. He ontologised what was in fact a question of his age, a Viennese question. But on the other hand he described the whole libidinal economy which Deleuze and Guattari treat as their own.

This is what I call libidinal economy: in other words, how economic processes are produced by the transformation of energy. One transforms the energy of the drives into libidinal energy. The energy to be contained is that of the living being, the living being with a nervous system. All animals have it. But these aren't drives, but instincts. They say that the drive is animal instinct linked to libido. That requires an apparatus for the production of the libido which goes all the way to the Head of State, the Pope etc. It's the structure of sublimation that produces, constructs institutions. What's more, this libidinal economy requires means of production. I will bring out, before long I hope, a book on Freud, the fifth volume of *Technics and Time*, where I am going to really do a thorough analysis of the question of technics in Freud and Lacan. There is no technics in Freud. One has the impression that he never read Greek mythology. It's amazing. It all becomes very clear when we consider the destiny of Prometheus. Prometheus, as Jean-Pierre Vernant has clearly demonstrated, is the principle of the Greek gods. Vernant explains that if you read Hesiod, be it *Works and Days* or *Theogony*, the relation of mortals, that is, human beings, to the gods passes through the transgression of Prometheus. It is because Prometheus transgresses Zeus's law that mortals exist. Otherwise they wouldn't exist. This is made absolutely clear: Vernant shows that all the pious Greek rituals, sacrifices, sacred meals, etc. are always a commemoration of the conflict between the Titans and the Olympians, that is to say between Prometheus and Zeus. One has only to look at Greek statuary, to read Greek tragedy or Greek poetry. And of course Freud represses the supplement: Prometheus doesn't exist for Freud except in terms of homosexuality - in the story in which he pisses on the cinders to put them out, which then is a manifestation of latent homosexual content.<sup>12</sup> It's absolutely ridiculous. So that is Freud on Greek culture, compounded by the fact, conversely, that Oedipus is not at all a god in Greek mythology: Oedipus is a story that was only told later on. It exists in the mythology but only as a small footnote at the heart of the West, which is itself very problematic.

Following that, when Freud writes first 'Totem and Taboo' in 1912 and then 'Moses and Monotheism' in 1937, he reflects with his rationalist side on how we can finally rationally imagine the system of hominisation, of the constituting of the ego and the superego, of acting out, of the law etc. He

12. Sigmund Freud, 'The acquisition of power over fire', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 13 (1932): 405-410.

refers to Robertson Smith, to the sacrificial meal or the totemic meal, and he fabricates this fable of the father's murder by the sons and asks himself 'how is it that suddenly they had the courage to decide to kill their father?' And he says, 'perhaps because they had invented a new weapon'. But he doesn't begin to take one thing into account, which is that the moment the weapon appears is perhaps the origin of the father: it is not a question of a *new* weapon but of *the* weapon, that is to say the appearance of technics that replaces transgression, since in order for the sons to be able to kill the father, it is necessary in the end that they be in a relationship which is no longer the relationship of a pack leader to a pack of animals. Rather, they are connected to the possibility of emerging from simple bio-zoological relations. Perhaps technics is the very condition for this type of relation which is no longer simply biological. And one finds exactly the opposite problem when Freud asks himself how Moses's neurotic guilt and in some way its incarnation was transmitted from generation to generation. He arrives at the absolutely astonishing position of saying that in the end, perhaps, Lamarck was right with respect to Darwin and that perhaps a given behaviour is transmitted in the end by cells. It is ridiculous to say something like that and it is incredible to say it because Freud was a rationalist and took the rationalism of his time very seriously: he was a Darwinian, but there he was speaking as a Lamarckian, while the Bible is a book that exists and is transmitted, etc. Not for an instant does he seem to envisage nor even to imagine that the Bible could be something other than a simple bit of paper!

For me today, looking back, to return now to a re-thinking of libidinal economy with Freud, with Lacan, with Deleuze, with Derrida, with Lyotard, but above all with Winnicott, is to reinterrogate the law of desire with regard to technical objects. It is here that Winnicott is absolutely fundamental. He didn't do much theory; his work was practically all clinical. But he said, 'Look I have seen this and I will tell you what I saw'. He observes the role of the '*doudou*' as we say in French, the teddy bear, the transitional object, and says 'It's there that it happens, it's there that desire is constructed'. What is a teddy bear? It is a technical object. And it is the technical object which makes the link, which creates what Gilbert Simondon calls the 'transductive relation' of care between the mother and the child. Winnicott says, 'without the transitional object, there is no relationship'. The object can be in the beginning a sign for the mother, the transitional object, but very quickly it transforms itself into the substitute that Derrida would call the 'supplement', except that Derrida never theorised the role of the supplement as desire; he talks about it when he reads Rousseau, but he never tries to think an economy of desire on the basis of the supplement. This is for me today *the* question, of the economy of desire, and in the end the only ones who are thinking about it - because there *are* people who are thinking about it, and very, very well at that - are marketing people. Because marketing is the science of transitional objects. The iPhone makes that absolutely obvious. But it's true of everything: cars



are transitional objects and all technical objects are transitional objects, at least in capitalist, consumerist economies.

JG *I wonder if you've read the media theorists Matt Hills and Roger Silverstone?*

BS No I haven't read them.

JG *They developed a Winnicottian theory of media objects as transitional objects.*<sup>13</sup>

BS Oh really? I'd be interested in having their references.

JG *I'd like to ask you a follow-on question. Because I think that - perhaps you'll correct me -Winnicott didn't share Freud's political pessimism.*

BS No he did not. On the contrary. I think that one must from the outset challenge the question of pessimism and optimism in philosophy; for me 'philosophers' means 'neither pessimist nor optimist', for a reason that will perhaps appear to you to be very classical, which is that if one claims to be either optimist or pessimist it's because one hasn't posed the question of liberty. I don't renounce the question of human liberty. I think that one can be neither optimist nor pessimist. Because if one is a pessimist that means that everything plays out negatively, that there is nothing more to do, and if one is an optimist that amounts to exactly the same in the opposite sense, a source of determinism or fatalism. One can reasonably think questions from the perspective of hope. I myself am very often extremely pessimistic as an individual: sadly, that often prevents me from sleeping. Since I work extensively on pharmacological problems, very often I wake up at three in the morning and I can't get back to sleep because when I see all the complications, it's infernal, a dangerous subject for me to treat, therefore a *pharmakon*! But philosophically speaking I absolutely refuse this question, pessimism or optimism; however, I think that one must pose pharmacological questions: which is to say, questions which are either poisonous or benign. And then one must be able to work out the possibility of developing a remediation, of the development of remedies, in an extremely poisonous, extremely toxic context. If you are a normal rational individual, you are very pessimistic. But if you philosophise, you must be neither pessimistic nor optimistic: you must describe the field of possibilities, that is all. That's why I was saying a moment ago that this is not the same thing as a political therapy: in politics you can be optimistic, but from the point of view of pharmacological critique you must be neither pessimistic or optimistic. Moreover I try to think this through a theory of what I call the *epokhē*;<sup>14</sup> in my next book I talk at length about this, trying to show how the appearance of a new *pharmakon* at first always creates a negative *epokhē*, a destruction of all constituted circuits of transindividuation, of all knowledge of how to live (*savoir-vivre*); at first this makes people more

13. Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures*, London, Routledge, 2002; Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life*, London, Routledge, 1994.

14. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: 2. Disorientation*, Stephen Barker (trans), Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2008, pp60-1, 71-7; Stiegler, *Ce qui fait que la vie vaut la peine d'être vécue*, op. cit., pp63-5.

stupid: the appearance of a new *pharmakon* always produces stupidity. In our age it has produced an enormous quantity of stupidity, not just a little stupidity but a colossal amount, but this is structural and normal. The current political battle is to open up a new era which I call the second epochality of the *pharmakon*, of the *pharmakon* itself.

In this new 'second epoch', one reifies this experience of stupidity, and here Deleuze is very important because he says that 'only stupidity can make us think (*faire penser*) or give rise to thinking (*donner à penser*)' (perhaps he didn't say that exactly, but I'm saying that that is what it amounts to). This is very important, because in this second epoch the battle against stupidity will produce a pharmacological critique that will itself engender a new therapy. Socrates is exemplary here for me - not only Socrates, but all philosophical movements that inscribe themselves in history, and that in the end imbue new epochs with greatness or spiritual power, in Paul Valéry's sense. Anyway, we are constituted out of this 'second moment', so that is what I'm trying to theorise today. I also have what I call a 'rational theory of the miracle': Kant tried to define a rational theology; I'm trying to create a rational theory of the miracle. What do I call a rational theory of the miracle? If you add up the numbers and the objective data about the situation of the planet, there's no chance that it or the human race can survive: there is no chance. That's very pessimistic as a point of view: you have a chance but it is so infinitesimal, it really is zero. If I say to you [a Frenchman], for example, you have a one-in-a-billion chance of becoming, by a freak of circumstance, President of the United States: yes, that chance exists perhaps, one in a billion or one in ten billion, or whatever. But the chance that life would appear on earth was that small. The chance that the teaching of Christ would have had the impact it has on the transformation of the world - because Christ changed the entire world - was virtually nil, but it has happened. The chance that Socrates would still be remembered today - (as he himself says he will be at the end of his trial: he says 'I will be with Homer', which is to say 'they will never forget me because since I am a philosopher and you are not - they are going to forget you but not me' and, well, he was right). But, in reality, there was no chance, if you reflect for even a moment on the likelihood of all traces of Socrates being destroyed by earthquakes, by tempests, by fires, by barbarians when they arrived at philosophical schools. But Socrates has come down to us, he speaks to us at this moment; therefore he is there, he is in effect with Homer.

This is what I'm working on now. I think that everything important is absolutely improbable, as Maurice Blanchot said, absolutely improbable - but improbable in different senses. First there is the probabilist sense I was talking about, but there is also a second sense which simultaneously brings together Blanchot and Deleuze (as well as Derrida and Husserl). This second sense is that the things that really count don't exist. Only the things that don't exist count, and they're not reducible to the calculations of probability. From the point of view of probabilities, for example, justice is totally impossible - and in

any case it doesn't exist and will never exist. But there are things that make life worth living. Justice is in question in every society: not necessarily the Western concept of justice. In China, the point of justice is not expressed at all by the Greek notion of *dikē*, but Confucius also poses the problem - in different terms, but he poses it. And the Indians of shamanic societies pose it still differently, as do the pygmies etc. So you see that it really is an elemental structure of libidinal economy; it is an object which doesn't exist for a very precise reason, which is that in fact all the objects that count are objects of desire; and an object of desire, by its nature, doesn't exist but is only idealised as a support for idealised projections, such that all the virtues attributed to my children, my wife, my mother and all the people I love infinitely are phantasms, hallucinations. I attribute things that don't exist to them. But what exists in reality doesn't exist, but is 'true' by virtue of its function in my life, of its enormous effects on existence. And that's true of all forms of human life.

So it's in that sense that I speak of a rational theory of the miracle. The word 'miracle' comes from 'admiration', and also from 'mirage'. Christian parables - Christian miracles, for example - are in fact literary translations (because they are literature) of a process of admiration. One is capable of 'seeing Jesus Christ walk on water'. But I might also see my wife 'walk on water'; that is no problem: I simply ask everyone to see her as I do. But this is the normal structure of desire: if I say all this, it is because it gives you a clear idea of the object of political struggle today: the libidinal economy must be reconstructed. If we want the planet to survive the incredible quantity of problems it is experiencing, there is no other way than to rearm desire, to re-initiate a *process* of desire (and not of drives). And that's quite possible if you look at what has happened. I will tell you a story that was told to me in Japan. I have a friend in Tokyo, Hidetaka Ishida, who took me one day to the great Zen temple in Kyoto. We stood half an hour before a Zen rock garden without saying anything. After half an hour he said to me, 'you know Bernard, what you see here was invented in about 1500 by such and such person, the abbot. He invented this technique for Japanese samurai who were returning from Japanese civil wars in which people were massacred and who said that their souls had been destroyed' (by the drives, in fact). So this guy invented a technique of self, a technique of care, and in fact it's the origin of Japanese Zen culture, which has since become Japan's base, its cultural basis. And that is something absolutely fabulous.

It's similar if you look at what happened in France in the tenth or eleventh century - for example, Saint Julian the Hospitaller (a very important saint in France: Flaubert wrote a text on him.) What is the story of Saint Julian? In the beginning Julian was a noble: that is, a bandit, because the aristocrats were bandits at that time, 'robber barons', whose favourite activities were making war and hunting. And this young man, one day, this noble who is courageous (to be noble, one must be courageous - 'virtuous' in the old sense of the word), goes hunting. He is crazy about hunting: he goes to hunt animals in

the forest. He has a new weapon that allows him to kill from a great distance and in great quantity. And so he comes across a herd of deer and massacres the mother doe and her young. He killed them one after another. Then the buck arrives with his great antlers; he lifts his legs in front of him and starts to speak, saying to the boy, 'You will kill your father and your mother'. Then he receives an arrow in his head; he falls dead. After that - this is a quasi-Oedipal story - Julian, who at this time was not yet a saint - returns home where he finds a man in his wife's bed. He is going to kill this man and his wife but no sooner has he killed them than his wife returns to the bedroom and says, 'Wretched man, you have killed your father and mother!' In fact his parents had just arrived from their travels and his wife had put them to sleep in their bed; he thought they were his wife and her lover. As a result of this he becomes a saint: that is to say, he creates an order and so on. You understand, I'm not saying that we should return to the time of saints and monastic orders. What I am saying on the other hand is that there is always a moment when the exhaustion of the drives in the libidinal economy leads to its complete reconfiguration in a new way of life, a new economy of the superego, a new possibility of idealisation. That is what we must live through now, I believe. This is why I'm interested in free software and other such practicalities: we're not dealing with nobles, warriors, or samurai now, but on the other hand we are dealing with engineers, who are industrial samurai who all of a sudden change their behaviour, who say 'I don't care about my job any more, it's not my problem, I want to work differently'. And I think this is absolutely fundamental.

*BR Many people like the idea of free software, thinkers of right and left. How is your account different?*

*BS* Not necessarily different. I agree with the thesis shared across many very, very different sensibilities: I believe that something absolutely new is happening here, a process of what I call a de-proletarianisation process. But I myself am not completely clear regarding what I think of the idea of 'radical free software', 'creative commons', 'open source', the differences between them and their different modalities; I haven't yet formed a solid view because I think that in order to have a concerted viewpoint one must spend a great deal of time studying carefully the organisational models and questions, which are also the primary questions particularly regarding property and industrial property. I was asked by UNESCO three or four months ago to organise a conference on author's rights and industrial property, and I have already held a conference to explain why I don't know what I think about it, on one hand because I think that one can't have a completely general opinion on the subject, and on the other because that itself poses a problem: I would say initially that it is largely a matter of free software and this or that economic sector. When one poses the problem of intellectual property one is always

in danger of opening up the entire problem of property, including the little matter, for example, of one's apartment; I'm not saying that one must return to issues of collectivism and the means of production, à la Bolshevism, but nonetheless one *is* returning to issues not so far from that - and I haven't formed a specific view. It's extremely complex and must be thought about in pragmatic terms, if you like. More generally, I take a political position today for which many critical people would reproach me. This position is not that of knowing whether capitalism will be replaced by socialism, communism, or who knows what. I think that no one could respond to that question today; a tremendous amount of work needs to be done theoretically and practically as well, and this work does not yet exist. It is not 'at zero', but almost nothing has been done yet. And thus I would find it dishonest to take a position - I think that many creative possibilities are at work to re-new the economic-political structure. On the other hand, I believe that it is absolutely possible to say that the consumerist industrial model is absolutely exhausted and that consumerist capitalism is exhausted; that it is possible to bring about a new model. I believe this completely. It is developing in all sorts of frameworks at this very moment and I work not only with free software but also with farmers, with energy scientists of all kinds, with business, etc., and I think that there is something that is truly being re-constituted that itself is in the process of creating a new spirit - perhaps not of capitalism - but in any case of the economy and of economic activity, capitalist or not.

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