

Fables of Re-enchantment

Multiplicity, Imaginary, Revolution



Stefania Consigliere

Ghosts, oracles, and talking plants... an atlas for escaping disenchantment

Enchantment has disappeared from our lives. Whoever dares to mention it violates the most basic epistemological canons that hold our world together and is immediately labeled ignorant or mad. It is suspicious, however, that the taboo on enchantment comes about just as the historical process of modernity begins to produce spectres and nightmares on an industrial scale. The world is populated by ghosts and no one can talk about them. Even revolutionary thought has conformed to this precept, abandoning the imaginary to the violence of fascism: an enormous historical error since it has brought about the demobilization of intelligence and sensibility on the most crucial terrain for any form of change.

Uniting archeology with modernity, anthropology and yearning, *Fables of Re-enchantment* analyzes the knot that links disenchantment and totalitarianism; it observes the ruinous effects that it has produced for human and non-human lives; and it sketches another way of thinking of the revolution, the multiplicity, and relations with the imaginary, the pre-individual and the invisible.

A book of anthropology, ecology and philosophy, written as a fable. A book for returning to wonder and to shake off fear in the years of global terror.

Stefania Consigliere is an anthropologist and works at the University of Genoa. She is the author of various works including *Strumenti di cattura. Per una critica dell'immaginario tecno-capitalista* (co-written with Paolo Bartolini, 2019), *Antropo-logiche. Mondi e modi dell'umano* (2014), and *La costruzione di un umano* (2014).

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Fables of Re-enchantment. Multiplicity, Imaginary, Revolution
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Translated by Steven Colatrella

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To David Graeber (1961-2020),
diplomat between the worlds of the real and the possible
and poet of anarchy,
once more in voyage

Here, where we are now. This text has come to maturity during the pandemic Spring. A chronicle that from the very start stank of history has brusquely put to the test arguments and rhetoric, logic and meanings. In the end it seemed to me that the whole held together even in the face of the unprecedented viral event, which the reader will find few direct traces of, but which was the first storm navigated through.

Instructions for use. The structure of the text obeys the requirements of montage. It is still the Marxian problem of the *Darstellung*: there is no linear exposition that can describe the water in which the fish swims; only a series of leaps, of little and big shocks, can reveal that its sea is only one among many worlds. To that we must add that to impose logic from top to bottom on a text that argues in favor of multiplicity would be – even if perversely desirable – rather out of place. For those who insist on cultivating the vices of reason, the following pages reconstructs the main argumentative sequences, which can also be read in this more consecutive order. The internal movement of the paragraphs, on the other hand, follows the needs of the route taken, which, at times, prevail over the smoothness of travelling. To put a patch on it, all the information related to routes, currents and ports are found, at the end of the text, in the Ship's Log.

Thanks to Alessandro Baccarin for his generosity in making comments and for his observations on fascism; to Paolo Bartolini for his whole body of research; to Guido Battisti for the quantitative leaps in researching re-enchantment; to Ilaria Bussoni for having woven a mixed ecology that laughs at all purity; to Arianna Colombo for having put these pages to the test during a tormented time; to Annalisa Metta for the happy timbre of her gaze; to Simona Paravagna for *l'esprit de Gênes* (“spirit of Genoa”) that

is embodied in her as in no one else; and to Cristina Zavaroni for all those circuits that otherwise would not exist. The Libera Collina di Castello and its she-spirits received the first fable of re-enchantment, among sounds of accordion and tales of cigarette lighters.

Out on the ocean. The Italian route of this book has been long and surprising. Along the coasts and on the mountains of the peninsula many are seeking a new and difficult allegiance to a non-trivial enchantment, and a myriad of small fires have been lit, in recent times, to signal to those who set out the presence of possible landings. To some of them I owe my psychic survival along these newly fascist years: the comrades of Tutta Un'Altra Storia (Cecilia, Cristina, Duccio, Maddalena, Mimmo, Nadia, Osvaldo, StefanoB, StefanoP); Francesco and Stefania; Massimo and Carlo; Gianluca; Irene; Gabriella and Walter; and of course Claudia and Francesca.

Piero Coppo, fellow traveler in the Amazon jungle, comrade in critical thinking and master of the elsewhere, is as present as ever.

I would not have dared to take this boat to high water, nor push it across the expanses of the oceans, without the support of a crew who at some point, as it should be, collectively decided the course it should take. First and foremost, Carla Bottiglieri, whose delicacy is matched only by the vastness of her connections to the world; Jesal Kapadia, for her capacity to knit visionary threads from many different shores; Steven Colatrella, who revealed to me the *losing* appeal of baseball and the native roots of US music, and with whom we shared much more than just words to translate; and Stephen Shukaitis, who light-heartedly took the risk of sailing this ramshackle vessel to English-speaking shores.

A few notes on Italian events have been added to the Ship's Log for English-speaking readers. Out of a kind of fidelity to the mark of the times, the bibliography has remained unchanged; along these three years, however, many more fugitive vessels have taken to the sea: may the spirits of the waters be kind to us all.

This book is dedicated to all those who at least once have smelled the scent of another world outside the walls, of a different state of time, of the pasts and the futures skirted and lost, of a gentle co-becoming, and, from that time, have not stopped yearning for it.

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THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #1. It is little more than an observation: the modern project, with its narrative of progress and happiness for the greatest number of individuals, has failed. The world around us is a disaster.

After four centuries of capitalism, in the western (or ex-colonialist) countries the topsoil of a common life has disappeared. Under the yoke of neoliberal governance, subsumption is total: whether it is chats, wages, feelings, or collective decision-making, everything comes through a cage of rules at the same time binding, incomprehensible and changeable, in an affective desert lacking existential meaning, and with the only imperative being economic growth. The trivial experience of a phone call to a call center summarizes this feeling of the present that extends itself to the intimate, where emotional disability, linguistic stereotype and obsession with enjoyment illustrate the misery of our times.

While we waste our time typing codes, buying on Amazon and arguing with our partner, the global background that we force ourselves to not see is made of unfolding structural violence, which manifests itself in the form of homicides, diasporas, disappearances, rapes, bombs, and genocides; and of a climatic catastrophe of unheard of proportions: it seems that the amount of heat that the earth system is accumulating is equal to that caused by the explosion of dozens of atomic bombs, like that unleashed on Hiroshima, *each second*. All this is known, but we don't do anything about it; it doesn't hit us like a punch to the stomach, we don't conceive of it, not really. If we did, we could not continue undaunted in the monumental waste of energy that is our life.

To live as we do, we are forced to continually separate what we know from what moves us, what we feel from what we do, in a psychopathological regime of dissociation and impotence. Not surprising, then, is the epidemic diffusion of mental disease; more than half of our fellow citizens use or have used regularly prescribed psycho-pharmaceuticals; almost all of us, in order to get through the day, use a variety of legal and illegal substances; meanwhile the young, the aseptic “youth population” of statistics, are freaking out like never before.

All this suffices to sense difficult times. Yet something is still missing, the enzyme that transmogrifies problems into nightmares: it is the paralysis of the imagination, the incapacity of seeing beyond the wall of the prison that is suffocating us. This alienation transforms disaster into apocalypse, the fading of the world which we are used to into the disappearance of all possible worlds. It’s a sort of spell: many animals die in this way, staring paralyzed at the headlights of the oncoming train that overwhelms them. We tell ourselves that maybe, one accident after another, their descendants will learn to distract their stare so as to jump aside. We count on the long-term of evolution. We however *already are* the children and grandchildren of overwhelmed generations and we must tear ourselves now from the curse of the end of the world. Both because dying in this way, in the middle of the railroad tracks, is indecorous; and because *everything done* by humans – and capitalism is one of these things – can just as well be undone.

The way of flight from a cursed time is toward *anything* that is not impending disaster. The paralysis melts on contact with the otherwise. Not an abstract otherwise, fanciful and exotic, but the very proximate one that continues to exist outside of the dazzling headlights: the grass, the embankment, the den, the path, the trees, the shadow of the woods, the animals on the lawn. The forest is still alive. What we seek is already here: fragmentary, imperfect, rough as real things are. It is only a question of being alerted to its existence. What prevents us from contacting it?

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #2. It is a problem of *superstition*, a word of uncertain etymology, and with a notable history. An edict of Marcus Aurelius punished by deportation whoever terrorized their neighbor with *superstitio*, that is, with excessive fear of the gods. The origin, name and attributes of the god were of little import: the law hit those who

transformed *pietas* (piety) into terror, troublemakers and profiteers that captured souls ensnared by the sacred. Some time later, however, when pagans and Christians began to reciprocally accuse each other, they used the word in two different ways. For one group the Christian cults were superstitions because they were excessive, not conforming to the measured practices of the Roman religion: the question was, therefore, of an ethical kind. For the other group, the pagan cults were superstitions because they paid tribute to a false divinity, different from the only true god: the question was, therefore, ontological. In this slippage, superstition is no longer everybody's risk, but something that, by definition, affects only others, those who do not benefit from the only true revealed faith.

This ontological declination has had a long life in Christian civilization and has passed, in different forms, through the modern era, where superstition hits only those who still do not have access to the one true knowledge: that of the laws of nature revealed by science.

The others *believe, we know*. What happens, however, if the one true knowledge carries us straight to planetary disaster? If knowledge becomes existential paralysis? If the methods of investigation require the destruction of the object known, and, in the long term, also of the knowing subject? Reiterated by all the manuals and implanted in the depths of our drive system, this unshakeable presumption of superiority is the enzyme that transforms disaster into apocalypse. The reasons for our supremacy must be defended at any cost: better a scientific hurricane than a magic refuge; better to die than to become like all the others. The ridicule that we have poured on the possibility that something exists beyond what we see paralyzes us in the middle of the railroad tracks.

It would be helpful, in this mess, to reactivate the first meaning of the word: the idea that all, except us, live in superstition (understood as *untrue belief*) prevents us from realizing how much our adoration of the one truth is in turn a superstition (understood as *paralyzing belief*). This cursed presumption is the *Creed* itself of the moderns, configured in ourselves under a league of violence, ideology, and alienation.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #3. Coming closer to the border separating knowing from believing, science from magic, the rational from the irrational means, in the Old World, to run risks. The first is the epistemological one of disqualification, of being expelled from the city of Lights. The

second is the political one of approaching the mix of machismo, *Übermensch* proclivity, banality, resentment, arrogance and prevarication commonly known as “fascism.” This text will have to address both risks. Its success depends on the possibility of a leap outside of the modern superstitions while keeping away from any totalizing temptation. To this end, the analysis of fascism will occur several times at key points in the argument.

There are excellent reasons why, in Europe, things stand as they are. Elsewhere, where historical totalitarianism did not capture and traumatize entire generations, in the environs of the ecologist, anarchist and revolutionary left one can reason without too many preambles about re-enchantment, psycho-magic, or protection techniques. On this part of the Atlantic, on the other hand, even the most timid proposals must be introduced by long premises, distinctions and discriminations, and must win over at every step the diffidence of the interlocutor. In fact, you never get to talk of re-enchantment with the same freedom of comrades in the United States, not to mention Latin America, where for four centuries the vanquished secretly continued to give voice to the world. Here, where we instead find ourselves – namely in Europe, at the start of this text – a premise is inevitable.

Here it is: the refusal of fascism is, to me, a sort of zero level, something that goes without saying and does not require any justification. In desiring a “non-fascist life,” however, simply positioning oneself as an antifascist is not enough. One must arrive at a non-fascist life and the dues that must be paid along the road that leads there are many and unpleasant. Used as a banner, antifascism *risks making things too easy*.

To begin with, to define oneself starting from the adversary is dangerous. There is a hidden mimicry, a secret brotherhood between A and non-A that saturates the field of the thinkable and hides all that which, being other, refuses to let itself be caught by binary logic. This conceptual trap poisoned 20th Century political space, generating symmetrical orthodoxies and pushing all the rest to the margins and to insignificance. Better then to define oneself starting from what one is or would like to be.

The second reason has to do with the complexity of the world, of the forms of life, of the relationships, and of the things that are at stake. Independently of the contents of the struggle, the left needs that same complexity that the right would like to hide, it needs the intelligence and the sensibility that serve for navigating it, it needs the patience of those who go

for the long, difficult road, eschewing short cuts. It must learn to resist that which to others it is sufficient to profit from. While fascism could leverage the inertia of the *idées reçues*, or the power of a simplified myth, non-fascists must distance themselves from every temptation to banality – including that of racializing the fascists, and that of brushing off what lies outside of the railroad tracks ascribing to it the mystique of their adversaries.

The last reason is the most difficult to pin down. It is as if in fascism there were a specific analytical difficulty: the more we understand it historically, the less we are able to confine it to a particular age. There is certainly a difference between chaining slaves in the cotton fields, organizing manhunts in Amazonia, and preparing the migratory supply chains of the new global *Lumpenproletariat*: but where does the line between them cross? Were the bourgeois ladies that were moved by the civilizing work of “our boys” in Tripolitania worse than those who today promote micro-credit among Somalian women? And what differentiates the apologetics for the natural prevarication of the strong over the weak from the ideal functioning of the market? The specificity that we would like to find in fascism points to a much vaster history, one that includes us as well, that thrives in destruction and that we never fully grasped. Even when – resorting to myth, to vitalism, to the drives of the social unconscious – it seems to oppose itself to its own explicit presuppositions, fascism does nothing except bring to the extreme limit a logic of domination that precedes it: *fascism is one of the outcomes, perhaps the clearest, of modernity.*

This complicates things, because if distancing oneself from the grimaces of the Duce and from the smirks of his followers is relatively easy, modernity is the very water in which we swim, the matrix of the emotional and cognitive drives implanted in us, ready to spring into action under the right conditions. Perhaps to be aware of fascism means also, or maybe in the first place, to be aware of the darkest part of ourselves. A long ride is needed.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #1. Eleftheria Square, a little before seven o'clock in the morning. At the only shop open I buy a minimal breakfast that I eat waiting for the bus. When it arrives, the driver waves his hand to let us pass: it is the week of the referendum and all public transport in Athens is free. We slowly leave the city and take *Hiera Odos*, the sacred way: the twenty kilometers that take us to Elefsina, the ancient Eleusis, are still called that, even though today they appear in the form of a dusty

superhighway, skirted by big apartment buildings and unceasingly trafficked up and down by humans and motorized transport.

At the archeological site I buy the very first ticket of the day and for an hour I wander round the ruins in complete solitude. Then some others sneak up to visit the old rocks, but few: the extra-luxury buses drop off the tourist groups somewhere else. What are they looking for, those who have adventured here, and what are they thinking about? Do some of them have the same hidden agenda I have? For over a millennium entire generations of men and women, slaves and masters, Greeks or at least Greek-speaking people, under the sole condition of not having committed murder, went to Eleusis to be initiated into the Mysteries. They prepared for many weeks, then followed the ritual procession which started from Athens and lasted the whole day. In the middle of the night, after having drunk *kikeon*, they entered into the *telesterion* and “they saw.” The vision, unanimously say the chroniclers, changed their relationship with life and with death, putting their hearts at peace.

We don’t know what they saw, nor how *kikeon* was prepared, and the most extraordinary fact is precisely this one: our ignorance. Eleusis is not, for the Greeks, a clandestine path or the occasional deviation of a few marginal people; it is a recurring event, public, political, collective; it is the commitment made by the entire community, a mass initiation device. Centuries upon centuries of initiation ritual and no one revealed anything. Some, in a later epoch, desecrated the ritual parodying it in their sitting rooms, but they were immediately scorned and in any case their blasphemy does not solve the riddle. And so we are left to conjecture.

For anyone who has wandered among the even more antique ruins in Crete, it is obvious to suppose that the Demeter of Eleusis arrived from there, counterbalance to the Mycenaean macho fury. And there is something comic in the meticulousness with which the Romans, in their turn, magnified the places, equipping them all the *sinequanon* for a pleasant stay: baths, gyms, taverns, hotels, brothels. But in the 7th Century BCE, when it was founded, the temple of Eleusis was born small, not any larger than a country church. I try to trace the wall signs, almost entirely buried, of the first *telesterion*. I try to imagine myself at its door, in a night between summer and autumn, in the month of Boedromion. A day of fasting, then leaving Athens, a long walk under the sun alongside the carriages in the procession, singing, invoking. Someone presents me with

a bowl with my dose of *kikeon*. As always, I would be afraid, a sense of subjection. But I wouldn't feel bewildered. I have already lived this moment, a couple of years ago, thousands of kilometers from here.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #4. In its hegemonic form, modernity is the human world that took form in Europe, between the 16th and 17th Centuries, in the coalescence of three gigantic historical processes: colonialism, capitalism, and science. Without the gold, the labor power, and the slave-industrial experimentation of the colonies, there would not have been any primitive accumulation. Without the anthropological configuration of Protestantism, primitive accumulation would not have triggered the circuit of surplus value and the transition to capitalism. Without science it would not have been possible to objectify the world, to justify the new global hierarchies and to build the myth of progress. The confluence of these three phenomena gave rise to the powerful device of centralization and homogenization necessary for its functioning (the nation-state) and the type of subjectivity required by the new configuration (the individual). Despite the many attempts to give a name to its contemporary extension (postmodern, hypermodern, super-modern, liquid modernity) the whole formed by colonialism, capitalism, science, State, and individual continue to structure the world that we live in and to imprint on them a special form of dissociation.

On the utopian side modernity presents itself as the radiant reality of a world of knowledge, wealth, democracy, liberty, and technologically assisted comfort. According to the central myth of progress, it is a unique culture, among all of those that have ever existed, which has known how to grasp, through science, the reality of things; the only one to have liberated humans from the state of minority; the only that, through technology, has known how to dominate nature so as to satisfy all our wants. Not just one culture among others, but the definitive overcoming of cultural limitations, universal destination for all, and fulfillment of human history.

In the meantime, however, on the historical side, there appeared colonial hecatombs, enclosures, witch burnings, factory discipline, total institutions, the reduction of the male body to a productive machine and of the female body to a machine of reproduction and recreation, human zoos, the Atlantic route, extractivism, genocide, totalitarianism, the extermination camps, necropolitics, and now the anthropocene as well. The

melancholy of the English at the start of the modern era became mass depression; the hordes of miserales that roamed the streets of London in the 18th Century are today trapped at the frontiers; joy has disappeared from art; the heart of darkness never ceased to beat its drum. Utopia of progress and violence of domination must be taken together, there is no way to separate them once and for all.

From a certain point of view, there is nothing new. Like all other systems of domination, modernity too has used violence to impose and maintain its logic, and it has then guaranteed itself legitimacy and stability with the typical trick of every hegemony: the elaboration of ideologies that are at once simple and grand. From the superiority of men in patriarchy to that of priests and warriors in stratified societies, from divine kingship to religious subjection, ideology, with its utopian elements, hides the process that produces domination, induces the oblivion of violence and naturalizes hierarchies. Differently from other systems, however, above the ancient two-armed device modernity has grafted an entire arsenal of techniques of capture based more on fascination than on enslavement, more on persuasion than on coercion. The arms, in this way, become three: violence, ideology, fascination.

This power derives from the extraordinary inclusive ability that modernity inherited directly from Christianity. When the first Jewish Christians leave the *ethnos* to bring the good news to the *goyim*, they accomplish a decisive step. The new religion welcomes anyone regardless of ethnicity, gender, class and, indeed, with a precise emphasis on the necessity of severing one's primary attachments (leaving "home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields," as the Gospels say). In exchange is offered to all a visa for the Kingdom in the wake of its advent. Compared to other religious forms, Christianity has a higher utopian index: no longer content to ask of the higher spheres prosperity and a certain habitability of the world, it instead promises a definitive solution to the contradictions of sub-lunar life; and it promises this, at least *de jure*, to all.

As with Christian salvation, the modern utopia of progress too has a universal character. Even when its champions belong to a specific group (typically Europeans), it remains in any case open to whomever wants to adhere to it. You are not civilised or savage because of intrinsic characteristics, but because of the values you choose: the sole line of division

is between those who are already within progress and those who are not yet. The ontological, epistemological, and ethical superiority guaranteed to the converted of modernity makes them zealous agents of its propagation. The fee that must be paid, levied with intransigence at its thresholds, is the abjuration of what one believed up to that moment. The newly arrived must forget the place they came from, burn the wild clothes of ignorance, become insensitive to manners, to myths and to beings that, up until that moment, had been woven into their lives: ancestors, lands, non-human and more-than-human beings, legends, enchantments, trees, mountains and skies. Little, in contrast with what is promised: to whomever accepts its metaphysics, modernity guarantees participation in the march of winners and an infinite access to the possibilities of enjoyment.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #5. Deeply rooted in our heads, the modern metaphysics articulates itself in a complex binary system (nature/culture, human/animal, male/female, body/mind, truth/opinion, civilization/barbarism, etc.), whose dualism is only apparent because the relationship between the two poles is not complementary (A/B), but oppositional (A/non-A): in each circumstance and under every respect, A is superior to non-A and must win.

Below the oppositions is in fact at work the very solid principle of *monism*, which is premised on there being only one being (whose laws are described by science: all the rest is myth); a sole valid path to knowledge (the logical-deductive one of rational wakefulness: all the rest is delirium); a sole acceptable ethical system (the one that, conforming itself to the laws of nature, pursues progress: all the rest is ethnicism). It is a true mythological machine, made for purifying A of every residue of non-A, so as to reaffirm and guarantee in every situation its superiority, and to disqualify everything that “isn’t us.”

Like the Jewish god, modernity is a jealous god, and like the Christian one, it is an expansive god that unceasingly attacks what does not respond to its logic. Its fundamental operating system is that of *reductio ad unum* (“reduction to one”), the reduction of multiplicity to a single state of affairs: of the ontological regimes under the sign of naturalism; of the economic regimes under the sign of surplus value; of the knowledge regimes under the sign of science; of the therapeutic regimes under the

sign of State medicine; of the work regimes under the sign of wage labor; of affective regimes under the sign of a particularly cruel patriarchy.

Modernity does not admit to comparisons, which means that it does not admit to alternatives, to the point that even Marx and a large part of the revolutionary movement greeted with favor the unifying activity of capitalism, the forced marches that would have brought the whole of humanity to the brink of communism.

Since nothing can resist its expansion, modernity pursues an incremental dynamic of a peculiarly heroic stamp: no unknown zone (however protective of delicate or otherwise impossible processes) will survive the progress of knowledge; no need (however absurd, toxic or induced) will remain unsatisfied in the expanding of production; no alternative form of organization of the world (however intelligent, sensible and happy) will resist the progress of democratic and individual freedom.

The necessity to purify distorts the very idea of the good: the *pharmakon* disappears, that ambiguous power that can be either medicine or poison; a unique discrimination separates the things that are only good from the things that are only bad and must, therefore, be eliminated. Contradiction must be expunged from the field of logic and conflict from the field of life in the name of an infinite and complete harmony, that will keep us at bay from every instance of possible transformation: ambiguity, participation, plots, entanglements, pulsations, instabilities, analogies, and the undefined are banned, relegated to a savage past or to what, in us, is not civilized (the body compared to the spirit, women compared to men, children compared to adults).

The regulating idea of measure, increasingly perceived as repressive, disappears, replaced by that of infinite growth. Progress has no upper limits; regression is laden with all of the negative values. Be it the revisiting of preceding biographical moments, the decline of the GDP, the reduction of the commodities in circulation, or dystopias, the way that leads to *less* or *before* is the way of evil; the only possible direction is that of the *more* and of the *beyond*, of the greater, of the increase. The fulfillment of the trajectory – still and always future, but reachable – will coincide with complete knowledge, absolute good and a humanity fully satisfied.

It looks like a spell. Still today, “progress” is a bewitched word that shuts off thought and blunts sentiment, making us hostage to whomever brandishes it. As soon as it is pronounced, no one ever finds anything to

oppose, doubts are silenced, hesitations overcome. Who will object to the construction of a school in the Amazon? Or to the building of a hospital in the Congolese forest? Or to the imposition of representative democracy in a place of tribal regulations? The many available excellent descriptions on the lacerating effects of development, on the exploitation that immediately ensues, on the climactic and environmental disasters, on the catastrophic consequences of cultural impoverishment, are not enough. Not enough either are the experience of our own profound unhappiness. The best thing remains progress, and it is of little import if what gives sense to the lives of collectives and of people is swept away. A depressed Westerner with a smartphone is better than a happy hunter-gatherer.

Adorno and Horkheimer had already noted this: not because of its force and its successes is the Enlightenment more totalitarian than any other system, but because, for it, “the process is decided in advance.” We may not have worked out yet the whole formula for the perfect drug or for the more just organization of the world, but there is no doubt that it will be us to find it. *Hegemonic modernity is a system of domination whose specific trait is the propensity for the totalization of the existing.*

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #2. It’s almost Midnight: the darkness of the rainforest and the jet-lag from an alien time zone confuse my internal clock. We sit in a circle, leaning against the walls of the *maloca*, the large ritual building open to the vegetation and animals out there, while the *taita* prepares the *yagé*. The rite has its own times, its own criteria, that I observe without understanding too much. Come the moment, we stand up in turns to go and drink the double decoction from a wooden cup, measured out according to our experience, and (so I reckon) our weight. In the night, during the long body-to-body with the plant – we dance sometimes, sometimes we wrestle – it will be a song that guides us. If you get lost, look for the voice; if you are afraid, hold on to the melody. I did everything that was necessary to find myself here: the voyage, the forms, the purge, the declaration of intents, the climb in the rainforest. The documentation as well: I read everything that I could read, everything I could find. Not on the Amazon, however, and not even on the master plants of the rainforest, nor on the Ashaninka or curanderism. To arrive at this point, I read everything that I could on Eleusis.

We don’t know, nor probably will we know, when the peoples of the Amazon began to use the *Banisteriopsis caapi* to produce a drink able to

open the psychic and physical zest of the subjects and put them back in contact with both what surrounds them and lives within them: the plants, the spirits, the animals, the many souls of human beings. It is not a mere disorder that presents itself in the vision, nor is it about archetypes or ancient scenes linked only to biographical accidents. The *yagé* makes visible the entire implicit social consciousness, the unspeakable that expresses itself through images, public secrets and spurious knowledge. It is the presence in us of history, our own and that of everyone. It includes envy, secret struggles, the passions of a community, the history of the world that we live in; the ghosts of what happened and of what could not happen, the constellations and the arrests of the historical process, the futures that we have not taken. There are the wounds, the unburied dead, the violence and the domination, the forgotten memories: it is the storage area, within each of us, of the times and their destructive charges, the sedimentation of the endless disaster that we call "history." And there is also the possibility, always fragile and ambiguous, of a counter-memory.

Yagé nights and Eleusinian rites join in an intersection that is, to say the least, hazardous. They are brought together by the ethical, epistemological, and ontological disqualification, that the modern cosmovision throws over both of them. Eleusis, just as Orpheus, Dionysius, the Bacchantes, and the Oracles, the *daimon* of Socrates and the dreams of Chrysippus, show how much we repress of the ancient Greece in order to be able to logicize and rationalize it. The multiplicity of human worlds is what we repress from the present in the name of a future of triumphant progress. This convergence between the Amazon and Eleusis, who knows why, takes away some of my fear at the moment in which, in the rainforest, I go meet the plant – or maybe to be met by the plant.

Some fear, in all that, the ruin of the Enlightenment, of critical reason and, therefore, of Western civilization. Such a risk exists indeed. But while I wait for the plant to make itself felt, I ask myself if a tetragonal fortress with triple walls, without a door or a window or even drawbridges, with air pumped in by machines, big-screen on every wall and piped music in the elevators is not something much worse than a ruin. Among the ruins, at least, the wild plants grow, and the ghosts who wander around here have a name.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #6. The objections are well-known: for example, that according to which a certain attitude to totalize the existent

is not unique to modernity, but characterizes every cultural regime. Even the Celestial Empire presented itself to its subjects as an impassable horizon, and so did the Inca or the Indian caste system; even the smallest and most remote groups refer to themselves as “humans,” relegating all the others to the periphery (when not also to the category of food or excrement). And so, if everyone is ethnocentric, why is it only modernity that shouldn’t be? But there is too little anthropology in this objection – or not enough philosophy, perhaps.

To begin with, it misunderstands one of the fundamentals of modernity, which is precisely that it does *not* think of itself as ethnic, one people among other peoples, but as *universal* due its privileged access to nature. Even when Westernization is criticized, modernization remains out of the question as the common destination of humanity and the sole way to access the objective foundation of the world. For entire centuries, whoever acted in the name of development was not in fact thought of as a representative of a certain human group, but as a pioneer of the whole of humanity, liberated at last from its chains. Witness to this, despite the extension and the atrocity of the conflicts, modernity has never been able to think itself at war. For wars, in fact, one needs adversaries, someone that is recognized as an equal – and, to modernity, no one is. This way, so long as those who we confront are ignorant savages or insolent upstarts, the necessary means to maintain discipline is not military order, but public order. It is the practice of the pedagogical massacres for straightening the spine of the bad pupils, and of all the police operations founded on the indisputable right of primogeniture of the moderns.

In the second place, this ferocious universalist arrogance, sustained by a globally hegemonic position and by an exorbitant technological power, has made the moderns the terminators of a very large number of human worlds, ways of consciousness, and forms of presence (not to mention ecological landscapes and living species). This termination is symbolic even before it is material: often the destruction was justified by attributing to “others” the darkest traits of modernity itself, those that, in a well-known psychological process, are expelled from the self by projecting them outward. This dynamic links the civilized and the savage, the colonized and the colonizer, in a perverse co-dependency. The excess of both material and symbolic destructiveness of the modern regime is unequaled, and it is its beneficiaries that should answer for it.

In the end, the most crucial point. In contrast to the moderns, the others admit to a plurality of “others.” No group constitutes itself in isolation or according to an exclusively internal coherence: the most common situation among human collectives in any time and place is that of *co-presence* with other groups in relation to which they define themselves, take position, decide on borders, on mimesis and on osmosis. Whatever the assumptions and the logic of a particular collective, the presence of other human forms is a powerful denaturalizing factor, which compels diplomacy and protects human groups, through its mere existence, from autistic withdrawal. This is almost incomprehensible for Westerners ever since, half a century ago, the huge process of social standardization that has produced the global middle class began.

This is still not enough. Beyond this sociological multiplicity, the others almost always admit to an even more bewildering form of plurality. Be it enough to say, here, that, stepping outside our borders, we often bump into worlds populated by a myriad of “other persons,” persons in non-human form: animals, plants, mountains, winds, ancestors, *jinn*, spirits of the woods or the ices. Often these “others among others” are powerful and capricious and humans need to negotiate with them in a project of cosmic politics. In these contexts, multiplicity is continuously present as limit, danger, opportunity: as a horizon of *non appropriability*.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #7. On the other hand, the project of “reduction to one” brings with it the full and complete appropriability of the real. It manifests itself, to begin with, as a means of homogenization. The world of modernity is one, smooth and uniform, without gaps in between. It has abolished discontinuity, qualitative variations, turning points and metamorphoses, unifying all that exists into a single system ruled by few, known variables. The experience we make of it is that of a space without thresholds, continuous and without differentials.

It happened to the sensible world, when nascent science cut away from knowledge all that was not quantifiable. The sole relevant characteristics for scientific knowledge are those that are measurable; all the others – and that means those, which are crucial for the quality of experience, that depend on the ecology of relationships and on the co-becoming of the “subject” and “object” – become irrelevant. Training in the laws of probability will varnish all that with a semblance of naturalness.

It happened to space: the needs of capital have made the *lares* and *penates* disappear in an abstract geometry of allotment where every point is equivalent to every other and the quality of places is lost. A little later, the speed of motorized means of transport will tear travellers from the relationship to roads, paths, and winds, and cement will spread over everything to confirm that the only tangible reality is that of the market. In music an analogous operation is carried out by the equable temperament, with its productive potential and its centralizing power.

It happened to time, when the necessity of hourly efficiency required the synchronization of the church bells, without regard to the entirely local character of mid-day; the railroads, the stock markets, and the insurance companies benefitted. The periodic alignments of different temporalities that could insist on the same instant (the opening of the *mundus* among the Romans, the Days of the Dead, the ecstatic rituals and so forth) have vanished. Now even social and biographic times are becoming uniform: the old alternation between work and life, which was already the outcome of a drastic simplification, in the age of connectedness seems like a far away paradise.

Today we experience the spreading of a single existential space where even intimacy between subjects disappears: no part of life is subtracted from the public gaze and even the space of sleep is subject to an unprecedented attack. The whole of the subject is made fungible: the experiential profundities that opened with boredom, in non-ordinary states, in travels, and in waiting have been thinned out; childhood is regimented; there are no liminal spaces of transformation, nor times to occupy oneself of the things of the other world (or of other worlds, or of other parts of ourselves). From this single world, above all, the event has been banned: the breaking in of something unexpected, of the irreducible, of the otherwise. Perhaps for this reason we call “event” any repetitive spectacle, while the encounter with a true event often takes the form of a trauma.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #3. Leaving for the Amazonian forest I promised myself to go as soon as possible to visit the remains of Eleusis in order to close that unstable circle. Now, while I walk among the walls of the ancient temple, I suspect that it was a sophisticated form of anthropological cowardice: in order to get closer to a largely alien practice such as Amazonian medicine I had to tie myself to something analogous on

the philogenetic line of my own cultural tradition – and who better than the ancient Greeks? The Mysteries of Eleusis, then, with all the charm and ambiguity which the phrase has been charged over time. Eleusis is mysterious because we know so little about it, but also because, as good moderns, we expect that the word “mystery” refers to a secret doctrine, an esoteric teaching. Nothing of the kind, but it takes a while to understand that.

A couple of weeks ago, on arriving in Greece, a sign on the door of an elevator struck me. It said, *ektos leitourgias*, “out of service.” The word *liturgia* (liturgy), which I would struggle to define in Italian due to its fearsome sacred and cultural resonances, here means “functioning, use, service.” The discovery put in motion a curious interpretive pendulum. The Enlightenment subject in me was laughing: behind every high, difficult, obscure concept, there is always an everyday explanation; everything that seems transcendent can be brought back to the dimension of the profane. But the romantic soul was also exulting: under the most ordinary words lies an inexhaustible and abyssal profundity. For an instant, at the Athens airport, I escaped from the referential flatness of contemporary newspeak and from the emotional and cognitive ruins that it brings with it. The words that we use are profound, mysterious and dense. Not because someone has sequestered them in the kingdom of the transcendent and the intangible, making them into instruments of domination, but because they come from the multiplicity and from the potential, all full of history and elsewhere.

So I discover, at Venizelos (international airport for those with money and passports, exchange station of the Balkan route for those without), that the mysteries are a liturgy, that is, a service, a set of operations that serve to make the world function in an acceptable way. It is useless to search for their meaning in a doctrine or in a secret destined for a few: if the design of a good elevator is the work of engineers, for those who take it its usefulness lies in the fatigue it saves us. What is, however, the usefulness of a mystery rite like that of Eleusis or of the Amazonian *yagé nights*? In what sense can a rite be, like an elevator, “out of service?”

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #8. In order to carry on in its project of appropriation, the world of surplus value must present itself to those who live in it as the entirety of what exists and of what is possible;

the most powerful and desirable world not only among the ones already existing, but even among those imaginable. For the trick to work, it is not enough to eliminate the alternatives that already exist: it needs to also block the motor that produces them generating bifurcations, desires, intuitions, resistances; that leads the living to experience new forms of relationships and to co-become with their own world – and indeed, it has no chance of succeeding without controlling this sphere. In modernity, this condition was reached barring access to the imaginary, and to the risks, the possibility, and the transformative potentiality that it opens.

(“Imaginary” is an ambiguous word, polysemous. It can mean “something that exists only in the mind of someone,” like the imaginary friend of a child, the “migrant invasions” in the head of xenophobe politicians, or the theory of relativity when Einstein was elaborating it. This meaning poses important philosophical questions on how to distinguish between crazy and genius, on the meaning of non-ordinary states of experience, and on the delicate art of *making exist*. But “imaginary” can also refer to the social unconscious, to the inflexions and sensations that span the decades and tie together entire generations exposed to the same basic experience. These structures of feeling are the effect, on individuals, of our collective history, the imprinting on the consciousness of modes of feeling that are only apparently intimate and private, but in fact derive from the general structuring of a world. The imaginary as social unconscious is the whole set of learned relationships, impressions, memories, associations of ideas, narrations, and emotional inflexions that the members of a group share among themselves for the simple fact of being a part of that group and having gone through the same places, institutions and experiences. Finally, “imaginary” is also the shadowy part of a human world, the belt that mediates between the real, in its elusive vastness, and the local, specific world, which is brought into existence. It is the region of the possible, of potential, and of the untimely, Marx’s “dream of a thing.” It is the myth-dream where possibilities, bifurcations, alternatives originate; where wastes, ghosts, and unrealized futures live a posthumous life. Fantasy in the head of someone, social unconscious, belt of penumbra of a world: under the hat of the imaginary we move between what is only for me and what is for all, between what still does not exist and what exists according to an excess potential. The ambiguity of the word is its strength as much as its weakness and is an epistemological compass. We use it in this way,

without giving it a univocal definition, because what it denotes is neither univocal nor rational-izable.

The barring of the imaginary is indispensable to the dynamic of totalization. The frontiers to overcome and the lands to fence in are not only geographical: psychic, symbolic, oneiric, and narrative lands are just as relevant. In the project of complete subjection nothing must arrive, from outside, to break up the tie between the individual and the market, to suggest the existence of other logics and other needs. Nothing must interrupt the cycle of production and consumption, the nexus between the needs of the structure and the individual drives. Of the market, in fact, we feel every gasp, its shivering reverberates inside us: we desire what it desires, we fear what it fears. On the other hand, trees, wolves, fountains, ghosts, windmills, stars, gods and demons have ceased to speak. In dreams and in drunkenness there is no consciousness except unreason. The destiny of the world does not affect the subject; the destiny of the subject does not affect the world. This is what goes under the name of disenchantment.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #4. Among the stones of the temple, under the already hot sun at nine in the morning, I think again about the night in the rainforest. The *yagé* brought visions of an absurd precision, alter-perceptions of imperturbable realism, the possibility of being simultaneously in two worlds. If I opened my eyes I was in the *maloca* in the middle of the wood, with the *taita* and his helpers, with my traveling companions and the chirping of insects in the equatorial night. If I closed them I was elsewhere, and with equal completeness. It wasn't about choosing between dream and reality, but between two different dreams, or two realities: the shared one that drags all of us along a common time and that we continually negotiate with others; and the one that Karamakate, mover of the worlds, describes as "time without time," a place of fearsome *chullachaqui* (human-like in shape, but empty inside and without memories) and of possible healings. Perhaps a rite is a means of reopening the world which we are used to, a way of returning to feel what is underneath, the violence and the splendor of the possible, the multiplicity; a way to keep from suffocating from what already exists; to see where certain folds originate, certain pains, and try and dissolve them. The buried *telesterion*.

While I fluctuated between the sounds and the smells of the forest, with additional fingers to expand my hands and the visions of gateways on

the earthen floor, the rite appeared to me as an indispensable movement, a space of suspension between what we historically are and what still is and always will be possible. But it is also a difficult space, where relationships show themselves in their original state, charm and danger together. It can be seen with crystal clearness in little children, when they learn to enter into relationships with a cat, a knife, a friend. The drink reactivates that magic, any relationship shows itself as it was before time, use, practice, and good manners domesticated it. And in the end it is a dangerous space, where it is better to not venture alone and where you don't go for yourself, to add flashes to your own ego. You need someone to bring you back home, and a collective that can be your horizon. A couple of times, that night, I searched for a song like a scared child runs to a parent. At a distance, I now realize how much trust I accorded, without too much thinking about it, to human and non-human beings that accompanied me on that encounter, to their good intentions. Thanks to their mediation I spoke to the *abuelita de la selva* in the proper way: breathing, and with all the good manners I was capable of. Please, if possible, could you, thank you. Like many grandmothers of this planet, this one too is lovable, but trouble if angered.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #9. The silence of the world is one of the projects which modernity boasts of the most. This is why, breaking our automatism, we should understand disenchantment not as *true state of the world*, in opposition to the fantasies and superstitions of the non-moderns, but analyze it in its functioning, its nexuses, its outcomes. The set of presuppositions, practices, and discourses that accompany it (the disappearance of non-human intentionality, the disqualification of otherness, the pathology-zation of the sensible, the collapse of the individual onto him/herself, the declination of freedom as non-attachment, the objectification of the world, the superstition of society) are articulated to form a refined means of control that not only accomplishes, but *guarantees* the project of totalization.

The crucial importance of disenchantment for the modern regime is revealed by the profundity of its introjection, by the peril of putting it into question, and, above all, by the moral, much more than epistemological, approach to the question. In the utopian self-narrative of the moderns, the development of the productive forces and individual freedom

descends in a direct line from the overcoming of superstitions with which the old hierarchies kept people in a state of minority. No more devils, angels, spirits, nightmares; incantation formulas lose their effectiveness, the preachers' images of terror begin to be laughed at. The world becomes *positive* and the word is well-chosen: to the cognitive positivity of science, based on data, measures, and industrial repeatability, is joined the ethical positivity of a world so well built as to no longer have any parts that remain in the shadows.

As a fundamental emotional-perceptual tonality, disenchantment represents to us the absolute horizon of value: an iron curtain separates what exists from what, *since it doesn't exist, must then no longer exist* (and vice-versa). The modern world is the military realization of a naturalistic fallacy: ontologically assumed, the non-existent is immediately realized in fact through violence. What exists is positive and is therefore objective, true, and good; what does not exist is loaded with all the negative qualities and will, therefore, also be non-objective, false, and bad.

The curtain requires the very rigid application of the logic of binary opposites: beyond logical-reductive rationality there are no alter-rationalities, but only irrationalities and superstitions; beyond the things that exist there are no alter-ontologies, but only illusions; alongside the good of progress there do not exist other values, but only disvalues; outside state sovereignty there is only tribalism; outside the individual there are no other forms of subjectivity, but only immaturity. The clue to its action is the recurrence of the expression "it is nothing but..." and of the adverb "still"; in this way, we can hear talk of peoples that *still* believe in spirits, that *still* don't have electricity, or that *still* practice magic; and we come across peremptory propositions according to which the other ways of subsisting *are nothing but* prehistory; the myths *are nothing but* fables; non-normed affections *are nothing but* deviance; non-ordinary experiences *are nothing but* chemical imbalances in the brain. The immense variety of the world is reduced to epiphenomena of a hard and cold universe that only we Westerners are able to grasp in its tragic truth. To name what, in spite of all, overcomes the great partition, the more refined speak of symbolic effectiveness, provided that material effectiveness – the true one – is something completely different.

So rigid is this border that any discourse that doesn't take it for granted violates the most fundamental ontological and epistemological canons that

hold up our world and provokes scandal. Whoever crosses it slips immediately into being unserious, monstrous, less than human: we call them crazy, savage, demented, charlatans, barbarians, ignorant, at times also women and children. Disenchantment is the very presupposition of social life.

Our psychic life depends on it: it's either us or disenchantment. There is something excessive in this rejection, an embarrassment that reveals deeper aspects. For *it is true* (and in this modernity has right on its side in abundance) that enchantment can be an instrument of domination and *it is true* that the modern movement has freed the lands that it swept up from previous systems of domination that had in their grip, in a malicious way, the imaginary, dreams, and the fears of humans. What instead *is not true* is that enchantment is only an instrument of domination; that modernity has ceased to make us of it; and that the use that it makes of it is not, in turn, malicious.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #10. The main effect of disenchantment is the separation of human beings from the world through an ontology of dissociation. The great silencing is played around the status of *person*, which for four centuries has been rigorously reserved to members of the zoological species *Homo sapiens*. Beyond human sociality, there are neither intentionality, nor sense, but only blind mechanical movement. So, in a Cartesian understanding, while our bodies belong, like those of other living things, to the natural, universal, mechanical and objective sphere investigated by science, our consciousness move instead in the "second world" of intentions, freedom, politics, and desires. This makes us into persons, special beings to which are owed valorization, protection, and respect due to their particular ontological dignity. All the rest can be appropriated because nothing else, in the cosmos, has voice or desire: nymphs and spirits disappear from the woods; plants and animals cease to talk; the figures of dreams become puppets of an unconscious ventriloquist. The disappearance of every intentionality not referable, in the last instance, to human beings, authorizes violence against the non-human in any form and intensity.

This process is functional to the new productive dynamic: only in an inert cosmos can surplus value grind away without obstacles. Taking away any ethical limits to the exploitation of the earth, of the water, of the heavens, and of the living, disenchantment makes acceptable the spoliations

that increase the fungible goods. Without the de-personalization of the cosmos, agro-industry, fracking, nuclear power plants, and extractive supply chains would appear for what they are: destructive and deadly enterprises; and the shedding of poisons, toxics, and pollutants would immediately be seen as criminal aggression.

The silence of the world has acted on the ethical temper of the moderns, who have lost the habit of the multiplicity, of negotiation, and of partnership among differences. Mediation, the capacity to find a harmonious relationship between different spheres, to accord what cannot be consonant, has disappeared. And so there has appeared a unique world of notable power, a gravitational black hole able to annihilate, or to make unrecognizable, every autonomous form of existence and every notice of other worlds, of intents and values different from ours. An indisputable orthodoxy, shared in equal measure by social sciences and by Marxism, affirms that human society is the only horizon of sense in an relentlessly mechanical universe. We moderns have understood this and, therefore, are able to dominate nature; other societies, on the other hand, continue to project their myths and their dreams onto a cold and indifferent cosmos, that only in this shadow game can appear animated or intentional.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #5. A lot of bad things can be said about the ayahuasca tourism of recent years. Jean-Loup Amselle did so in a pamphlet with the genial title *Psychotropiques*, which tells of bored gringos, hipsters seeking powerful sensations, cowboys of the high and the inevitable perversion that money from the north carries with it. All true. Something, however, doesn't add up. Most of the people I met in the forest seemed to me in search of a thread that, at home, they could not even give a name to. Many worked in rich countries' institutions, in research labs, at the university: refined intellectuals, trained in skepticism and the scientific method. And in fact I don't recall any conversions, nor announcements of miracles, nor enthusiastic declarations. Something happened, however: a very small slip in the balancing of bodies, of words, of perceptions. Nothing more, but enough to recognize oneself as part of a larger experience, of a different perspective from that of disenchantment. The *yagé* nights are not (yet) *ektos leitourgias*, while the rites of capital – elections, TV series, extreme sports, tourism in Antarctica – leave participants in the existential swamp of consumption and spectacle.

When, upon returning from South America, I read Amselle's book I felt annoyed. It's brilliant, witty, refined, and progressive enough. However, he chose to do his research without entering into the experience, limiting himself to observing from outside; a bit like if someone had described Eleusis after a few days at the spa and without setting foot in the *telestesion*. An undoubtedly useful perspective but not well-informed and not very respectful, which in the end obtains only one result: disqualifying the phenomenon. It ends up, therefore, reinforcing the modern cosmovision in its original sin: that of believing itself the only one able to distinguish, once and for all, between true and false, objective and subjective, serious and ridiculous.

Upon returning from Greece, I feel again the same annoyance, this time on a continental scale. The referendum did not have simple answers. At first I rooted for the "no," then the Greeks explained to me that there was no secure political line, no homogeneity between the sides: there were also very good reasons to vote yes and bad reasons to vote no. The neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn voted the same as Syriza. Democracy is also this; and, indeed, it is this above all: a way of not letting ourselves be overwhelmed by the tragic. It seems, however, that in the meantime it has been demoted to a children's game, a pastime for those who have not yet understood, a joke that must not last long. The dark, disenchanting (and, yes, in their case, *mysterious*) adults of the troika are quick and efficient in restoring order: they block, sanction, mock. They stand in the way between the possible and the real. All is resolved in the predicted manner, in the gray and drugged fury of capitalism. Ruined are the European Union, democracy as we thought of it, the political forms that we knew. Cracks open in the fortress walls: air flows in, ghosts escape.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #11. Beyond permitting violence, disenchantment allows for its removal through epistemological blindness.

For the entire 18th Century the best English spirits wondered, with anguish, why in the world enormous herds of miserable and grim ragamuffins were wandering the streets of the richest of all nations. The explanation will be provided by Marx some decades later, through the reconstruction of the enclosures and expropriation as the fundamental methods of surplus value. It required all his effort in order to lift the veil: once the violence of primitive accumulation had done its work, a mythological

machine prevented its being remembered. Human beings have always fled need and sought wealth, declare the classical economists; the industrial ants always survive the Winter, while the grasshoppers die...

It is a specific logic of symbolic domination. To understand its functioning one must disassociate poverty and misery, and stop thinking of them as synonyms: in fact, they are two completely different anthropological conditions. In poverty, the quantity of material goods available is limited but sufficient to satisfy needs because it goes with the unhindered ability to procure what is needed: to cultivate one's own food, to construct one's own home, to be with others in meaningful relationships. Poverty does not, therefore, imply either scarcity or impotence. On the contrary, misery is a state of extreme material necessity combined with an inability to resolve it.

Here is a bitter pill: beyond the market economy and the dynamic of scarcity-value, misery does not exist if not in entirely exceptional situations; it arises with that very wealth that claims to heal it. In theory, need produces wealth in order to eliminate misery; in fact, in order to exist, wealth must first of all produce misery. To complete the picture, in a society where each is forced to think for themselves, no amount of wealth really eliminates the risk of misery. Under capitalist domination poverty disappears, replaced by a chasing in circles of misery and wealth. It is a banality, but it is useful to repeat it: in this dynamic there is nothing natural: the dereliction of some is necessary to the opulence of others; accumulation is the other side of expropriation.

It is a diabolical mechanism, understandable in a clear way only from the outside. In Sub-Saharan Africa whoever accumulates power and wealth without putting it back into circulation, whoever gains the fruits of the work of others is called a "sorcerer" and becomes infamous. It follows, in this logic, that the sorcerer is whoever acts on the basic mechanism of surplus value – and that means *us*, as well. In being the beneficiaries (and victims) of the capitalist dynamic, we had to be sheltered from this *unmasking* understanding that reveals the nexus between the individual psyche, the social unconscious, and structural violence: the most efficient instrument for countering such a revelation was precisely disenchantment, the inquisitorial recall for explanations that stick to the quantifiable, without any hint as to the intentions at play that become, at most, laws of nature.

It arouses indeed suspicion that the taboo on enchantment comes into play just as the historical process of modernity begins to produce spectres and nightmares on an industrial scale: *the world becomes populated with ghosts and no one can talk about them anymore.*

An approximate and moody repertoire is enough to clarify the extent of the damage: it is the ghosts of the expropriated communities, of the burned witches, of the *indios*, of the Africans thrown in water during the Atlantic trade, of the soldiers in the trenches, of the disheartened workers, of the women killed by Caesarean sections; it is the spirits of the animals and of the plants reduced to appropriable material, the regrets for the myriad delicate links severed by the “storm that we call progress”; it is the psychic traces, in the survivors, of violence seen, suffered or made to suffer; it is the replies learned through shock, violation, and breakings, the traumas that descend through generations; the nightmares born from low-intensity exterminations in the colonies, in concentration camps, in “ethnic” massacres, in torture chambers, in necropolitics; it is the waves of panic radiated by the smart bombs; it is the traces of slavery, of patriarchy, or wartime rape and tourism rape; it is the shame of having been there, of having assisted it; it is the grave-less dead of contemporary trafficking. It is the aspirations, the desires, the utopias of the misfits of the world-as-it-is. All these are *modern* histories, that can be publicly narrated only as local and circumscribed excesses, of an otherwise good and triumphal process. And all are ghost stories.

There were many, and they become ever more. Domination creates spectrality; wherever it presents itself, the ghost is the trace of a repressed violence. Moreover, as Freud noted, removal is not a once-and-for-all event, but a process that requires constant expenditure of energy because what is repressed tends to move forcefully towards consciousness. To the original violence must, therefore, follow another, of less moment but unceasing, to maintain the repression. The ghost is the continuation of violence, it appears at the point where remembrance and repression oppose each other to testify that *we, too*, are among those overwhelmed by that violence.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #12. And yet the ghosts howl, drag chains, move furniture during the night. How is it possible to ignore them? Only those who have spent a long time training themselves to be insensitive and cynical can, or in other words *us*, with our freedom and

our endless enjoyments. Our concern for whoever “sees things that are not there” (Marian apparitions, for example, or else *jinn*s, or the spirits of the forest) masks the fact that, very often, we do not see what is actually there: the violence, the cynicism, the exploitation, the destruction. As its third zone of action, the disenchantment-device severs the attachments that link human beings to the world; this causes the collapse of the individual onto themselves that produces *the sovereign subject*.

It is one of the modern paradoxes that, in order to understand the subject, one must refer to the paradigm of sovereignty. This comes about, in the human sphere, as imitation and transposition of the cosmic sovereignty – made of spirits, gods, forces, ancestors, etc. – that regulate the life of many egalitarian groups. Sovereign is that person who, as the cosmic power, can arbitrarily commit violence without being the object of sanctions and is, therefore, the quintessential *ab-solutus* subject, freed from the constraints that regulate the life of others. Not for nothing do aspiring sovereigns typically exhibit their credentials by committing grave violations of the worldly order (assassinations, incest, mass murders), thus qualifying themselves as fearsome. Sad passions, and especially fear, are the royal road to dominion.

This sets up an inexhaustible conflict between king and subjects in which the first tends to impose his will in exercising violence with impunity and the others seek to limit the damage by distancing the king from the rest of society through a series of prohibitions, taboos, and interdictions. This is the so-called *adverse sacralization*, whose logic manifests itself, likewise, in paradoxical forms: the taboos imposed on the king to keep him at a safe distance are also what confirms him as more-than-human, until we reach that Gordian knot of rite and politics, symbolic violence and material violence, that is regicide. Court etiquette, which constrains and puts limits on the actions of the sovereign, is also the sign of maximum distinction. The place, at once inaccessible and inescapable, where the sovereign is confined, takes the appearance of a miniature paradise, a utopian enclave where the fundamental dilemmas of human life seem, at least temporarily, to be suspended. As in the tale of the young Siddhartha Gautama, aging, illness and death must not penetrate the palace, and, in contrast to everyone else, the king cannot die: he can be assassinated by regicide, sacrificed for fertility, suppressed with discretion by his attendants, he can “depart for the lands of ancestors,” or transform himself into an effigy, but the simplicity of death as an outcome of life is precluded to him.

The institution of sovereignty inherits these paradoxes, starting with the fact that any juridical order is founded on illegal and often violent acts: the great transgressor is also the guarantor of the law. In the transition of sovereignty from the person of the king to an entity called “the people,” things have not improved: in many crucial circumstances of political life, it is very difficult to distinguish the sovereign people, entitled to make laws, from a riotous mass. Moreover, as noted Lord Kames, the difference between absolute despotism, where all are equally subject to sovereign violence, and absolute democracy is one crowned man: when his head is cut off, royalty falls like rain on others without losing its double character as utopia and violence. So it happened that, in the profound modification of the relationships between subjects under capitalist regime, a crumb of royalty was conceded to all. Not only because we all vote and because each, within the *hortus conclusus* of their own subjectivity, is king; but above all because, as sovereigns, we are carriers of characteristics at once desirable and frightening.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #6. The first time I felt it was in Rome, on the sidewalk of the Termini station, and then all around the city. It presented itself at certain points in Paris and London, but more uncertainly, frayed; in Naples, too, in a solid and disquieting form. And now here. As if the force of gravity were stronger and increased the weight of things, of the sky, of my own body. A space in the form of a funnel that can be climbed only with difficulty. The lines of force converge, the event horizon tightens. In Rome I lose track of the existence of any other place: my city, the rest of my life, the urgency of facts in the world, they all fade. Only the present moment remains, the cobblestone on which I walk, the delight of rounding a corner. It is a splendid sensation; one I know I have to tear myself away from. If I lived here, I would do nothing but live here. If it's paradise, it is not yet its time.

Now I feel it again, stronger because unexpected. “Square” says too much and too little. Crossroad of the flows of humans, goods, and desires that intertwine the city, as in ordinary squares the space opens, and indeed here it opens wide, unconfined, and blinding, to meet the alleyways that surround it. But not with an elegance of stones, nor with a voltage of volumes. This square is a slice of the undefined without recognizable form, whose sparse borders do not appease the gaze. There is no tonic

note, or perhaps I don't know how to feel it. As in Borges' tale on the two labyrinths, that without limits, barriers, and directions is also the more dangerous one.

The gathering of the dead, the mosque of nothing. Make your choice, tourist, and if you persist long enough you could end up understanding something. Anyway I miss the first appointment: we arrive for the first time in mid-afternoon, when the taxi leaves us at one of its many corners. I look without paying attention, taken by the search for the address which we have to go to. *I don't see anything*. Only a lot of emptiness, overwhelming sun, people in slow transit. In the shadowy labyrinth of neighborhoods, I feel more at home.

It takes us a few hours to recover from the train ride. An anomalous heat wave is prolonging the Summer suffering of Morocco; in the second class car, overfilled and without air conditioning, it was well over 40 centigrade. The complaints of the local travelers gave our own suffering a somewhat more objective appearance. Climate change, that at our latitudes inspire a still largely metaphysical fear, is already a daily threat here. Five liters of water, brought along in an excess of zeal, were already gone in sweat when the voyage was not yet half over.

When the train entered the semi-arid area around Marrakesh, the landscape changed. Not yet desert, but already full of all that the Western imaginary projects onto the desert: the absence of life, the wealth of minerals, drying heat, the sand, the laziness, a slow danger, a sense of the absolute. A landscape of the soul for the fathers of Christianity, in the desert you can get lost, or you can go crazy, just as in the thick of the forest. Or you can find yourself in a community without a king and in a higher health, in the messianic part of the Apocalypse.

It's hard to tell. In the unbelievable streak of catastrophes that was the making of *Fitzcarraldo*, there is that of having *really* deforested and cleared a hill between two Amazon rivers in order to drag a ship from one to the other. A quarter-century later Werner Herzog published his notes of the epoch with the title *The Conquest of the Useless*. It took him all that time to re-open the notebooks, written in such a tiny handwriting that he himself had trouble deciphering. Neither a report nor a true diary, the author describes them as "internal landscapes, born in the delirium of the jungle." They may as well have been born in the desert, among dunes cleared to allow a gas pipeline to run. But in the jungle, as in the desert, it is always

the white man that becomes delirious, quick to blame on the climate the madness that he must spit out when something exceeds his measure.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #13. The sovereign subject of modernity is the autonomous individual that we have all, for four centuries, been held to be, the personage hypothesized by law, economics, and the great novels of the bourgeois era. Self-centered, self-sufficient, in full possession of his rational capacities, in a waking state, identical to himself; who finds in himself – and not in relationships, in the cosmos, in the gods – his reason for being; who enters with others into solely exterior relationships, with a view to satisfying his own interests, solely responsible for his own existence, and owner of the enjoyments connected to it.

This form of subjectivity is born from a curious ethical overturning that closely recalls the transgressions of the aspiring sovereigns. At the dawns of capitalism, the vices (selfishness, jealousy, competition, cupidity, avarice) begin to seem the only realistic force acting in the world, incomparably stronger and more propulsive than virtues (benevolence, humility, frugality, attention, temperance, courage). What, according to other social formations, makes the beauty and fullness of life, becomes in modernity the way of stagnation and of boredom. There is no need to resort to the old trick of twisted human nature. If vices seem more propulsive than virtues, it is because everything around us is organized to make them triumph.

In all this, once again, disenchantment plays a key role. The semantic fields are not generated by accident: beyond “deaf to the voices of the world,” *disenchanted* also means “little inclined to trust, to altruism, to kindness.” It is they who pull straight for their own road without looking anyone in the face, who refuse to feel, who read in the world only narrow-mindedness. Capitalist domination prevents us from being magnanimous, courageous, and temperate so as to make laughable the words themselves that express these ideas. Silence of the world and sad passions intertwine in a single word.

From the sovereignty of the king the modern individual inherits a certain degree of utopian privilege: he enjoys the well-being produced by structural conditions that oblige others to work for him. He disposes of a very high power of access to the forces that govern life on earth (money, passport, medicine, technological gadgets) and of a certain individual

sacredness, and is not bound by any constraints of reciprocity. What makes him dangerous in his relations with his subjects – both the internal ones (the drives, the emotions, all that which in us is not sovereign reason) and the external ones (wilderness, animals, children, trees, deviants, wives, servants, the poor) – is that he feels superior and, therefore, in the right, and having a duty, to impose his will.

Two traits illustrate well the royal ascendance, utopian and frightful, of the modern subject. The first is his isolation from the world, at once protection from dangers and legitimation of indifference. Secure in his prestige and technologically empowered, made strong by his relationship with money, the sole depository of conscience, of knowledge, of intention and sense, the modern individual is solipsistic. The regulation of relationships between subjects is not thought of as an interconnection, but in terms of law and rights, and these are solely concerned with the individual, as evidenced by the difficulty of guaranteeing protection to “non-human persons” and the deafness of judges and lawyers to community rights. As already happened between humans and non-humans, a vacuum is created between individuals as well. The State and the market organize them as *already separated*, ripped from the relational fabric of life; the threads that connect people in ecological textures of meaning disappear, replaced by a single, invisible steel cable that binds everyone to money and to the market. The wealth of an individual is the sum of the things that he can do without negotiating them with others. This absence of attachments is called freedom.

The second zone where the sovereign ascendance reveals itself in all its tragic reality is the impossibility of dying. Not very sensitive to the delicate nature of relationships, including the relation to one’s own body, and unaware of himself up to the point of falling ill, the sovereign subject is terrorized by death because it shatters the only possible meaning: that of the individual life, of dominion over things and of enjoyment. Every change of status is a loss, because such a life cannot imagine for itself any future that is not its infinite continuation. Death is, therefore, unthinkable, subtracted from the cultural process, left wild and abandoned. This is why we are struck, every time, by the tranquility with which other collectives think about it, practice it, and approach it as a way toward a good life.

Even here, however, we should make distinctions. The neurotic opposition of life and death hides the fact that by “death” we mean two

very different things: the end of biological individual life; and annihilation, or the destruction of the conditions that make it possible to live. Among the human collectives that maintain contact with the relational textures of the world, the end of biological life is not an annihilation but a passage, a transition, something which a good life prepares us for, because the good life itself is nothing other than the capacity to navigate transformations. If we, instead, fear death to the point of bartering away every freedom in exchange for mere survival, it is because death as an end of individual life crowns the annihilation that already surrounds us and that we are experimenting in life as a relational desert, as coercion, depression, loneliness, and cruelty.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #7. In the evening we return to the square to eat fish at a stand suggested by the landlady. A Parisian expat, she lives in the building next door to the bed & breakfast together with her eight or nine-year old son. While we were pointing out her door, a neighborhood kid warned us: the child we were going to meet doesn't have a father. It can't be easy to here live as a single mother, not even with the protection of a European passport; she tells us, however, that she has been in Morocco for more than twenty years and that, when she returns to France, she can't stand the degeneration of manners, the petty aggressiveness, the shop windows. The house in which she takes in guests seems to have survived the last forty years of decay, a residue of another way of traveling: a scent of incense and patchouli, memories of years of cats and psychedelic explorers and double-decker buses. The bed & breakfast gave rise to a small local economy that includes an elderly woman neighbor, a cleaning woman, and a certain number of suppliers. In the kitchen, on the long marble sink, there is always a full lawn of fresh mint. Around the sitting room, from which we can see the sky, rise two floors of rooms of varying geometry. Ours, the landlady tells us in apologetic tones, still has no air conditioner, tomorrow another room will be freed up, if we want... but we don't, the contrast with the heat outside would end up knocking us over. On the question of energy and climate our chats take another turn.

In the last light of day, the food stands are still pretty empty. Behind a wooden wall, while cooking, the cooks sing and yell rhythmically in chorus, as the square spectacle demands. We sit alone at one of the long wooden and metal tables, order and then, while waiting, watch the square.

At nightfall something changes, gravity splashes up high. The scene is impressive. They have already said it all, and then filmed it all, narrated, photographed, documented. I can't do anything other than repeat the words of others, take pictures already seen, it's like getting excited about the Grand Canal. On the ground there appears every merchandise category visible and invisible. I feel a morbid fascination for the rows of whole teeth arranged with taxidermist care on trays of copper and for the enormous pliers that lay next to them; for the tools of divination, when I can recognize them; and also for the trained monkeys and the snakes to be charmed. How embarrassing, I fall for all the exotic tricks, and here they come: magicians, travelling storytellers, boxers as well, a little further on in the crowded void of the square. The smoke from the kitchens rises thickly over the restaurant sector and, like a fog, moves slowly above the buzz of an enormous crowd.

Beyond the square and the colonial avenue, the huge minaret of the Koutoubia rises well-lit like a sign of the One, at once threatening and reassuring. On this side of the road, in the shapeless spaces of this opening, the multiplicity, the non-unified, the center-less spreads out. They say that, compared to what it was half-century ago, the Jemaa el Fna is today very domesticated. It must then have had the gravity of a black hole.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #14. Devoid of support, due to being a monad, the individual can rest only on himself and on the market. Forced to maintain himself in the sole posture that allows him to respond to the dictates of surplus value and continue to enjoy his privileges, the modern subject is *monophasic*, knows and is authorized to practice only one form of experience and consciousness. Thus imprisoned, he takes comfort in telling himself that his cage is superior to all others, and sufficient to provide access to everything existing, to the true and the just. Every other way of experience is thereby declassified to a form of disorder and madness. His psychic stability depends on it.

The long training to never look at what happens on the fringes of the illuminated world also includes the inability to think about experiences that go outside of the ordinary state of things and of instrumental reason. This subject is, therefore, unable to move in the shadowy zone of the not-yet-known, in ontological instability, in uncertainty, in non-ordinary processes of experience. No shadow line to cross, for the modern

sovereign subjects, no contact with what transcends ordinary structuring, with the non-human, with what precedes and exceeds us; nothing more of what brings the living to experiment with new forms of relationships and to co-become with the world in a creative manner. The risk of losing privileges is too high, for those who venture on the wild side. This is why, as moderns, we had to learn to ignore our dreams, to keep a distance from every transformative relationship, to fear intuitions, and to consider children, madmen, dying people and prophets as *minus habens*; to ignore synchronicities, the uncanny, and analogy; to forget the joy of revolutions and of loves. If we still experience these things, as moderns we are held to have no use for them: not to think about them, not to explore them, not to grasp the otherwise they bring with them.

This self-identity leads to the impossibility of experience, because experience is nothing but *knowledge of transformation* (and, conversely, there is no knowledge that is not transformative). There do not exist transitions in our world, there are no meaningful thresholds, but only accumulations of always-identical, masses of uniform time: the ideal is that of the productive adult that seeks out the latest gadget, of the student in eternal training, of the mono-cultural individual capable of dwelling only within the narrow habitat determined by the demands of production and today largely digitalized. No choice that is not preordained, no critical threshold; all must happen in the name of the One, of continuity, of uniformity. The spleen of the romantics is justified: we are not nostalgic of a past Eden, but of the possibility of the otherwise. Even though it is easy to confuse them.

It is worth saying that the effort was titanic: it took centuries of disciplinary power and of alienation to obtain individuals hardened enough to reach the other beings of the world only through the invisible mediation of the market; to reach them, that is, as commodities, or at best as business partners. It is not easy to separate human beings from each other, from their dreams, from the attachments that give meaning to the world. First you have to isolate them, by severing their bonds. In this first phase, violence is the most productive force and must be immediately forgotten. Then they have to be kept apart, preventing them from reconstructing their links. Applied from the start to disarticulate the existing worlds, violence is then employed to avoid the recomposition of humans into collectives that seek self-determination (the periodic labour crises are, from this point of view, exemplary). And since humans tend spontaneously

to establish relationships and to move along unpredictable paths, it is necessary to intercept and deflect this movement before it takes form, providing in return the benefits that come from structural violence and the utopia of a life without pain. The totalizing efficiency of capitalism lay also in its capacity to present itself as the sole horizon of desirability. Here modernity's most peculiar trick enters the scene: *the perversion of enchantment to reinforce disenchantment.*

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #8. At the end of the dinner, Simona takes me for a stroll among the crowd, to pick up sounds and buzzing, then she suddenly chooses - she wants to listen to a musical group whose front man is pitching to the crowd, evidently in an effective way. He talks, smiles, blandishes, and invites until enough human mass is gathered around the musicians and enough monetary mass is in his hands. Thus begins our encounter with the *halqa*, the fluctuating space that enables an action, a science, an effect to happen, that performers manage with an iron grip as a part of their office. It works like the gravitational field of a celestial body: more labile around the edges, where those passing by can choose either to let themselves fall onto it or to go off on a tangent; denser the more one moves toward the inside of the ring of spectators, where seats are often available for ladies, westerners and highly regarded guests; very dense at the center, in the scenic circle that the performers fill with promises.

We understand nothing of what the front man says, save for some French words addressed right at us but intended, as is evident from the smiles, to everyone else. He treats the money that the public puts in his hand as something different from a mere general equivalent: the coins and rarer bills seem to be active objects, whirlwinds that energize the event. Even without understanding his words, his ability to speak, to move, to make it go around is clear. Maybe money is by its very nature already active, maybe it is activated in the passage from those who wait for the event and he who promises; or maybe it is the most magical object among all those that exist and have existed. It takes a long time: between the gathering of the magic substance and the beginning of the music there are pauses, silences, movements, exits and returns. In any European piazza people would leave, but not here. It is another way of inhabiting time. Each time the music begins in surprise, like a spring that suddenly jumps, according to signs and rhythms that we don't know how to read. The percussionists stay to one side of the *halqa*, with the

derbuka and other smaller instruments; the other musicians wander around the scene with the *gimbri*, the *otari*, the *oud*. They are dressed in tunics and slippers according to the canons of a masculine elegance that, for the first time, I find gorgeous.

Energized by the wait, the money, the charm of the front man, the music in turn triggers something else, unexpected and shocking. Only one of the ensemble members is entirely dressed in a Western style: older than the others, he wears a white shirt, tie, black suit and leather shoes. Until now he remained on the sidelines, a dark spot seated next to the percussionists. In the semiconscious part of my mind I had dismissed him as the impresario of the group, precisely because of his city attire. But now, toward the end of the tune, when the whole crowd is taken by the rhythm, he bursts up and with an unexpected energy takes over the scene. He moves in jerky motions, like a puppet, rigid and furious gestures of his forearm, legs, neck and contracted face. It lasts maybe a minute or two, then the music ends and everyone returns quietly to the edge of the scenic circle, where they drink, smile lightly, and exchange a few whispered words.

What have we just seen?

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #15. Isolation induces sad passions. People can be maintained in it only by providing them, in exchange, something sneaky and powerful: “dreamlike images” and cheap enjoyment, the guarantee of a shot. It is the aura of commodities described by Marx, the semi-hypnotic state of clients in the supermarkets, the phantasmagoria of shop windows, the call of the touchscreens, the social prestige of cocaine, the widespread and immediate availability of doping supplements of every kind.

If, as some hypothesize, the propensity to toxic addiction derives from an initial trauma, then modern addiction derives from the loss of the voice of the world. Here is a *toxicological hypothesis*: one of the fundamental levers of modern dominion is the addiction of the subjects to a complex system of rapid gratification, largely available and cheap. Not everywhere in the same way or with the same methods. Where there were frontiers to be opened and lands destined for quantitative exploitation, the modern invasion encouraged the most destructive forms of addiction, and the long-term effects of the traumas thus produced are still very visible. Where instead there is a need to extract innovation, toxic capture focuses

on gratifying with repeatable enjoyment on demand. The pleasure they induce has nothing to do with the accidents that dot biographies, or with what is common to human beings: in the cult without respite of capital, nothing works better than binding producers to an endless repetition of the same gratifying action. What is lost is the very meaning of individual destiny, and, with it, the opening of the imaginary, the sacred, the tragic, the encounter with limit.

Moving through neuro-physiological canals indistinguishable from those for pain, pleasure is the issue. It's the brain, and therefore the whole of the subject, that discriminates the meaning of the signal in relation to the experience. Aristotle describes pleasure as "what naturally goes with an unhindered activity." There is a political power in this definition that associates pleasure with *physis*, that is, with the "way of becoming" of whoever experiences it, whatever her form of life. One *arrives* at pleasure and life itself is pleasurable when unhindered. In order to transform this pleasure of fullness into repeatable discharges, you need to manipulate the physiological circuit inserting into it an artificial shortcut; process, realization and meaning are gotten around by acting directly on the receptors. Pleasure as discharge, as coercion and as anesthetic is a means of capture: something acts on the brain as a separate organ, outside the context of experience, and induces a sensation of contentment. This pleasure-discharge separates the subject from itself, and makes it the servant of its own physiology. It is an autistic *passage to the act*, endlessly repeatable and disanimating, that requires the sacking of the world. It is produced by an intelligence of destruction, a "dark knowledge" from which we must protect ourself.

The case of sugar is exemplary. Correlated to a number of metabolic alterations, its widespread presence in the European diet begins in the 16th Century and increases in parallel with industrialization, carrying out two principal functions: the first is to include the masses in the dream of progress through access to a substance previously reserved to elites; the second is compensatory: its consumption makes bearable the worsening of conditions of life brought about by industrialization and the moralizing campaigns. If we now add that factory discipline made its first appearance in the sugarcane plantations, the circle closes and we can link the enjoyment of some to the exploitation of others. The same can be said for tobacco, coffee and cocoa as well.

These lessons will bear fruit in the 20th Century with the widespread use of substances to make living conditions bearable, stop dissident movements, improve performances. Today daily life itself depends on their availability: we take them for work, for studying, for fun, for sex, for reproduction or non-reproduction, for sleeping or for waking up. Halfway between pharmaceuticals, drugs, and supplements, the substances are *ordinary*, permitting our daily functioning. Devoided of the sacred, transformative, or initiating aspects, it had, or has, among other groups, their taking has lost its tie to existential and political dissidence it used to have in certain periods and movement. Today it is not a question of psychoanalytical experimentation, but of adjusting to the rhythms of production and consumption. The demonization of substances in public discourse is the other side of their banal and widespread use.

As with sugar, pornography too is a powerful illustration of this mechanism. Abolishing every intermediary space between ordinary life and sexual performance, it is an endlessly staged passage to the act. As unspeakable as it is pervasive, vehicle of a patriarchal and violent imaginary, its grasp has something extreme about it: for how it flattens, makes uniform and bends to profit one of the most crucial and delicate zones of the imaginary; for the immediate coincidence of pleasure and consumption; for the construction of the intimate as a zone of inspection and abuse; and finally, ironically, for the liberatory pretensions in which it cloaks itself. In this case as well, a façade of moralism (liberalizing or repressive that it may be) and addictive drives go arm in arm, exhausting the relational and transformative potential of eroticism. Just as surplus value exhausts use, surplus enjoyment exhausts passion.

Never was the stimulus-response circuit of contentment so fundamental as in the current mode of production. It is something we should keep in mind when reflecting on the other worlds that are possible for us. As modern subjects, we depend on the availability of doping substances and on coercive behaviors; to arrive at other ways of existence, we must pass through a true detoxification.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #9. We move away from the *halqa* to walk around the square again. The Western-dressed man has returned to the stage another couple of times, always toward the end of the music, very able in playing his part. I leave with a sense of disquiet.

After a few steps, Simona tells me her head is spinning: maybe it's the fried fish, or the enchanting sound of the *gimbri*, or the chaotic whole of smells, incense smokes, and odors of burned herbs that inundate the square. Or maybe it's the diving into such a different space, with the echo of still other spaces, further to the East, further to the South. From whence comes the power of this place?

Up to 1912 in Marrakesh the prices of slaves were negotiated. *The Rough Guide to Morocco* informs me, in great detail, which part of the market was used to sell human beings that the Arab traffickers had captured among the Bantu peoples, in the Eastern Sahara, in Central Asia, and, up to the 16th Century, also in Southern Europe. It is a somewhat secluded gallery, quite dark and cavernous, where today you walk past piles of not very attractive carpets. Some slaves attained positions of power, others were freed by grateful masters, but obviously most of them were consumed working day and night in the various possible *corvée* that built the splendor of the Sultans' palaces. That traffic remains in the emotional tone of the city: the smell of the prisoner and that of the master left their scent when the two of them faced each other in the market, their pheromones sticking to the stones, to the streets and to the temples until many following generations have finished breathing them in.

Who knows if the Rough Guide volume dedicated to the United States signals with as much detail the dozens of places where, as a part of daily life, the auctioning of African men and women destined for the plantations or for domestic service took place. Written for knowledgeable ecologically and socially concerned tourists, the guide also advises against encouraging those spectacles in the square that employ animals, and wastes some lines describing their sad fate. It is a well-made series where, *when still at home*, I find everything I would like to know. But I really get somewhere only when an unexpected pain hits me: anguish for the short equatorial shadows, rage over the epic of conquerors, terror of the threshold. This time it is these short-lived serpents with their pulled teeth that convey to me an entirely physical idea of slavery.

From a certain point of view, it is always the same story: it doesn't matter how far away, splendid, or exotic is the place that you come to, just scratch the surface and every time there will emerge the sediments of a complicated and massacre-filled past. Tales of subjection, of slavery, of deportation, of domination; groups against groups, kings against kings,

sovereign against subjects, violence that reverberates for centuries, mausoleums for the powerful and sand for anyone else. There is a stable and ruinous logic of domination that almost all of the groups of humans have explored to its extreme consequences. Nothing gives me as much discomfort as to rediscover, time after time, that capitalism is only the latest offspring of an endless genealogy of horror.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #16. However, even this autistic subject, sovereign and intoxicated, can sometimes feel themselves moved, and not know why. The nostalgia that we feel when something distracts us from our occupations signals a state of the world that we have never seen, but that we still can sense. Maybe its place is the *notte salva* (“salvaged night”) in which there will be neither violence nor expectation of salvation, or maybe it is the arcadia of a life in which *nomos* no longer means “appropriation, partition, pasture” but instead “pasture, music, temperament.” Nostalgia for ourselves and our happy futures: if trees could talk, we ourselves would be something else.

Roots of every anti-modern resistance and remembrance of happiness, nostalgia is a place where a crucial struggle occurs. The *dream of a world* that it inspires is dangerous for the machine of surplus value and must be knocked out by a *world of dream*. In the trajectory that brings about coercion and doping we still find, at times, a sort of residue, a search for initiation and for wholeness that tells a different story and beckons to the possibility of becoming – a possibility immediately misled, inconclusive. Nostalgia is one of the crossroads in which the modern regime organizes its most effective ambushes.

Marx had already said it: modernity presents itself as disenchanted only to better sneak in its own enchantment, the phantasmagoric becoming-world of commodities that corresponds to the becoming-commodities of humans, of the earth, of living things. It is a concentrational universe: it has formal dominion when those forced to live in the world of capital still have memories, experiences, desires and the possibility of access to a non-capitalist world; it has real or total dominion when capital reaches a level of concentration such that everyone that lives inside it no longer has any memory, experience, desire, or possibility of access to a non-capitalist world. Existentially, it is a permanent state of *stasis*, in the Hippocratic sense of “blockage, stagnation, congestion.” It is captivity in a unique

form that, precisely because it lacks an exterior, makes things sclerotic and rigid. If enough time is passed inside its walls, it is difficult to leave them, to return to bearing the risk and ambiguity of non-concentrational worlds. This is, to a large extent, the present situation: every opening, every moving together with another must be intercepted, banned or locked up; nostalgia must be sidetracked through the administering of enchantment surrogates; the magical power of capital must be made invisible. The enterprise of vaccinating the imagination, as with Hollywood and Netflix, is as necessary as that of material enslavement.

Modernity is the enchantment that sweeps away every other enchantment. Magically posing itself as the only reality, it turns everything that is not itself into a ghost, making it nonexistent, inactive, or monstrous. *Total* enchantment, which captures the soul as much as the body, subjugates both the physiological and the imaginary. In its refusal of every non-quantifiable and of every non-objectifiable existence, disenchantment is a powerful magical scheme that isolates all from all, legitimizing the epistemologies of blindness and the ontologies of dissociation. It *a priori* forbids imagining alternatives to a catastrophic world and to our own unhappiness, offering us candies while whispering softly in our ears: *that's just the way it is...*

Here is the black magic of disenchantment unveiled: it serves to capture all capacity for change in the circuit of surplus value. Cunning, dream, inventiveness, *rêverie*, courage, exploration, are only viable in economic form, to open up new paths of exploitation; the place nostalgia points to can be visited only as spectators. To the *stasis* of the subjects is counterposed the phenomenal dynamism of money, an inanimate object capable of reproducing itself in bank vaults and of changing itself, literally, into anything. Thus, while the system is continually busy in a perverse polymorphism that changes its look while leaving its engine unaltered, the becoming of the subject is precluded. The power of the living is transferred to money. It is a full-scale vampirization.

If, as Baudelaire thought, the best trick of the devil is having convinced us of his own inexistence, then disenchantment is the decisive trick of modern illusionism. Its sacred validity prevents us from realizing that magical capture is working on us. We don't see it, we don't feel it, we cannot even hypothesize its existence. Phantasmagorias, aura of commodities, fetishism, universal expositions, shots, advertizing, packaging, spectacle, are all *tricks*. This is why early modernity hunted out of its square

magicians, witches, and charlatans, reckoning them dangerous because too similar to its own illusionists.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #10. I suspect that my traveling companion's malaise is a sort of vertigo. Too many different things all together, the impossibility of figuring it all out. On her first trip outside of Europe, she attracts the sympathy of the local ladies because, they unanimously say, she looks like one of them. We leave the square, we cross the street among groups of young men out to get some fresh air in the evening and we go to sit down under the minaret. It looks like a bell tower and that is something worth noting, an *axis mundi* that puts some order into the swirl of things. Uncertain, caught between cowardice and fascination, in the shadow of the phallogocentric minaret we realise that as liberated women we are really shoddy: some unknown rhythm, some snake charmer, and immediately we run under the skirt of the One... We talk about protections: a scarf, a bracelet, a coin; then a certain way of looking, of tying your hair up, of passing to the side. Unknown memories that trickle down from preceding generations.

Then we sit in silence. From the back room of the memory come flowing out images of *Les maîtres fous* together with a strange expression: "theatre of possession." In the fifties, Jean Rouch filmed, at Accra, in Ghana, a ritual of possession originally from Niger and practiced by poor migrants in the city. In the Hauka ceremonies the participants mime, in a state of trance, the roles, movements, and parades of the colonizers – British in this case. It is, at the same time, an imitation of colonial power, a making fun of colonials, an attempt to incorporate their vital force, and a means of acquiring status in the society of the whites. According to Rouch it is a clever mental health device: to give body (*one's own body*) to the ghosts that haunt the social space, for the time of a rite and in a safe context, is a refined way of working out the risk of going crazy (together with that of committing suicide and to be taken by a frenzy for escape), that always run among the oppressed. *Drapetomania*, obsession for escape: this was the psychiatric diagnosis that in the late 19th Century fell on the black slaves of the American plantations who, inexplicably, sought every opportunity to run away. Maybe even the mad movements of the man in black seen this evening was a form, however minimal, of the theatre of possession.

Nothing revolutionary in the current sense of the term, here, nothing that might overthrow domination: black skins and white masks, subordination, exploitation and the make-up table of (post)colonialism remain unchanged. Maybe it is a safety valve to avoid the worst, an intelligent dance on a limit that has the weight of the planet; or a survival, the unforeseen outcome of the history that passed through here. And that passed even further north: I think of the great madmen – Nietzsche, Warburg, Artaud, Simondon – mapmakers of the ethnic schizophrenia of our world, seismographers of the tremors of what we must not speak of in public, and that, despite this, continues to grip us. Would they have met a better fate, if they could have raved properly? Or was their folly the only possible health in a schizoid world? And who knows if the BDSM so widespread in our part of the world is not also a theatre of possession: maybe by openly staging domination and its roles, it helps our survival in the symbolic and material order of patriarchal violence that still rules our world. Perhaps it also allows the slaves that we are – and, in turns, the masters that we are – to see ourselves in all our obscenity.

We don't speak of this, Simona and I, in the shadow of the Koutoubia, but of little things that allow us to stay and to move. When we begin our walk again, we greet and thank the minaret (that, incidentally, is very beautiful). In the following days, we will not return there again.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #17. For a couple of centuries, the rise of modernity is triumphal. The most haunting ghosts still live across the oceans, or are placated with philanthropy and colonial drugs. Romanticism is caged in the segregated space of art: those who can't stand it join the revolutionaries, the others will be consumed by nostalgia.

The breaking point arrives together with the triumphal peak: in the Age of Empires something cracks, an abyssal double crisis, ethical and cognitive, opens in modernity which we have never really left behind. Under the frivolous atmosphere of the Belle Époque something disquieting is happening, ready for the most drastic revision of modern project: it's the specters of communism and of revolution; the ghosts produced by a knowledge and a subjectivity that could no longer count on their own foundations; and those bringing with them a scent of violence from across the oceans. The generations born after 1870 began again to speak with

ghosts, they seek any sign of multiplicity, and threaten a complete anthropological subversion, economic, cognitive, and ethical.

Up to 1914 the flowering is magnificent. The sciences, to begin with, welcome theories that bring multiplicity with them, theories of the incompleteness at the heart of the cognitive enterprise, elaborating models of inflexible and elegant vision. Some among the more refined intellectuals begin to study the non-Western traditions, finding them to be indispensable. Many return to explore the imaginary, to admit and to experiment in different forms of experience, to pay attention to dreams, to go beyond the limits. A magmatic *koiné* thickens in those years, ambiguous and multiple, capable of glimpsing the invisible and of addressing it. It is the moment in which, in the history of modernity, we came closest to re-enchanting the world.

The ghosts haunting Europe in those decades open up such tangible and dangerous possibilities as to require the most drastic remedies. It is not enough to block the revolution that announces itself, it is also necessary to burn the terrain on which it grows: the madness of the most radical researchers prefigures and parallels the destruction that is about to take place. To *détourner le spectre* comes what some historians have called the Thirty Years War of the 20th Century. Among the trenches and the fields of extermination, in just a few years' time, every human measure of events is disintegrated: with the transfer of technical means of progress to war come the lost generations, the mustard gas, propaganda, the destruction of cities, Zyklon B, the atomic bomb. The "other knowledges" that were forming are enslaved, destroyed or exiled; techniques of military control of populations are finally applied on European soil as well; totalitarisms carry out the most extreme and systematic enterprise of "reduction to one" ever to occur.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #11. Half a kilometer from the entrance to the city we take a wrong turn and instead of heading towards Bašcaršija we find ourselves driving along the side of a hill. The space of a bend and the sight of the roofs of Alifakovac that we see below, with the houses perched overhanging and the trees that weave around the rocks, make my heart skip a beat or, rather, make it sink into another element, that recognizes without ever having known. It is something that, as I already know, I must

not try to figure out. In that moment a part of me – one of the many souls that we are made of – separates itself to remain and live in Sarajevo.

Scattered over the hillsides, the neighborhoods look out at each other, all converging toward the river and the market. The complicated viability of these streets does not disconcert me. Its logic is the same I learned in Genoa, a city of all the unconscious, in the semicircle of hills beside the port. To orient myself I give to the Sarajevo neighborhoods the names of the Genoese ones, but, instead of going out, my fascination grows.

Put together, they tell us, Cristina and I develop a burning intellectual passion for historical horrors. Maybe it is due to the work we do together, to the tales of Libya and of the Balkans route we have gathered up over the years, or due to the suspicion that the current state of the world is even worse than we assume. We visit an exposition on War Childhood, the Museum of the Crimes against Humanity and of the Genocide of 1992-1995, an exposition dedicated to the massacre at Srebrenica, and to distract us, the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the end we can't take it anymore. We use the Wi-Fi of our Ottoman style bed & breakfast to understand something of the conflict, of the infinitely complicated chessboard of languages, religions and political memberships, of European, American, Russian, and Turkish aims after the implosion of the USSR.

Every afternoon, around two, a downpour refreshes the air and forces us to get another Turkish coffee at the bar. We spend most of the time walking up and down the Baščaršija, the physical and focal centre of the town, to which something keep on drawing us. Here the traces of gunfire can hardly be seen now, but just leave and walk up to the neighborhoods and the bullet holes on the walls, the density of the graveyards, and the dates – almost always the same – inscribed on the white headstones, are there to recall, without frills, the recent history.

Further up, along the river, we observe the horrendous new buildings of international banks and large hotel chains, springing up like mushrooms to recall to the vanquished the duties of subjection; still further up is the first section of the highway to Mostar, of rare desolation. All of the development that the EU catapults on the neighboring states does not even lick the wounds, it provides no answer, and no direction. Despite this developmentalist havoc, the city is still a marvel of views, of timbres, of stubbornness.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #18. Here modernity tries its most extreme trick. After having silenced the world, destroyed multiplicity, made the subject autistic and barred access to the imaginary through phantasmagoria and doping, in the moment of maximum peril it adventures among the waves and the ghosts of the social unconscious to put them to service. It forays into the realm of shadows to channel its power in the same way it has dominated the power of fire, of human labour, of the earth. It intercepts nostalgia for what has been lost, the intolerance for our present, and the power of the elsewhere, for an enterprise of absolute unification. *Fascism is the kidnapping of enchantment in front of the possibility of its liberation.*

Let's give it its due: fascism is quick to make incursions into the imaginary, able at appropriating it, at giving it a name, a meaning, a value. It knows how to canalize its power for its own ends (oceanic rallies, heroic exaltation, irrationalism, sexualisation of power, construction of paths of honor and glory); it knows, just as Hollywood knows, that a pinch of romanticism makes entire liters of sewage drinkable. It boldly ventures into the zone that modernity scotomizes, magnetizing those who suffer from the flatness of the bourgeois world, those who continue to feel the excess of the real, the antimoderns, the explorers of margins. It takes a while to realize the deceit and to notice that what is being accomplished is an updated and extreme version of the usual operation of reduction to one.

From many points of view, fascism is, therefore, the prodigal son of modernity: it instrumentally employs the discomfort of moderns to put it at the service of the same unifying assumption. If, in its monism, modernity has carried out an incessant reduction to one of the variety of the world, of the forms of experience, of the modes of subjectivity, then fascism corresponds to the moment of totalization of imaginary regimes. Leveraging nostalgia and inebriation, it brings modern subjectivity to the extreme consequences: protected by myth, indifference and separation become abuse, cruelty, and violence. Of inebriation it seeks the dark side: elitism, brute force, blood, rape. It beats the imaginary in search of domination through death and the annihilation of the other. It is the notorious *Viva la muerte!* of the Spanish militias, it is the skulls, the phalluses, the inhuman mimicry of the Duce, the paroxysms of the Führer. Its most realistic portrait is still *Salò* by Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Beyond being a violent and mystifying reductionism, fascism is also the negation of happy passions, if these mean ecstasy in the face of the

multiplicity of oneself and of the world, the vertigo of letting go, the co-becoming. Fascist is that life that has no need of other lives except to reaffirm its own, and therefore sacrifices them to its own enjoyment. In an etymological sense, it carries out a perversion (from Latin *per-vertere*, betray, reduce to an end) of the imaginary: myth, dream, and ghosts – something that is un-appropriable and ontologically multiple, suspended between presence and absence – are yoked, put to service. It is no longer just an effective illusionistic show, a screen that forbids access to something else, but a veritable military occupation of the imaginary.

What distinguishes totalitarianism from dictatorship is the intimate, visceral adhesion of the population to a project of unification that presents itself as newly enchanted – or, to use the proper technical word, that presents itself as *bewitched*, but after centuries of disenchantment the moderns are unable to distinguish. The alienation demanded by surplus value is so unbearable, so necessary is the contact with what could be, that in exchange for a fake myth and an apocryphal fate many are willing to give in on all other fronts. In fascism, the perverse use of the imaginary and of myth reappears on the public stage, and with maximum power. But instead of referring to a single subject, to a caste or a class, it expresses itself with all the power of the national State. Fascism and totalitarianism extend the privileges of divine royalty (the exercise of cruelty with impunity) to the abstractness of the nation, to the single Party, to that part of the population that can dominate over racialized “others.” And they distill these privileges in the unconscious of the *new man*.

If early modernity had at least the good taste to relegate to madmen, savages, and children all that which it did not want to see, fascism leaves no space to freedom. It coincides with the yoking of the imaginary regimes and drives: colonization absorbs even the invisible, uniformity is total. Totalitarianism.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #12. The year before, having arrived at Mostar by mistake after two weeks of beaches, children, and pedal boats, we had begun to breathe again. A deep, sinuous river, dark green and without embankments, as in a painting by Giorgione; all around, people who seemed alive. On the bridge a man explained in excellent Italian, to a group of co-nationals, the meaning of the policy of the EU as seen from there. He smoked one cigarette after another, had lived through the siege, was

cultured, a survivor and undoubtedly much better informed than his listeners, who listened only with one ear, their attention distracted by the divers that jumped off the parapet into the freezing water of the Neretva and by the next flash visit to a museum. Irredeemable tourists. Why did that man waste his breath? *Et turista ego.*

Reconstructed with philological care, the Stari Most makes its mark, in its new guise as a World Heritage site, blunting the memories of destruction. While I try not to stumble down the calcareous stones, there comes the disquieting shadow of a memory. A war reporter, his obsession for the fate of the Bosnian bridges, his death next to this one, among all of them the most beautiful, when the rainbow of stone that had made the Ottoman travelers marvel was already in pieces at the bottom of the Neretva. Old legends of death awaiting, the heartbreak in a flash of destiny.

Sarajevo that year remained the unattained goal, fantasized from Mostar vibes. Now a car that must be brought back to Italy from the airport of Sofia gives us the chance to close the circle. The brief Balkan transit that we had imagined – from Bulgaria to Sarajevo passing through Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro – turns out to be economically impossible. Not even a super-efficient employee of the General Insurance company, at Kjustendil, can work out a solution. Since the beginning of the year, these countries are no longer covered by international motor insurance. At every border, the customs sell a local policy that, for a variable amount, offers variable coverage and is not negotiable. The times when going to France required insurance implements and a different currency suddenly come close again, the brutal efficiency of borders makes itself felt. We stop for the night in this frontier city of thermal baths.

The Ottoman building of the public *banja* seems little changed by time. For a couple of Euros, we stay an hour soaking in very hot, slightly sulfuric water, that a flying plumbing system sends to large tubs of white tiles. As at Hamman Mellegue, in Tunisia, where the Roman baths continue to host ablutions, the original purpose of use survives the centuries. The old stones of the external walls, the pipes, the white tiles are shabby but alive, their function protected. It could be worse: the whole structure could have become an old carapace dressed up for tourism.

An archeological expert in Buddhist art once told me that in the Himalaya area the cult buildings, decorated with gaudy color paintings and exposed to an impetuous climate, are periodically repainted, to the

desperation of Western scholars that would instead always preserve the most antique traces. What is important is the beauty of the painting, its capacity to indicate the way, say the locals: not its antiquity. A faded and peeling image is not a good way to honor divinity. It is an entirely different relationship to matter, memory, traces, origins and originals. An anarcheology.

While some cubic meters of water rapidly fill our tub, I fight with my idea of a spa. I see the dark wood of the parquet floors, the majolica, the loungers, the corridors, the glass doors that slide silently, the white bathrobes. And a double-digit entrance fee that I never feel like paying. Here the furniture seems taken from the set of a Cold War movie, and on entering the tub I have to consciously rely on the hygienic virtues of hot water. At the end of the hour, when we raise the enormous black rubber plug that closes the tap, I don't want to leave anymore.

Toward evening, a very long avenue with two lines of trees on either side, incongruous for the size of the city, leads us to the railroad station. There is no movement, only a pair of stationary diesel locomotives. Opened in 1910, the line was supposed to reach Macedonia, but it never made it: wars, geomorphology, political interference in the Balkans, and bureaucracy, stopped it. The population reclaimed it many times, with interpellations and petitions. They have fruit, tobacco, oak and pine wood, coal and granite to bring to the city markets; without the railroad, development cannot arrive. Work resumed briefly during World War II and again came to nothing; later, the spectacular-concentrated domination of the Soviet regime will have other things to think about. On both sides the rails are lost in wide green meadows: nothing separates them from the rest of the world, no barrier, high ground, or protection. An abandoned happiness lives in that place. The morning after, when we leave again, from the manhole covers the vapors of hot waters slowly rise.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #19. Fascism is one of the many manners in which, in human affairs, power was perverted into domination. To be exact, it is the modern form – nationalist, colonialist, capitalist, individualist, and technically unscrupolous – of this perversion, the fulfillment of the totalitarian tendency already inscribed into the logic of modernity. And it is one of the many manners in which enchantment and imagery have been employed as instruments of domination.

To reckon with fascism means to grasp it under both lights: the one that relates it to other forms of domination and the one that makes it historically specific; and thus to open up two fronts of resistance: one to the specificity of modern domination, and one to the general tendency of power to turn into domination. Further, it means grasping it at the same time as a force of fascination in its imaginary boldness and as a force of oppression in the violence with which it puts even enchantment to its service. The non-fascist life that we are looking for intersects the concerns of revolutionary Marxism with those of anarchism; and it intersects the concerns for the good life with mystic concerns for the margins of the unknown, the depths of the imaginary, the elsewhere and the otherwise.

Let's observe then the more general component of fascism, its affinity with other systems of domination. In the secrecy and conspiracy that characterize the "operating minorities" (fascist, Nazi, or communist) Marcel Mauss saw the 20th Century reproduction of a Greek phenomenon already described by Aristotle: the "Society of men," public and secret at the same time, that satisfied the need for secrecy, for influence, for action, for youth and also for tradition. In the fascist posture there is indeed something *ancient*, but we must understand this correctly: it is not an archaic form of domination, that modernity would have in some way transcended and that fascism re-proposes, as in the interpretation that Mauss seems to give it, but an inescapable risk in the relationship between power, domination, and imaginary.

If power is what *goes through relationships*, i.e. the possibility of acting on relations that we are in, and to be acted on in a regime of circulation and exchange, domination is the stiffening of power and the stagnation of its circulation. If power is, at least in some measure, advantageous to all, in domination advantage and the possibility of action are only on one side, the street is one-way. In extreme cases, the peak of agency and wealth of a few goes with the dereliction and misery of others. As in the mythological machine of capitalism, based on the chasing in circles of misery and wealth, to the exclusion of poverty, domination and dereliction chase each other, excluding power.

Here is the most vertiginous alternative. We can think, like Bataille and Girard, that the propensity to domination and to violence, the taste for cruelty and the totalitarian penchant are part of human nature, that they are intrinsic to the desire that moves us. It is an even too convincing

philosophical position, very desperate and in the end profoundly reactionary. Or we can think that violence, cruelty, abuse and the production of misery are an inescapable *possibility*, that, however, must each time be newly chosen. That they are, that is, the outcome of a history.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #13. The political geography of Bosnia-Herzegovina is an act of faith, the system of government a glorious mystery. Within the borders of its territory there are two entities, perhaps three: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Muslim and Croat; the Republika Srpska, largely Serbian and Orthodox; and the district of Brcko, practically a frontier canton, composed of territory of both the other entities and given administrative autonomy. The three entities vote according to three different systems, and all together elect a tripartite presidency composed of a Croatian, a Serbian, and a Bosniak (Muslim from Bosnia) president. The official money, the convertible Mark, states right from its name an exogenous political program, or a formidable flexibility. In fact, since 1995 the nation is commissioned by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, instituted by the Dayton Accords, that has merged in 2012 with the Special Representative of the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have read this information a half dozen times and still I have not memorized it, nor am I able to understand how things work in practice.

Yet, looking around, you wouldn't say. It seems, on the contrary, that the usual chain of state command is in action here as it is everywhere. There are cars, buses, skyscrapers, banks, book shops and stationary stores, junk stores for tourists, a river with its embankments, cheap restaurants, bars, street-sellers, and car parks. How could it not be business as usual? I hesitate: if the State is a superstructure, then here can be seen what remains when it is not in a condition to harm, namely, *everything*, or at least all of the usual. Or: when the spectacle of State power no longer retains any credibility, only the real command remains, the one that passes through financial flows; and in fact the number of banks is amazing. Reconstruction is the real business; the war is only propaedeutic.

A brand new highway, financed by European banks, Kuwait, and OPEC, leaves the city westward and sooner or later, by dint of destroying karst landscapes, will arrive in Mostar. In Uganda, where Cristina does fieldwork, the building of an asphalt road between Kampala and Kasese cut the travel time by half, as much for human beings as for anopheles. Malaria

spreads with development. Here the toll road is convenient for the tourists that want to optimize their time, much less so for the residents who rarely have enough money to pay its toll. In the meantime, domestic train connections remain sporadic and the international ones are suspended, there are no direct trains even to Belgrade or Zagreb.

Yet the rails between Ljubljana and Belgrade were on the route of the Orient Express, the most legendary of trains, free zone of luxury and intrigue, a mobile nexus between two strongholds of the imaginary such as Istanbul and Paris. The itinerary disappeared from train guides in 2009, other trains run on those tracks, not necessarily better or worse, just like the humans they carry. *Newsreel 63 - The Train of Shadows* is a visionary experience worthy of the Lumière brothers. It opens with a few minutes of pure dismay. There is a man clinging to the wheels of a wagon: in the very small distance he films with his mobile phone the tracks that go by, a glimpse of the Balkan route that provides new meat for slaughters and brothels. The director is a Slovene activist and it shows: what remains of the glorious Balkan stations invaded by rubbish, what remains of human sociality around a bin where a tire is burning, what remains in the depths of the trains, in cinema, in the gaze. A voiceover accompanies viewers in a journey of unheard-of poetry.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #20. Michael Taussig calls them *spaces of death*, or *spaces of terror*. They are places where the systematic use of violence ends up creating a hallucinatory context. They are seen in the colonies, in camps, in the ravines of daily life under totalitarian regimes, in torture chambers. They are also found in family abuse, and in total institutions. Modernity has produced them without respite to allow progress its expansion and totalitarianism established them in State form, but they are not only modern phenomena. To observe them is not easy. The lessons they teach are crucial.

The first is epistemological and allows us to understand why fascism is such an elusive phenomenon. If in their normal functioning, human worlds are founded on the careful regulation of borders, passages and relationships, on a set of arrays that allow the whole to hold together, the spaces of death are built on the systematic violation of limits, on the destruction of any reliable order of things. They are places of *normalization of excess*. They make an eternal present endure through time, one in which

thresholds and differentials are erased, interdicts broken, attachments severed. They institutionalize and massify the arbitrary violence of the sovereigns, extending its action to an entire group. Their symbolic potential spreads like terror.

The effectiveness of torture lies not only in the pain inflicted, but in the grafting of the torturer's point of view onto the tortured. Describing these circumstances is next to impossible, because they undo the correspondence between word and world; and it is dangerous, because the violence that permeates them continues to reverberate in the narratives that are made of them. True and false, subjective and objective, are only valid within a well-structured world, in a recognized and stable enough order of things. In extreme situations, where violence has disintegrated every point of reference, experience is no longer rationalisable, causal chains are broken. Taussig speaks of *epistemological darkness*: in the spaces of terror it is not possible to establish what is true and what is false, what happened to me and what to others, what really occurred and what was only fantasized. Subjectivity itself is in danger: there is no longer any certain distinction between oneself and the world, between yesterday and tomorrow, between life and death, between legitimate and illicit.

Twilight zone of a world fallen off its hinges, the spaces of death have no documentable history, no progressive narration, no witnesses. Their knowledge cannot be put into sentences, but only hinted at; it is made of intuitions, anticipations, jumps; it is more a verification at one's own expenses than a demonstration of something. From here comes their strange, hallucinatory quality. What happens in these spaces cannot be said in ordinary language because it exceeds and denies every category of daily life.

Representation collapses. The historical reconstruction of the events, the counting of victims and the description of torture – indispensable tools for applying justice – end up obscuring the ambiguity and the complicity that characterize the theater of terror and that reverberate in the victim as an unspeakable shame. The crucial point of what here happens remains outside the scene, unrepresentable, *obscene*. For this reason, the testimony of those who went through these spaces is at the same time so indispensable and so impossible.

The second lesson is political. The spaces of death are such not only because of the risk of death, but above all because they abolish the *conditions of trust* that make life possible: relationships, meanings, sensibilities,

experience, exchange, knowledge, correspondence between language and the world. The bare life that appears in them, more terrible than death itself, *has nothing natural about it*: it is not the zero point of life, what remains when the superstructure of culture and of subjectivity is taken away, for the simple fact that human existence can only have place in conditions of trust. Secure relationships, meaningful language, solid affections don't follow the subject: they make it possible. Culture is not added on as a dress over a bare nature, but shapes every human trajectory from the very start, and deep into the cells. The being in common ("communism") of human relations is already there at the origins, to such an extent that emotionally neglected infants tend to let themselves die even in the presence of thoroughly adequate material conditions. Bare life is, therefore, not a return to some "initial" condition but a specific construction, the outcome of a forced de-humanization, a conscious destruction of attachments and of the very possibility of trust. To overturn the conditions of existence in such a precise and effective way requires planning. The violence that is practiced in these contexts is intentional: be it kings that kill subjects at random, camps where prisoners are starved to death or the production of criminal labour in the *new economy*, *zoé* (naked life) is not the zero point of life, that on which we construct *bios* (good life), nor that which remains when *bios* fails, but the most atrocious of its possibilities. The spaces of death – as well as misery, dereliction, cruelty and all that aims at de-humanization of some to the advantage of others – are historical phenomena, planned horrors, and not the outcome of a bug in human nature.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #14. The outdoor sofas at our caffè on the Bašćaršija have comfortable cushions and are ideal for watching the promenade. Many compulsions in me are already switched off. While waiting for *džezva* and *lokum*, I only check my email once. I don't look for tourist information. I don't look at the newspaper pages either. The cult of productivity seems like someone else's nightmare. And so, unlooked for, encounters arrive.

Behind the counter of the postmodern grocery shop that Cristina has dragged me into, a lady in tight jeans, thin t-shirt and firm manners, very beautiful in her 50s, tells us in a breezy English that she doesn't owe her perfect shape to the goodness of the products she sells, but to anxiety. To anxiety and cigarettes. And to anger, also, over how the city was wrecked.

Everyone is doing badly, there's no work, people go crazy and a flood of psychotropic drugs is flowing to soothe their pain. During the siege she remained here.

Muslim father and Serbian mother – and so what am I?, she asks, still incredulous of the fact that *stuff like this* could cause all that horror. Now around town you can see women in black burqas, incongruous. We don't know who they are, she tells us, why they are here. They began to appear a few years ago, now there are so many of them. Maybe they're the wives of tourists arriving from the Arab peninsula, it's a possibility. But at times, she says, we think they are figures, young Bosnians women that scrape together an income walking in black in tow to a man, for who knows what reason. She, our shopkeeper, in Sarajevo's Islam has taught her daughter to hold her head high and always speak her mind. The burqas arrive in the city as a slap in the face directed above all to them, to the Bosniaks of Bosnia, to the women.

I have crossed paths with Muslim women in Tunisian hammans, on Moroccan trains, on Turkish buses, in the Brussels corridors: each of them had her own way, different from mine, of dealing with her assigned social role, with the intimate mask of gender. Different still are the questions brought up by Ugandan village women, by Andean peasants women or by young college-educated mothers and political activists in the cities of the Amazon. Each time, the patriarchy that they confronted was different from the one in which I've grown. I don't know if it were worse or better, if the particular power that some of these women had came from a long training to resistance or from a free flowering. And then there were different concerns, different relationships with the body, with eroticism, with children, with politics. Each of them has lengthened my distance from the feminism of recent years, from the struggle deprived of sisterhood, from the presumption of already knowing what each of them could tell. Every time a foil: I promise to no longer say "women" in general or "patriarchy" in the singular, to hold off my cultural counter-transference, to listen without judging. Then I relapse.

In the meantime, our shopkeeper gives us a history lesson. I awkwardly realise how much I am a Western European, legitimized in my ignorance. But it is impossible to understand the bullet holes that still adorn the walls just outside of the center without knowing that the Sublime Porte became more prosaic Turkey only in 1922; that, once Soviet centrality was

over, three worlds could with equal strength contend for the spoils of the Balkans; and that, as with all intelligent and delicate processes, the coexistence of different peoples is easily destroyed by applying brutal stupidity.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #21. Faced with all the horrors that fascism commits cloaking itself in an aura, revolutionaries cling to materialism in its most bigoted and petty form. At this point in its journey the left has deserted the imaginary. Not only: it has disqualified and ignored it, thus revealing a deep proximity to the dynamic of the very same modernity, that, on another plane, it wanted to fight. Revolutionaries concern themselves with bread, water, housing and weapons. Rites, dreams and explorations of the imaginary are the stuff of fascists. A historical error of damning proportions, because it has brought about the demobilization of intelligence and sensibility from the most crucial terrain for any form of change.

Instead of abandoning the imaginary to the adversaries, revolutionaries should have prevented them from chaining it up, perverting it, and raping it at will. Now we pay for the mistake by lagging a century behind our adversaries and with the urgency to heal the devastations brought about in the shadiest and most crucial area of human becoming. We find it hard to understand the deep anthropological meaning of phenomena like raves, the search for the sacred in other cultures, the many techniques for breaking the subjective armor; we spend our life among enjoyments and bullshit jobs and we are afraid to even name the excess, the need for wholeness, the nostalgia of what exceeds us. To abandon the imaginary means, in the end, chaining ourselves up to the world as it is, surrendering our capacity to feel otherwise and to bring other truths into existence. In question, once again, is the relationship with the fundamental assumption of modernity: the totalizing monism and its earthly avatar called progress. Even if, to arrive at the fulfillment of history, a revolution is still needed, the ways and meaning of this journey are in any case already decided. The points of congruence between the classic idea of revolution and modern progress are impressive: just like progress, revolution must override every variability, increase wealth with the development of productive forces, appropriate nature, glorify the position of humans on the planet, and establish yet another “single state” of being.

Thus, a large part of 20th Century revolutionary thought did not hesitate to disqualify all that was *other*: non-conforming subjectivities,

non-scientific modes of knowledge, “primitive” ethical and communitarian forms, non-militant paths of experience. In this way it has lost the difference between real, historic liberations from old and unbearable oppressions and the claim to have found the royal road – the only, universal and right one – for liberation from all oppressions. Along with this, it has forgotten the similarity between the enchantment sought by preceding generations and that which, in rare moments, illuminates our present: the communards shooting on the church towers of Paris; the happiness of the partisans; what remained nameless the 1960s and 1970s and in feminism; the proximity between the experience of revolt, and that of love; but then also every instant in which our being in common with other and others is revealed, and the strange utopian bearing of multiplicity.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #15. Even if it is almost impossible, one afternoon we manage to get lost. After a few turns we arrive at a building covered in posters and writings against the European Union. *EU-thanasia*: the reference is not to the Greek referendum, to me still very vivid, but to the role of the EU in the War in Bosnia and then in the reconstruction. Sitting at one of the outside tables is a woman, her eyes alive and attentive, a half-smile while she watches us comment on photos and writings. She invites us to sit down, then sends for the manager of the underground club that opens in the basement of the building. Even with a basic English as the mediating language, we find each other immediately. She is a teacher in an elementary school, and uses an experimental and libertarian pedagogy. He now makes a living by running the club, and is one of the capital landmarks for activism. They are roughly our age: there are not many of them around here. They once were a couple. Today she has a partner and he, we sense, more than one. They look at each other with the closeness of those who remain faithful to the best part of the other.

We talk about Bosnia, about Italy, about neoliberalism, about the banks, about migrants, and then about Sarajevo before the war, a place that continues to light up the eyes of those who knew it. A happy place that no one had planned with a five-year plan, or perverted with the toxic aura of commodity, or subjected to the one true god. Such places take a while before they can be cancelled out, even when depopulated and humiliated they continue to burn in the memories of people. And in fact that Sarajevo is still not abandoned, it lives a shadowy life of its own, parallel to that of

the reconstructed city, and shows itself in traces at times, in corners and timbres, as a ghost. The man fetches a big book in Italian, French and Serbo-Croat, entitled *Un libro per una biblioteca. Viaggio balcanico* (“A Book for a Library: Balkan Travel”): a generous format, texts by various European authors, illustrated with images and photographs. It is a memento of the library that went up in flames and it is an extraordinary publication. Why haven’t I come across it before?

Later I will discover that there is almost no trace of it online. According to the National Library Service, throughout Italy there exists one single copy of it, kept at the Provincial Library of the Cappuccin monastery, in Palermo, Sicily, next door to one of the most famous and disturbing collections of corpses in the world. There is no connection, but the proximity hits me as if it were a sign. Of what, I wouldn’t know, nor if the sign is auspicious or inauspicious. During the siege the Bosnian poet Nedžad Maksumić, in an essay brief like the moment itself entitled *Road signs scattered on the ground*, wrote “You must adorn yourself with amulets and have faith in the fact that they will help you. Have faith in whatever sign whatsoever. Listen carefully to your belly. Act according to your sensations. If you think that you mustn’t walk on that street, then go take another one.” And right after that: “Don’t be afraid of anything. Fear generates new fear. It blocks you. You must firmly believe that you have been chosen to remain alive.” Since I first read these lines in 1995 in the booklet of a legendary record called *Materiale resistente*, I ask myself what war does to people – besides killing them.

These two know it. We stay and chat for a while under the blow-ups. If I lived in Sarajevo I would often come here to listen to music, drink beer and search for memories of a place I belong to, without ever having been there before.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #22. At the end of World War II, the “discovery” of the extermination camps and the survivors’ tales act on Europeans as a collective trauma. How had it been possible, in the heart of that Europe that presented itself as the beacon of civilization, to come to that? Many found it inexplicable. They chose then to read what happened as an interlude of barbary, the sudden and devastating re-emergence, at the center of civilization, of precisely that which civilization itself usually keeps at bay. It is the animal in us, the dark beast, that

kills and deports, that tortures and exterminates – not the human being. It is something alien, a corrupt nature to be kept at bay, a collective delirium, a psychic disease. Anti-modern resistances were assimilated to fascism and rejected, along with it, in the category of the irredeemable. Being against modernity again meant being against civilization *tout court*. No doubt about the necessity to keep following on the path of Western tradition and its way – among all, the highest – of making world and of making humans.

An understandable strategy, given the gravity of the facts and the peculiar horror they were laden with. It is not always possible, both in individual and in collective life, to deal with events of such importance, and the anguish can make one want to forget. But it's a short-lived strategy, too. It is evident, to begin with, that the trauma of the camps was possible only against the backdrop of the most complete ignorance of colonial horrors and of those connected to industrialization. If the differential engine constituted by misery and wealth is the specifically economic form of modern domination, in the colonies it immediately went much further. It took the cold blood of Hannah Arendt to connect colonialism and the camps, progress imposed somewhere else and barbarism suffered at home into a single historical arc. Aimé Césaire and Franz Fanon will say it in an even clearer way: Nazism is colonialism by the white man on the white man. Their teaching went unheeded and the shock was followed by a full-scale restoration. The history of the preceding decades was made unutterable. The rhetoric of Absolute Evil, detached from every human reason, made the facts historically inexplicable, turning the Nazis into monsters and totalitarianism into an Asian ethno-specific disease. Deferred *sine die*, revolution had to await the maturation of “objective conditions.” A maneuver that had the taste of a gigantic removal.

And indeed, as in a revenant's tale, the mix of perversion of the imaginary, cruelty, and enjoyment that makes up historical fascism has reappeared onto the public scene. In the consumerist totalitarianism denounced by Pasolini, as in the practice of denunciation in the age of coronavirus, in the posturing of the various “strong men,” as in racism toward migrants, in the trivialization of what is complex, as in the destruction of what is delicate; and then in linguistic stereotypes, in the glorification of ignorance, in the political and scientific canonization of hell as the backdrop of

human trajectory. This time, however, we should have learned the lesson. If, as has been noted, we have never left the totalitarian paradigm, it is because we have never been able to leave the modern paradigm.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #16. The snipers, the grenades, the ethnic rapes, the slaughters under the eyes of the Blue Helmets: between bullet holes and white gravestones there is no way to get around the question. We talk about political emotions, the emotional training of an entire population to feel, know, and think in the foreseen manner. When it is done consciously it is called propaganda, but its most effective version relies on the most obvious things: gestures, ways of saying, objects. Like almost everyone that has attended primary school before 1989, my mental map of Eastern Europe is undefined, and approximate: uncertain capitals, blurred borders. This vagueness depends on the maps that hung in Italian schools in the Cold War years, those on which Cristina and I learned the geography of Europe. They were full of colors in the West and uniformly gray in the East. In the profound years of childhood, we begin to find ourselves, or not find ourselves, where the others await us.

Fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism have haunted me ever since the 1970s engraved shreds of history and politics in my childhood (un)consciousness. I was anguished at the idea that entire nations could idolize a Mussolini or a Hitler, tolerate the existence of camps, or find the elimination of all differences reasonable. Then the last couple of decades has made it very clear to me *what a State can do*, how many investments in fear, compulsion, intoxication, and psychic splitting are needed to teach humans alienation from themselves and from the world.

There comes a dangerous thought. Eyes awake, a quality of presence that I recall from happier decades, thoughtful words, clarity of posture even under pain: has this people remained fully human *despite* the war – or *because* of the war? It is a question that sooner or later comes to anyone who has experienced other human worlds. For his whole life as a physician, an activist, and an anthropologist, Michael Taussig has pursued the flickers of humanity that sparkle in the most extreme situations, the enormous creativity it takes to get through the worst. Do we need war, violence, and spaces of death, with their weight of sheer destruction, for humans not to lose track of life, or can we come up with something more intelligent? Can we learn to be attentive and sensible without needing such cruel correctives?

At the little table of the usual café, where the barman recognizes us and gifts us a double dose of *lokum*, I read, puzzled, a handful of messages from far away friends that ask me if I am okay, if those around me are all okay. When I was a little girl and my father was a seafarer, my mother's policy was to tell him nothing, about things at home, that might worry him, unless telling him was indispensable. My pulse quickens, electric fog around the brain, suddenly I am no longer here but there: what happened at home?

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #23. In many respects, we are faced with a repetition of the same crisis that began to trouble the West at the end of the 19th Century, but instead of being merry, as in the Belle Époque, or openly rebellious as a half century ago, this time the mood is gloomy and desperate.

Recent studies in Marxism interpret primitive accumulation as at the same time *a historical event and a condition of possibility*, something that has not stopped happening, that must continually repeat itself so that the machine can grind on. In this light, many contemporary phenomena acquire historically legibility: expulsions, plundering of cities, degradation and immiseration are, at all times, necessary conditions for the existence of capitalism. Violence is permanent.

Thus, in the wild frontier zones, necrowork produces extermination with the goal of increasing the profits of global corporations: witness Mexico's *maquilladoras*, drug trafficking, the effects of fracking, the rising number of refugees around the planet, neo-Malthusianism in dealing with epidemics. The colonial divide continues to rule: what is produced beyond the frontiers of surplus value is presented as *savage* in a way that makes it equally possible to eliminate it or to *salvage* it, co-opting it within capitalist valorization. Frontiers are the site of a battle that is as symbolic as it is material for labor mobility, to the point of reproducing conditions of semi-slavery and spaces of detention of migrant lives comparable to camps. The *miserables* that, without rhyme or reason, filled the streets of Manchester bear more than a passing resemblance to those who, today, press on the borders and that tomorrow will be meat for the grinder for the economic recovery of the stronger nations.

Between those practices that we recognize as destructive, and those that we do not question, there is no ethical or factual distinction. Legal economy – that of GDP, prosperity and progress – is inseparable from

the practices of the underground or black economy; the *Lumpenproletariat* is as necessary today as it was at the turn of the 20th Century. The enormous violence of Old and New Enclosures is an intermittent knowledge, which we only have for brief moments: during insurrections, or when we retrace the line of western unhappiness. In the rest of the time, the history of the vanquished, which is also our story, is forgotten; the organization of our world returns to being a glorious mystery or, worse, a fact of nature.

The limit that must be continually overcome so that the incremental dynamic never stops is created by the very same necessity to overcome, without which there is no production of surplus value. Compared to the classic scheme described by Marx, neoliberal wealth is less centred on production and relies upon an enigmatic link between an ever more autonomous and inscrutable finance and extraction through consumption. With all that follows: the marginality and dislocation of productive work, the hazards of economic action, the stock market (and the gambling den) as a place for the magical appearance of infinite wealth. Identity depends on the commodities that we consume, memory becomes a stock asset, freedom coincides with the possibility of choosing between products on the market. So, if at first the frontier to be overcome was mainly spatial (geographic borders, the conquest of new lands, expansion), or temporal (working hours), today's capitalism has discovered the internal frontier, psychic and intensive. Exploitation extends to the wealthy border zone that lays between subjection and subjectivity. Innovation and surplus value can be extracted from thoughts, from behaviors, from feelings. Captured in nightlife, tourism, the imaginary industry, and flows of personal data, the part of existence that used to be called 'non-work' is today among the zones of more intense extraction and valorization. Once again, the zombie and the vampire are key figures.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS # 17. I come back to town about ten days after the fact. Amid the last heat of August and the little to do in my unusually empty household, one afternoon I tell myself that I need a soap holder and I ride my scooter to IKEA, the only reachable place that allows you to see. Or to *not see*. Between the western and the eastern strip there is no continuity. The bridge is interrupted and so is the dusty project of re-industrialization that has already betrayed this city many time.

The lump in my throat comes from the highway billboards, the familiar white graphic on a green field hanging above the void: Genoa West, Leghorn, Ventimiglia. *Non sequitur*. No one will ever read them again in their profane sense, the proximity to the hecatomb has turned them into relics. Others have jumped the barriers and observe that disaster with me. *Dis-aster*: the fading of the star that we were following, loss of orientation, anguish. I buy a soap holder and as soon as I exit the already frightening traffic jam around the fallen bridge, the entrance to the Sopraelevata gives me a breathtaking view: an MSC ship of fifteen or sixteen floors, tourist crate on a floating platform in front of which the old seafarers, and among them my father, shake their heads as if looking on an offense to their craft, to the sea, to the spirits of water. Lying alongside the island of Giglio, from afar the Costa Concordia looked like a stretch of the coastline. Only when the ferry came close enough to the port did we realize, with a gasp, that what we had seen was not coastline, but a ship's keel. A full-blown disaster just behind my back and a disaster announced just before my eyes. Innumerable generations of Mediterranean women express themselves in me as I moan, under the helmet, that every excess is paid for in the end.

Then everything, in the city, will focus on reconstruction. The open competition, the projects, the times, the appropriations. The dead, like the displaced, will retreat to the background, justification for any civil and moral duty: that of returning to the *status quo*, or finding ourselves again finally in an uninterrupted city. It's difficult to shake off the mood that motivates such a sad passion. No reflection on the possibility of passing through the disaster without restoring the *status quo*. No hypothesis about a different transport ecology. Not a word on the folly of commodities travelling in containers, on wheels, along tracks and finally landing, after a short life, in the trash. I am not able to articulate these thoughts with my co-citizens; it seems to me to betray their pain. The same thing happened after the G8 in 2001: I found it difficult to say that a city turned upside down is a better terrain than a city perfectly functioning according to the commands of surplus value. Once again, I feel that the dead are being betrayed.

Two months later a storm of unheard-of strength breaks onto the shores of Genoa and most of northern Italy. The operators of the Port Authority have been alerted: according to models there will be exceptionally large waves, up to six meters high. They end up being ten and a half meters high. The house of a friend of mine ends up under water, his

proverbial library floating on salt water. I watch some videos online. As a young girl, on the days of rough sea, we used to go to the Nervi seafront promenade and the fun was in running around without letting the waves get you. Never, in all those years, had I seen the wave frequency that now these videos put right before my eyes. This is not the Mediterranean, it is a sea that I don't recognize, maybe certain oceans... the Anthropocene right at my door.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #24. Like the Old ones, the New Enclosures produce unprecedented amounts of ghosts. They are everywhere: in the enormous plastic toys that we all buy at Christmas for a few Euros, stained with the blood of women workers murdered in Mexico; in the gas pumps that pour dead fishes of the Amazonian rivers into our gas tanks; in zombies, catastrophes, *homo homini lupus*; in the clear declination of modern patriarchy provided by pornography; in the dark initiation to senselessness that we impose on young biologists, young managers, young engineers (on the young in general), so that they can do their dirty job without going crazy. And, to come closer to us here, in the Mediterranean, reduced to an immense graveyard without tombstones; in the trafficking of manpower needed by industrial agriculture, the sex market and criminal enterprises; in the gigantic extermination, torture and rape camp sponsored by Italy and known by the toponym of "Libya."

What part do they play, in the depression of our times, the howls of the ghosts that any mentally sane person is able to hear, and no one that wants to be considered mentally sane can mention? The result of this psychic split is *us*, citizens of hegemonic modernity; we who, in fulfilling our duties as zombie revelers, continue to dance to the tune of a totalitarian drive: the generally modern one, but also the specifically fascist one. It sounds like a *boutade* by a Hotel Abyss intellectual only so long as you don't pause to look at the details.

"You're on the locomotive of a train that can't be stopped. In front of you is a rail exchange: bound to the left hand track there are ten people that you don't know, bound on the right hand one is your best friend. Which track do you choose?" According to a certain part of Science, this type of petty test should reveal the truth about the human being, laying bare its deep structure, as if desperate choices, hierarchy, domination, were not the *outcome* of circumstances that have nothing natural about

them. In the second half of the 20th Century, thousands of animals were tortured in laboratories of ethology and psychology in order to demonstrate nihilistic theoretical premises (that infanticide, rape, or domination are natural, for example), without ever questioning the fact that aberrant conditions produce aberrant responses, and that researches of this kind are indistinguishable from torture. In many disciplines, violence is continually applied to “objects” of knowledge through the elaboration of ridiculous theories that cloak themselves in scientific objectivity.

Another area where the long wave of the reduction of the world to mere relationships of violence manifests itself is that of public recognition, which is increasingly obtained only by claiming a victim status. The structural violence that permeates social space, the ambiguity of roles and the collective collusions become invisible. Political life is reduced to a binary moralism: either you’re a victim, or you’re an executioner. On the other hand, the political life of neoliberalism has prepared us for infernal alternatives: do you want your wages raised? You will accelerate delocalization! Want to welcome migrants? You will bring in smugglers! Want to assist people you care about so they don’t die alone? You will propagate the virus! Want to stop giving your data to Google? You will be outside of the Internet! *Tertium non datur*, because socially and humanly just solutions, those based on solidarity, mutuality, and equality, are short-lived, you know... And it is *true* that they are short-lived. Not, however, because they are impractical, but because everything around us is organized for attacking and destroying them, to make the sad passions of fear, impotence and resignation triumph.

And again, every time that the image industry takes a step forward in representing cruelty, our drive structure shifts in the direction of that of the executioners. By progressively raising the threshold of sensibility, images train us to endure situations of boundary confusion, violence and normalization of excess. There is an entire social history of cruelty that passes, today, for the history of images.

The space of death continues to be the logical space within which we think of foundations: it is the “normality” to which we are conditioned by exposure to cruelty, to fear and to the struggle of all against all. In this hell, the most cynical will find their pleasure by taking the logic of domination and the perversion of the imaginary to extremes. In this, we continue to be fascists.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #18. Ten months after the collapse, the rest of the bridge is made to fall with six seconds of controlled explosions, three thousand persons displaced in the range of three hundred meters, and the recommendation, when they return, not sweep or vacuum the dust that will settle on their windowsills, but to wet it instead. The tones of the live broadcast are triumphal. That same day the first parts of the new bridge arrive in port.

Media coverage is at a medium level; the event no longer captures the attention of the whole nation, it has become the stuff of inhabitants and international experts. Destroy, then rebuild: the best business, the very reason for certain wars. Politicians show off in front of the television cameras. Is it a war, that we are engaged in? If it is, I can't delude myself that I am only a victim. A part of me, of what I possess, of what I am capable of, identifies me as an aggressor.

The security apparatus is imposing. The tanks built on the bridge deck, together with twelve sprinklers, will create a fifty-meter water wall. Down below, heaps of earth covered with a special tissue, fifty meters high, will absorb 40% of the vibrations, reducing to a height of one meter on impact. Scaffolding and wet nets to contain the dust and a wall of sand to parry the shock wave. It is the first time that a bridge of this size is made to explode in the middle of a city, in a densely populated neighborhood. An experiment in social engineering, in every possible sense.

I fix my eyes on the screen with the same despair I feel in front of country circuses, street artists, charity shows at Christmas. A set of phenomena that share a sweet trait: they try to be *other* than the logic of surplus value, but are too small and marginal to make it against the pitiless dynamic of capital. Every well intentioned enterprise is desperate; every kindness is already lost in the struggle of all against all. The inevitability of defeat shatters me. This time it is not a matter of individuals or little groups, but of a whole collective, local and even national. We can put in all the intelligence and good will we want: until the demon that we have unleashed remains commander of the ship, we will remain unable to protect ourselves from the effects of development.

At the end of the 1970s the Italian television broadcasted an English miniseries that many remember as one of the most fascinating and terrifying experiences of their childhood. It was called *Children of the Stones*. It told of an English village build alongside a megalithic circle and

trapped in a temporal ring that cyclically returns to the starting point: the inhabitants are condemned to repeat the same actions and the same events, over and over again, until their doing them in the right sequence will finally release the terrible power of the stones. Thrill after thrill, in the course of the episodes we come to discover that the inhabitants *are* the stones themselves, the megalithic circle the petrified figure of a circle dance. In the same way, but without the consolation of it being fiction, we find ourselves prisoners of enormous senescent infrastructures, of which (and from which) we don't know how to free ourselves. Condemned to repeat the same sequence of events – produce, consume, die – until the superhuman destructive power of the stones is unleashed. It seems that the Apennines bridges of the rail line between Genoa and Novi Ligure are badly maintained, too; that the thing is well-known; that nothing can be done before a new carnage occurs. This is how the cargo cult manifests itself among us. The debris created by the explosion will be used, they say, for the laying out of an urban park. Perhaps some fragments, no matter if true or apocryphal, will enter into the circuit of modern antiques, like those of the Berlin Wall. So phantasmagoric is the spectacle of capital, that it will sell us our own ruins.

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT #25. And yet there is turmoil in these terrible years. The critique of the present, that the end of history wanted dead, has returned to call things by their names. Some speak of capitalist sorcery, some analyze the techniques of psycho-politics, some describe the dynamics of necrowork, some study the causes and effects of the anthropocene. The resulting panorama is disastrous, yet among them there is no sense of despair. Perhaps because they know, as others have known before, that fear, resentment, and sad passions are the breeding ground of the worst. I don't know if there is a well-documented historical study on the particular (and little spoken of) happiness of those who, leaving the crush of an epoch, decide to take part and accept the risk, poverty and discomfort that such a choice carries along. Fact is that an ironic, cheerful vein is clearly perceptible in them: cynicism is the risk of every step, but they keep it at a distance. They enlarge the view. They know that, in order to come out alive, we have to try again, in an even riskier version, something that had already presented itself as a luminous possibility: *the overcoming of modernity.*

Obéissez à vos porcs qui existent. Je me soumetts à mes Dieux qui n'existent pas.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #1. To overcome modernity: to dissolve the nexus between monism, *stasis*, totalitarianism, and disenchantment. Dissolve and not cut, lest we find ourselves again in the posture of modernity. The starting position – which can be summed up as: *either us or enchantment* – is not very promising. How do we arrive, from here, to *us and enchantment*? Or even: us and multiplicity, us and imaginary, us and cosmo-politics?

The possible solutions depend on processes that are not decided in advance. This fact is irretrievable. A process can be decided in advance only if there are no alternative premises, no bifurcations, no other worlds – only in the *unus mundus* of the moderns. Now its end allows the re-emerging of what the last four centuries have denied: namely, multiplicity. Multiplicity of worlds, of times, of lines of the past and of becoming, of ways of making humanity, of beings and paths, of meanings, of forms of life and of ourselves. There comes the suspicion, and at times the revelation, that the cosmos is alive and vibrant, full of co-dependence and possibilities. Banned for millennia, metamorphosis reappears in the public square together with bacteria, poets, magicians, and those who pass through worlds.

At the point we are at, it seems too good to be true, a dream of the condemned, the flight of the soul in the dereliction of the body. But even this doubt, apparently so desperate, is a psychic maneuver to protect ourselves from the collapse of monism and from its incalculable consequences. It still means *giving in* to the adversary. Or one can jump, mingle with the sea of arriving people and relearn conflict, mediation, and choice. Fear is understandable, even more so since there are no roads, and no guarantees, not even from ridicule.

Only just a few stories, a few images. *Only.*

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #19. While along the coast the waves destroy docks, the woods of the Eastern Alps are uprooted by gusts of wind up to 200 kilometers an hour. Even in the age of drones, the numbers remain approximate: cyclone Vaia destroyed a forest area of at least four hundred square kilometers, and knocked down trees for over eight million cubic

meters. Until the non-humans return to speak, the volume of wood – just as, elsewhere, the tonnage of meat – replaces the numbers of the fallen.

When I find myself again on the high altitude tracks, I discover that *uproot* is not a metaphor. Conifers do not break: the entire tree is toppled over, its foundation rising as an enormous disc of roots, topsoil, stones. What is usually below, the dark damp in which the tree stood, is now made visible. I feel indiscreet in looking at it, as if I were spying on someone else's intimacy. Others are less fearful: in the wall of soft earth and twisted roots a variety of small animals has already taken up residence. There are lots of these new vertical habitats, on the track that leads to one of the many Austrian strongholds built in the age when Freud traveled with his family to the Hotel du lac in Lavarone, shortly before the young men of the Altopiano di Asiago ("Asiago plateau") found themselves shooting at their childhood friends. World War I seems much closer here, the time passed since then being described as *only* a century. Are four generations a lot or a few? They say that another hundred years will pass before the woods return to be as they were before the storm. In the meantime, we have to reckon with the anguish of a disfigured landscape; with damaged houses; with the needs of the tourist season; and with the plummeting price of timber.

That everything – trees, trails, ski routes, and mountain profiles – should return as it was before is implicit in all the discourses, an unquestionable precept. Yet the distribution of conifers on the mountains, which so appeals to vacationers in search of nature, depends on the productive necessities of the valleys: without sawmills, IKEA and pellet stoves, the woods would have other shapes, other colors, other roots; the varieties of microenvironments and species would be different. As with the bridge that so divided my city, here too reconstruction mixes moral compensation and a stubborn refusal to change the way we look at the world.

Back in the village, I stop to look at an installation. A sign recalls the storm from the point of view of a tree, ripped from the mountain after eighty years of honorable service as a refuge for squirrels, birds, and heated walkers (nothing is said, here, of wasps, caterpillars and ants, of subterranean relationships with other trees, of the relations with the porphyry and the dolomite). As I read distractedly, the "passage of Vaia" makes me think that maybe *vaia* is the local name for the storms that occasionally hit the woods. And I think: if the local language had a name for it, then

the phenomenon was already known, maybe it is not the Anthropocene but some “natural” cycle, something already known, understandable... A mild wave of consolation runs through my veins – in vain: a brief search on the web reveals to me that Vaia is the name attributed to this first Alpine hurricane, as anomalous as the wave frequency that hit the coast. And that’s not all.

In the American way, since the 1950s the Institute of Meteorology of the Freie Universität of Berlin has drawn up lists of women’s names to chronologically assign to meteorological events. Some are drawn from mythology; others can be chosen, for a few hundred Euros, by private citizens. They are assigned in proper alphabetical order when their turn comes: there is a list for cyclones, which are shorter and, therefore, cost less, and another for anticyclones, which last longer and cost more. At some point in time it, therefore, happened that a lady from Düsseldorf, a certain Vaia Jakobs, was gifted by her brother the privilege of giving her name to a cyclone. We don’t know what the relationship was between the two, so we can’t reconstruct neither the brother’s intention, nor the sister’s reaction. Nor do we know if it is possible for beneficiaries to withdraw. The fact is that, at the end of October 2018, it was her turn: the cyclone that hit the Italian mountains took the name Vaia which, like the name of Attila, became synonymous with destruction. Of Mrs. Jakobs of Düsseldorf the Internet has little to say, and, in the absence of a proper journalistic inquiry, caution demands that we don’t take this story to be true. Perhaps it’s just an urban legend. In any case, if it is not true it is well conceived: it appears, in fact, that the lady in question is the head of a number of productive companies linked to the production of house furniture. Furniture made of wood, the raw material whose price, after the disaster, dropped to a ridiculous low. The storm we call Vaia, the storm we call progress.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #2. There has always been someone treading these unbeaten tracks: ragamuffins of philosophy and nobles of poetry; grumpy people who keep on strolling in graveyards ruminating on castles, specters, monsters, tombs; on the unserviceable Highlands; on ruins and automatons. They use dream, the fantastic, the nightmare and susceptibility as means of estrangement. Their wild bricolage with the wastes of the Enlightenment city gives strength to their critical unrealism. As a

whole, these recalcitrances and impatiences go by the common name of *romanticism*, perhaps the strongest, most stubborn and shadowy antimodern refrain that has united entire generations of misfits of the-world-as-it-is.

Melody of revolt and melancholy, Romanticism is born out of a mourning that cannot end because, in the enlightened lands of profit, bad death runs rampant. Despite the dissociation required by the epoch, hosts of visionaries continued to speak to the spirits of those who were gone in abominable circumstances, to feel the fright of forests, animals and children. Scattered across time and from disparate political positions, these ghost dancers realized that the silence of the world covers howls of pain; they should be credited with the very precocious perception, and then the loyalty, to a feeling of *there must be something wrong*. Romantics are those that glimpse, in the pavements of progress, the broken bones of the dead.

In all its permutations, Romanticism has been a refuge for those who sought to think and feel outside of progress. The outcomes are different. Some of the sharpest critics of modernity were great conservatives and even reactionaries, slothful nostalgics for what no longer is what it never was. Others were visionary revolutionaries, tireless seekers of what, in hell, is not hell. The ridge is narrow: in the romantic spleen and in the search for re-enchantment have long been expressed the repressed memories and the discomfort of modernity. Conservatives and revolutionaries part their ways when faced with the multiplicity: the formers would ban it in the name of a better and regretted totality; the latter welcome it as an antidote to the totalizing temptations.

Both positions are riddled with problems. The firsts arrive, through enchantment, to skirt fascism and at times even to throw themselves into it. Better then to remain disenchanting, will rightly reply its opponents. The latter instead are nice people, with their carefree and kind look, but in the end they are of little help in the heat of the struggle. Indigenism, primitivism, Luddism, wild mysticism, nostalgia for initiation, utopia, yearning: stuff for women and the underdeveloped, say rationalists and macho-Marxists, outlets of a *sensiblerie* that lacks a grasp on reality. Better to remain disenchanting than to risk ridicule. And yet these are precisely the risks that we must run to escape the historical train that is about to sweep us away: not from enchantment, but from the fascist use of enchantment, we must liberate ourselves.

Attention is the most rare and most pure form of generosity. To very few spirits is it given to discover that things and beings exist... It is this, in my eyes, that is the only legitimate foundation of every morality; bad actions are those that veil the reality of things and of beings or are those that we absolutely would not commit to ever if we knew truly that things and beings exist.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #3. Method, freely translated, means “after the road.” It is what we tell of our travel after having done it. At times it’s nothing else but a jumble of events that happened while we were in at the mercy of places, forces and occasions that we did not understand. Other times it’s a tarot card game in which a figure glimmers, the shadow of a direction or of something learned. Certain moments glow in memory: the bench in a town without a name, the smell of a morning, the cigarette at the edge of a stream. The flashes are not where we expect them to be, they don’t illuminate either the planned destination or the great milestones of the journey. Yet, in order for them to shine, you had to go all the way there.

The voyage is underway, the method is the chatting on-the-road by a disparate “us” that tells of a certain risk, maybe to exorcise it, or to feel more courageous. The passage to multiplicity requires the deactivation of the disenchantment-device that rules both modernity and our very presence. Further, enchantment is not the freeze-dried sweet that runs from Hollywood’s cartoons, but an intrinsically ambiguous place, a dangerous one. However, there is no other choice: the critiques of modernity that seek to overcome its despotic traits while maintaining its ontological arrogance are only bland reformism (or wishful thinking). There reappear risks which we are not used to anymore: that of not being right, that of not being the best, that of sawing off the branch we are sitting on.

Along the road we then talk of reliability, of the available resources, of how to trust something even knowing that it is not, and cannot be, without risks, nor universally valid. Absolute reliability and unconditional validity are out of the question: they can be obtained only by deciding the process in advance, and that means disenchanting the world – exactly what we no longer want to do. The passage we seek makes no claim to absoluteness. Its validity, when it exists, is only local and temporary. It allows us, today, to move around without hurting ourselves too much, and,

as with Wittgenstein's ladder, or the raft of Dharma, once the passage is made, it can be abandoned.

The most beautiful tales, however, are those that try to tell of the presence (or at least the foreboding) of enchantment and of multiplicity in the journey that leads us to contact them. Thus, still traveling, we glimpse an indication. In freeing us from the compulsions of the single world, enchantment and multiplicity carry along *a certain happiness*, both in the overflowing form of the exit from *stasis*, that transforms our relationships with the world, and in the everyday form of *making it*, in the minimal sense of being able to live, to think, to feel. This exit from the sad passions is in itself an ontological, cognitive, and ethical divide.

Nothing abstract about it: happiness has for each its own recognizable materiality. The breath enlarges or quiets down, sleep deepens, the world lights up and events are linked by a meaning that exceeds them (and us). It is the secret core of many questions that, in good society, are considered impertinent: what happens when, reading a book, I am forced to put it down after a few pages because my heart beats too fast? Why for no apparent reason does an unknown place attract me, as if it concealed something crucial for me? What do we experience at night, in dreams, so intense as to overturn entire days? What happiness lives in processions, in carnivals, and in every suspension of ordinary time? How does the success of our own actions transform us? Why do the things that concern us in the most intimate way are revealed only in relationship with others? How come that in falling in love synchronicity becomes a common and everyday fact? We have been carefully trained to dismiss all these phenomena as subjective impressions and to disqualify them – maybe because, if welcomed as a real part of our experience, they would make the violence of surplus value and the boredom of the single world unbearable.

Happy tales are rare. Not because there is no happiness, but because, in telling about it, we feel foolish like children that still believe in Santa Claus. But that's just the reason why we should stick to it: to traces sedimented in certain pages and in certain town squares. To the aura of suspended moments; to the fearful and liberatory daze of when the world opens up to show what interweaves it. To the gratitude for all the times that our feet were resting on solid ground. To the mystery that lies in the everyday, with the infinite multiplicity that we can already glimpse. In all these circumstances, method does not come before the path in order to

prevent any deviations, but only afterwards, to tell of its adventures. Measure is relative to those who measure; and practice is intimately weaved with risk. As in the empiricism of William James, *nothing but experience, but then all of the experience*. The peculiar happiness that results is method.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #20. Then it arrives, here like elsewhere, here like everywhere. It arrives rapidly, suddenly, without any real surprise: for decades this thing has been waiting for its moment in the collective unconscious. Maybe thanks to Hollywood grafts on the global imaginary, maybe because, in some part of ourselves, we felt very clearly the coming of disaster. By dint of sticking our hands where it would be better not to touch, a short sequence of nitrogenous bases has spread all over the globe with all the transcontinental speed of which we are capable, with the urgency and the opportunism of financial transactions, with the stupidity of tourism. So now we are all under house arrest, all confined. And it is not only me and my handful of friends, but all Genoa, all Italy, all Europe, half the planet.

The world of before has made itself distant. As in the spaces of death, as in every ecstatic outflow, the consensual vision of the world has gone to pieces. What is before our eyes cannot be understood according to a single perspective, every bit of information is a tile around which one can build many different mosaics. As in the spaces of terror, the state of exception empowers whoever manages violence to act arrogantly and arbitrarily. Distance and isolation have the force of law, no celebrations, no welcome to newborns, the dead leave without a goodbye, ready to become ghosts. The friction of personal sensibilities is terrible: old alliances are broken over the national anthem, over respect for the curfew, over the use of face masks. The normal time of compulsion is suspended, and in its place comes the silence of engines, an infinity of telephone calls, online compulsion, clear skies, the impression that a rope is about to rip, and a vessel of the living and the ghosts is about to put out to sea. Long cultivated, emotional misery erupts in anguish and denunciation, terror of the plague is already adhesion to the regime. The despotism of the spectacle is absolute, an obscene horizon of experts, jackals, and strongmen ready to blow on fire to the point of unlashng psychic whirlwinds of terror. The hurricane rages within the imaginary: you die of the virus and of fear, you die of hospital and of the lack of a hospital, folly in ambush behind every

corner and every closed door. Every doubt is already treason. Hosts of people, among them many young, re-learn solidarity, cunning, strategy. Drone, apps, video cameras everywhere, and in the meantime we can all walk around with our faces covered, like the stowaways that we go back to being. The instrument of financial torture with which, a little while ago, Greece was humiliated and sold off is suspended, so it turns out it wasn't a law of nature. Twenty years of neoliberalism and the undoing of public health. In wartime rhetoric, doctors and nurses are heroes; in exchange, it is their turn to go and get themselves killed, like so many little soldiers in time of war. Ecological disaster, neoliberal oppression, and the pain of the world take shape in the social unconscious. The ruling class and large-scale retailers take advantage of the situation for settling scores with the working class. The lines at supermarkets and the theater of obedience. The collectors of big data are the new state potentates. Then those that don't have a home, those that are home-bound alone, crazies, sex workers, refugees in camps, cruise ships that can't dock, people in jails, the elderly in hospices. Nightlife centers, beaches, parks, gardens, tourists' monuments, cathedrals: everything closes.

Parishes remain open. If they are on the street that you must travel by necessity you are allowed to enter and pray. I enter and pray. The majority is reciting a rosary of petty ambitions, of millenarian fears, of inexhaustible wiles. What do we have to re-learn... I bring books to a comrade who entered to pray along the street she too must travel by necessity, libraries are closed, she brings meals to the elderly. The majority stands like an illness, like a misfortune. Whispers with bowed head, at the distance of a bench. How are others doing, what do you do to resist, what do dreams say. A lady offered her a tea, the cup was empty, she drank it anyway. Remember Lord these servants disobedient to the laws of the pack, don't forget their faces, that after so much struggling it is just right that fortune should help them, like an oversight, like an anomaly.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #4. There's reason for astonishment. A sense of wonder in many sciences, starting with the hard sciences, which were the first, and have more continuously been, the ones to follow visionary paths. On the front of subatomic dimensions, where we might have expected the utmost simplicity, such a complex panorama has emerged as to force us to rethink both the idea of the unity of reality (quantum

mechanics speaks of “superposition of states”), and that of causality and temporal linearity. Nor is it different on the other front, where cosmology comes to terms with the possibility of infinite universes. In all its dimensions, the real shows itself as exceeding to the sciences that scrutinize it. Even the ancient ramparts of calculating reason, math and logic, have for more than a century learned to co-exist with the contradiction that, as Gödel demonstrated, inevitably resurface at the heart of systems that would like to ban it.

More recently, the earth sciences and the life sciences have begun to dismiss reductionism and hierarchy in favor of ecological landscapes made up of relationships, driven by heterotopias and retrogressions and populated by hopeful monsters, pan-chronic forms, quasi-species, and holobionts. The evolution of living things has ceased to present itself as a linear and progressive tree and has come to resemble a multiverse of endless forms most beautiful, each of which explores a region of it, and where the greatest creativity is expressed by bacteria. The disconcerting results of the Human Genome Project have imposed a different epistemological framework: the development of organisms does not follow a pre-established line in genes, but depends in a crucial way on the ecological landscape in which it occurs. The genome itself is no longer thought of as a sequence of instructions, but as a field of possibilities that open or close according to the history of the organism. Even the concept of the individual has become blurred: terrestrial beings are not closed units in competition with each other, but the outcome of intersections and symbioses, of collaborations and co-dependencies, holobionts that carry in them an entire ecology and whose fundamental structure connects them to all other living things.

Nature manifests itself in the guise in which we are able to see it, and everything depends on how we ask questions, on the observer’s intentions. A millennial-old metaphor for stupidity and the degree zero of life, plants have been recognized as intelligent, and not in a diminutive or residual sense, but of an acute intelligence, alien and disorienting. The very same animals, that appeared obtuse to positivist researchers, respond in an intelligent and participative way to new generations of ethologists who accept to enter with them into a process of co-becoming. Hierarchy, dominance, rape, infanticide – the whole gallery of horrors on which sociobiology has long speculated – are revealed to be laboratory artifacts or

outcomes of abnormal circumstances. Animals are no longer diminished versions of ourselves and of our dark side, but expressions of different worlds, of other ways of making a world. Entering into relationship with them requires the metamorphosis of both the researcher and the animal, as hunters, breeders, and passionate naturalists have always testified to.

Evidence is not, in the first place, a matter of logic, of reasoning.

It is connected to the sensible, to the worlds. Every world has its evidence.

Evidence is what is shared or what divides. Then communication returns to being possible, communication that is not assumed, but which must be constructed.

And this network of evidence that we are made of they have taught us so well to put into doubt, to flee from, to be silent about and to keep it for ourselves that, when we want to scream, words fail us.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #5. Not even the dead, wrote Benjamin, are safe from the winners: not even when the winners are their own children or grandchildren. Affected by selective blindness, historical consciousness has for a long time read from the past, in full and noble terms, only what seemed to lead up to modernity, relegating all the rest to barbarism or to realm of the *not yet*. Today from that past is released a multiplicity that shatters historical and progressive linearity; the arrow of time itself is jeopardized in the appearance of different temporalities and rhythms: circular, elliptical, recursive, and discontinuous. It is the archeological path in the sense of Warburg, Melandri, Foucault: the investigation into a historical (or prehistorical) origin ever present and ever lost, always active and always broken, something that never ceases to happen and to be undone, contemporary with the shadowy side of our present, more a condition of possibility and impossibility than a remote event. We need courage, and a lot of *metis*, to flex by a few tenths of a second the *arché*, the first levels of a cultural world, the deepest strata of the imaginary.

The positivist evolutionary scheme colonizes our minds. Thus, for example, we cannot explain why, for hundreds of thousands of years, people entirely similar to us only produced chipped stones. But what if intelligence were poetry before mechanics? Contemplation before accumulation? The prehistoric people that adventured deep into caves to

paint thousands of peaceful (and not in flight) animals and few (often wounded) human beings sought perhaps to propitiate the hunt, but we can also assume that they were tracking modes of vision, incubating dreams, creating relations with the invisible. Perhaps these paintings are not imitations or reproductions, but creations of worlds through myths, stories, hybridizations with other living beings.

The permanence of images and the ontological tenor of myth are zones in which erudition mixes with existential disquietude and where his-story's jumps act as real callings, epiphanies that carry an astonishment bordering on imbalance: the historical seismography of the forefather Nietzsche; the survival and the symptomatic value of the forms intuited by Warburg; Benjamin's dialectical images, that in the moment of danger are charged with time until they break into pieces; Jesi's journey, forever tempted to jump into the mythic world and for this very reason lucid about its risks.

The clearest example, as always, is classical Greece. Philology and positivist ancient studies have made it the champion of all that which we recognize in ourselves as virtue, settling the accounts that didn't add up with the opposition between philosophy and religion, rational knowledge and myth. Thus the Greeks were, time after time, the bearers of Western racial superiority, the fathers of direct democracy and class struggle, the first critical thinkers, the inventors of logic, of rationality, and of science. Each time it was a matter of bringing back to unity by excluding that the Greeks were multiple, welcoming to what arrived from outside, refined explorers of what we dismiss as irrational. Textbooks still present ancient philosophers as if they were academics engaged in intellectual skirmishes. Socrates is glorified as the father of dialectics overlooking his *daimon*. The voices that are too different to sing in the Pantheon are called "obscure." Quite another panorama emerges however from recent philology, from the anthropology of the Greek world, and from a part of the history of philosophy. In the daily life of Greek women and men there were initiatory paths, periodic contact with the numinous, Orphic and Eleusian rites, the dangerous proximity to metamorphosis, an intense relationship to dreams and divination. Philosophic schools were ways of living, and even Aristotle, at the highest point of his metaphysics, reveals himself openly visionary. Maybe, if Greece continues to beckon us, it is not only because it stands at the origins of what we are, but also because it treats with kindness and intelligence what we are not.

Together with what was, and which for a long time we have not seen, glimmers what we never cease to lose, the alternative possibilities, the missing futures. Between hunting-and-gathering and the pastoral-agricultural economy, there is not a progression without return nor an alternative: for a very long time, human populations switched between different modes of livelihood and political organization according to the season and needs. They did not inhabit a single social space, but were periodically in transit between the egalitarianism of the hunter-gatherers and the hierarchies of the villages; they would not fix themselves. Who today would know how to politically think such an alternation? Still in Greece, the paradigm of the *polis* is not revealed only in the blatant and glorified opposition to the imperial one, but above all in the hidden tension with the Arcadian one, where the meaning *nomos*, of song, of the agreement among beings, of good life are completely different. Who knows how to imagine to these heights?

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #21. In a different time, in an unusually cold Roman evening, while driving me back to my hotel, Ilaria lights a cigarette. The physical memory of the first puff activates in me as if I were smoking myself, thought becomes sharper, attention becomes less neurotic. In the afternoon we watched a video about Amazonia, we tell each other tales of tobacco.

In places where, in order to learn, you have to ask the plants, the *tabaquito* is the master of the master plants. It teaches things about humans, about animals, about other plants, about friendship, and enmity, about being in the world. It has information to which others, on their own, would not know how to get to. Botanists say that in every square meter of Amazonian land thrive around eighty different vegetal species. It is difficult, in such a biodiversity-rich environment, to pinpoint the exact combination of the two plants that make up the *yagé*. If you ask *curanderos* how they spotted them, they reply: "Tobacco told us."

Among them the *tabaquito* is taken nasally, under the form of a dense and obscure decoction, to make it drip down towards the mouth and immediately spit out, because it's also a powerful vomit-inducer. Or it is drunk as a light decoction of a nice amber color, in order to accelerate the physical, psychic, healing, and transformative process. In this case, tobacco remains in the body until it has completed its work, then it chooses

on its own how it will leave. The smoke of the *mapacho*, black tobacco, is blown onto specific parts of the body in the *sopladas*, the simplest and most democratic form of cure, which all can practice, first remedy for minor ailments in children.

It is inevitable, they say down there, that tobacco ruins the Westerners' lungs, with the inconsiderate and compulsive use we put it to. It is the same with coca, master plant of the Andean region and an extraordinary tonic. Its dried leaves must interact for a long time, in the mouth, with the enzymes in the saliva: thus the heart beats steady and quiet, breath is ample, thoughts are clear. A rather different use from ours, who throw tons of coca leaves in tanks of kerosene, sulfuric acid and ammonia to obtain the *pasta base* that will become cocaine. At the end of the transformation process, the powder we sniff is a chimera born of an orgy of vegetal, mineral and industry, as powerful and damaging as certain weapons. And vampire-like, too: a kilo of cocaine requires 150 kilos of *Erythroxylum* leaves.

Half of the problem with substance abuse lies here, in this energetically senseless circuit that transform a vegetal into a bewitched trap, wrecking the delicacy of relationships between human and non-human beings, between bodies and elements. And yet, a poetic of substances survives even amongst us, in the corners of tobacco pouches, in the fingers rolling a cigarette. Smokers retain something dreamlike in their gestures, a basic solidarity of tobacco, cigarette papers, and filters, a rhapsodic contact with another way of being in the world. They resist the obscenity of a dominion that, in order to hide its collusion with global drug trafficking, proclaims holy war against tobacco. And in fact the god of fire scatters enchantment over smokers' lighters, that disappear from their pockets to reappear in a different color, or in a different number, or in a different form. If you really want, they say, you can bind lighters to you, make them serve only one master, but it takes commitment and hard work.

Ilaria has a rare grasp on what is happening around us. She is in touch with revolution theorists, with the most radical philosophers and sociologists, with the transalpine and transoceanic movements, and also with botanists, architects, landscapers, experts on herbs. She tells me that, in the last few years, she feels much more life and passion in those who design gardens than in those who continue to mourn the looked-for and never arrived revolutions. So I tell her about what I saw in the greatest garden of them all.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #6. Despite our world's emphasis on rational wakefulness, dispenser of objectivity, rights, and enjoyment, we are continually in transit between different states, as demonstrated by the fact that everyone of us practices daily another way of experience, mysterious in its functions, and utterly banal: sleep. Science's scarce understanding of sleep and dreams, the impossibility of giving them an unequivocal interpretation (be it physiological, evolutionary, or psychological), leaves us unguarded in the face of the first and most fundamental form of elsewhere at our disposal. Dreams shuttle between the social unconscious of a group, with its dependable answers and its ballast, and the new that continually shows up, making them flow into one another. It seems that the molecule associated with dreams, DMT, is recurrently produced during the dream experience and has two big peaks during lifetime: one at birth, the other at death. There is in dreams a contact with the self and with the world that makes it difficult to dismiss them as meaningless; when morning comes, however, we don't quite know what to make of them. Exiled to the interiority of the dreamer, they do not become political objects; we don't know how to read them, nor how to protect them, nor how to use them. It wasn't always this way: many times, in the tradition of the oppressed, the critical interpretation of dreams has shown ways of possible desertion.

A multiplicity of experiential modes intertwines along the days: *finite provinces of meaning*, endowed with a specific cognitive style and a certain coherence. The ordinary state, with its style made of wakefulness, awareness, suspension of doubt, industriousness, sociality and linear temporality alternates with other provinces: fantasy, dream, art, religious experience, scientific contemplation, child's play, and, more recently, those opened by pharmaceutical chemistry and internet connections. To move within a certain province, you need to experience and know it according to its own style, just like you need skis on your feet in order to ski, or to be in water in order to swim. The passage from one province to another involves a leap, a sort of shock, such as when we dive into water. If in the transit we do not perceive a swerve, this is due to a long-standing habit: the most common and frequent passages, those to which our world has accustomed us since we were newborns, happen in a fluid and inapparent way, almost without needing us to be conscious of them. This, however, does not mean that there are no thresholds and sometimes we perceive them

as intensely as when we were kids: the turning out of lights in a theatre, the sinking feeling that announces sleep, the entryways of churches.

A rhythmic alternation between states seems inherent to our experience of the world, to the point that it is not good to remain too long in just one province. The lack of sleep and the basin of sensory deprivation can be used as instruments of torture; paranoia grows in proportion to the time that our motionless bodies spend online; in the isolation of the sovereign individual as in social distancing, physiology itself changes, and anguish spreads. Without the exchange with other regions, the provinces of meaning dry up; if the passages are blocked, the order of the world becomes sclerotic. On the other hand, a fleeting contact with elsewhere is often enough to find meaning again, and to breathe.

Beyond these habitual provinces there are others, more exotic, which require a recognizable shock of entry, so much so that many fear them as destructive of the very possibility of experience. Madness is the clearest and most extreme case. Without going that far, there are at times abrupt transitions, unsought for and even unimagined (savage mysticism, insurrection, terror in the woods), that lead us well beyond the limit of what we are accustomed to. Other times we seek out experiences made possible by specific devices and settings (meditation, encounters with substances, lucid dreaming). Then there is the intentional suspension of ordinary time, with the long preparation and intelligence that it requires: feasts and celebrations have nothing to do with rest, weekends, or holidays, they are passages to another state of the world.

It is not true, therefore, that whatever falls beyond the rational wakefulness which we were trained for has no method, knows no measure and admits of no practice. If we admit that the provinces we experience with daily provide access to meaningful parts of the real, then we should extend this significance also to less known provinces, which require a larger shock upon entry. Beyond the provinces we are used to, there is not dis-organization, in-civility, animality and regression, but other forms of organization and experience: trance, possession, divination, shamanic ecstasy. The fact that we get lost in them only means that we don't have the map. Even madness has many other outcomes when approached as a transformative crisis and a transit to the non-ordinary, rather than as an irretrievable destruction of the only possible order. Each province is viable and rich with knowledge and possibilities, provided we devote

ourselves to it with the same commitment, attention, care and intelligence that we put into the exercise of mathematics, mountain climbing, or Romance philology. No more, no less.

Childhood reminds us that we were not “one” but “many,” a plexus of differences, a story plot of parallel lives. Even if most of them don’t reach, and never will reach, existence, in any case they are not without influence on our actions, our decisions, our loves.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY # 7. Heedless of individual zest, and unsettling, what we should know nothing about at times still makes itself known: certain moments in collective struggles, the estrangement when a place reveals itself, the tumult of the heart in times of celebration, traces of our destiny in the face of a stranger. Something has touched us.

If we look beyond the limits of our cultural history, other ways of constructing subjects and construing humans appear. The individual on which the whole infrastructure of law is built is none other than the historical form imprinted on men (the masculine is here intentional) by modernity, that is, by a world that welcomes and acclaims subjects of this kind. We understand this better by comparing the logic of the *individual*-subject (or the sovereign-subject produced by modernity) with that of the *dividual*-subject. While the former defines himself starting from himself and expresses a self-centered intentionality, where relationships are exterior and do not define the subject (existence comes before relationships), the latter think of themselves starting from the bundle of relationships that pass through them, expressing a hetero-centred intention as an endpoint of relationships that originate elsewhere and are intrinsic and defining (relationships come before existence).

Individual and dividual do not exist anywhere in their pure form, but are poles of a vast field of possibilities. Even in our society, where the individual structuring of subjects has reached the greatest extreme, crucial parts of experience are better described as dividual (as is the case with kinship, people “made of the same substance”). Similarly, understood as creator of one’s own being in the world, the individual is not exclusive to Western history: others have construed this kind of subjective autonomy and have pursued it in different ways – for example as an achievement, rather than as a presupposition.

What is different is the relationship these two forms of subjectivity entail with stability and metamorphoses and the risks they bring with them. Thus, among the Amazonian dividual-subject it is indispensable that the shamans can transit between genders and species, between the visible and the invisible, and the risk of undergoing an unsought and dangerous metamorphosis is present and real for all. At the other extreme, for the modern individual-subjects, identity is a crucial issue, and the risk of self-centered rigidity (de-realization, solipsism, depression) is always around the corner. Every world has its dangers. In ours, which has walled off subjects within individual identity, the antidote to this drift is metamorphosis, a possibility of otherwise both for the world, and for ourselves.

Thus falters one of the most stubborn assumptions of Western history, enunciated already by Plato in his banning of poets: if we trust to their stories, says the philosopher, the gods would be sorcerers capable of changing form and instead, following reason, we should believe that above all god has a simple form and never “comes out” of himself. That which is best does not change. Let us, therefore, honor the poets upon their arrival, as they deserve, and then immediately walk them to the door, because what they bring with them is too dangerous. Plato’s struggle is anything but gratuitous: a certain stability is indispensable to the endurance of the worlds and the subjects that inhabit them, and obviously, in the search for a better order, the philosopher wants to guard against the instability and the uncertainty brought about by metamorphoses. An understandable concern, that however should no longer dominate us. Is Plato’s *Republic* a communist paradise of the philosopher-warriors or a totalitarian nightmare? The question sounds misplaced only to those who have lost the clear eyes of the beginner. The ban on metamorphosis opens an issue whose danger is revealed with the modern “reduction to one” and that 20th Century totalitarianism carried to its logical conclusion.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #22. Once I went on a diet in the forest of the Peruvian Amazon. We had set off from Italy with the idea of visiting places where different therapeutic traditions converged, places where, according to scientism, you heal for the wrong reasons. After a few days in Lima, a small plane had climbed over the Andes to bring us to the region of San Martín, in the high forest.

The cocaine routes pass through these lands, where semi-clandestine laboratories produce great quantities of *pasta base*. Not all the product becomes powder for the North, though. A certain amount enters into the circuit of the local dealers, inducing a particularly severe addiction. Here a center for detoxification from the vegetal-mineral chimera called cocaine has devised a somewhat hybrid protocol: a little psychology, a bit of biomedicine, and a certain dose of Amazonian therapy. Ever since the 2008 crisis dried up the EU's taps, ordinary activities are financed by various kinds of workshops for gringos.

As always, the equatorial sun puts me in a bad mood. It takes me a few days to come to terms with such a dazzling light that it seems dark. Our host family lives in a neighborhood of dirt roads across the river, twenty minutes on foot from the city center. At every street corner there are motor-taxis parked in the shade of the trees.

In the late afternoon, we check-in at the center headquarters, a beautiful building in bricks and wood surrounded by green. The next day we go for our interviews with a staff psychologist. The following day we are summoned for the purge. And the next day still, in the great *maloca* beside the headquarter's building, the first collective ceremony takes place, in which the *taita* in service ritually administers to us the vomitory plants. The following morning, a Friday, we have our last breakfast under the palm tree gazebo in the house courtyard, we put the few things we can bring with us in our backpacks and we start off for the forest together with about twenty other people, including guests of the center and paying foreigners. For nine days we will eat rice and *platanos* boiled without salt, and we will drink the decoction of those plants that, following our psychological interviews, were assigned to us.

We pass the first stretch crowded together on the back of a pickup truck, then it's an hour's walk uphill. On arriving, we find fresh lemonade and are assigned a *tambo*, an individual hut protected by a barrier of vegetation: little more than a roof and four walls made of branches, with a hammock, a decent bed and a new mosquito net. Outside of the *tambo* a bench; behind a hedge, the latrine is a hole in the ground. We go to wash ourselves in the river and put on clean clothes. Tonight we are going to meet the *abuelita*, we have to be tidy and properly dressed. At the end of the ceremony, right before dawn, everyone returns to their *tambo* to begin eight days of complete solitude.

Saturday morning, upon awakening from the *jagé* rite and when the sun has already been risen for some time, Edgardo, apprentice *taita* and our reference for the time of the diet, arrives, together with a very young helper. He brings me the root decoction of a plant called, in the local language, Ushpa Washa Sanango; in the Linnaeus taxonomy, it is *Tabernaemontana undulate*. I will take it morning and evening, alternated at midday with a decoction of coca leaves. The Ushpa, it is said, activates the memory of the heart, letting the farthest memories and the deepest emotions emerge, soliciting compassion. I expect it to be tannic and aromatic, like some teas are, but instead it has a terrible taste that makes me think of dish soap. Surprisingly, the coca decoction is much more palatable, bright green and with a nice, decisively vegetal taste. I expect it to activate and focus me, instead it makes me drowsy. Edgardo explains to me that it is used for dreaming. Halfway through the week will also arrive, just once, the *tabaquito* decoction, to enhance the effect of the other plants.

We have left in town everything that could remind us too strongly of our own biographies, of the exoskeleton of identity: IDs, money, photos, telephones, time-measuring devices, mirrors. We have no medicines, no vitamin supplements, no tobacco; even soaps and toothpastes, with their too strong smells, have been left home. Books are okay, however, and also little music players without date or time. Some have brought a musical instrument with them. We can walk around the forest, but if we pass by someone, we must go straight on avoiding eye contact: in the state of openness we are in, even looks can bring troubles.

Every day we go a couple of times to the river to wash ourselves and get water to drink. On diet, above the skin, an oily patina often forms that smells of burnt. Having fasted completely for twenty-four hours, on this first Saturday morning my asthenia is such that I walk as if I were very old. I have with me the stone that I picked up from the Genoa beach of my childhood. I give it to the river as a homage from a far away world; in return I ask for drinkable water.

After a scant hour of interview, the center's psychologist had me watch out for the haste of the head and the heart, and advised me to pay attention, during the diet, to slow changes and small things. And indeed it seems to me that nothing is happening, that nine days are an infinite expanse of time, that boredom will kill me well before the fast does... From the centre's library I borrowed three novels, but I am unable to read them.

Everything strikes me with extreme force, everything leaps to the heart to tear it apart. Luckily, I also have a stack of scientific papers with me and these I am able to read, proving once again that the real thing is literature and not science. At times, lowering the papers, I find myself eye to eye with strange insects similar to stealth helicopters, that sit themselves in front of me and remain still, in flight, to look at who knows what about me. Or who knows who.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #8. At issue is also the clear Cartesian opposition between subject and object. Maybe in objects there is much more than we admit to and the ways of existing are more numerous and nuanced than we think. About this the fables have so much to say.

Things act and they act on us: those that populate and make inhabitable our homes, animating themselves as soon as they cross the doorstep and then filling themselves up with our time; those which we think we have gotten rid of and that live a second life as polluting specters. Those that we throw into the cauldron of art and cage within museums because they are too powerful to remain free. They don't stand on the objective shore of reality, as opposed to the subjective shore of humans, but are, if anything, mixed entities, hybrids of nature and culture, endowed with a power that never can be fully tamed. It is very difficult to separate objects from concepts, doing from knowing, devices from forms of life. Recognizing the animation in objects – whether as an affective part of our own world, or because of the meaning that the builders have blown into them – immediately opens up glimpses of enchantment.

In the gray area of quasi-existence, specters of Marx ushered the critical season of hauntology: ontology and ghosts. The haunting is that special state of the world in which, beyond the awaited and ordinary presences (the seat, the sky, the factory walls, the corner bistro, the tree in the garden), we are alerted to others, that, however, cannot be seen in direct light or in frontal perspective, but only in chiaroscuro and with the corner of the eye. The ghost is the trace of a violence that we have not been able to erase and that returns to manifest itself as an unassignable memory and sudden terror. It lives in mental crypts, the more active the more unspeakable, and moves along the generations testifying to an event so full of abomination that it cannot be integrated: the abjection of the witches who burned on the flames at and that of the inquisitors that lit them; the

shame of being slaves and that of reducing others to slavery; the infamy of being flesh for the brothel and that of being flesh for the cannons; the shame of having survived the camps and that of being the executioners. Its persistence is an archeology of our dissociation.

Haunting manifests itself in the intermediate space between a system logic that can somehow be named (“capitalism,” “colonialism,” “racism,” “patriarchy,” “totalitarianism”) and the partial, symptomatic and contradictory experiences of it made by those who cross it. It is enough that at times the structures resemble each other – that there is between them a similarity of relationships – for the pain experienced in one to be reactivated in the other. In revealing the everyday violence that pervades the functioning of the world, the ghost dismantles ideological narratives, leaving us unguarded in the face of a harsh reality, grappling with our pain, our collusion and the necessity to do something. And it reveals that the apparently most private experiences are in fact entirely social, depending on the organization of the world, and passing through in the form of unsaid feelings, half words, common places, secrets, sudden discomforts. The dark corner of the garden behind the school, where no one went to play hide and seek, remains unapproachable for entire decades. The ghost that inhabits it is incorporated into the geography of the place, and lives in the movements of the older children. Until someone, overcoming fear, dares to go.

These mournful ghosts show that re-enchantment does not go through what, of the mystery, is mysterious, but rather through what, in it, is most trivial and ordinary, as was recognized by Benjamin’s Gothic Marxism and by surrealists. It is a fledgling researcher, still positivist, that hangs out at séances or seeks magical healing from a shaman in Siberia. Mystery is all around us. Profane illuminations await those who know where to look.

There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can “invoke” or not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in – and this inverts the schema of the Panopticon.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #9. The signals coming from the planet tell us that other worlds – fragile, imperfect and anything but idyllic, but undoubtedly *other* – still live. One hears it said that globalization would have already swept everything away, that no alterity has survived the meat

grinder of surplus value. It is still not true. Despite the power and the depth of the attack, other ways of humanity exist and are struggling hard to continue to exist. The “Marx-like resistances,” that have slowed and deflected the unfolding of capitalism in the West, are companions to the “Polanyi-like resistances” that, outside of the West, oppose the destruction imposed by market economy.

The picture that delineates itself can be briefly summarized as follows: starting from a reality that, as the hard sciences warn of, remains continually excessive, and much more complex with respect to any available interpretation, each collective (meaning a network made up of human and non-human beings taken as an entirety of reciprocal relations and in co-evolution) carves out of it a certain number of entities and phenomena (an *ontology*), establishes paths of knowledge appropriate to that context (an *epistemology*) and defines conduct consistent with the existence of that world (an *ethics*). Every human world is a specific region of the real, a particular declination of the nexuses of existence, knowledge and intention that underlie the very possibility of living. Each one reckons, in its own way, with the friction that the real does not cease to oppose, with uncertainty, with the banal and crucial fact of not being able to grasp the entirety.

The outcomes are very different: not everyone thinks, as we do, that there exists (or doesn't exist) a single god; that time had a beginning; that the rational foundation of actions is utility; that freedom means the absence of relationships to others; that survival and enjoyment are the supreme goals. There are places where humans receive teachings from plants; belong to the same ontological category as the wind and to another category than their children; are possessed by a spirit and much more, in endless variations and configurations.

Anthropologists do not hesitate to speak of *worlding*: the differences between the various human worlds are not the by-products of language, economic systems and material assets; on the contrary, all this institutional panoply and the material organization itself depend on diverse ontological assumptions, different ways of actualizing reality bringing into being specific qualities and relations. Relations thus have constitutive value, and are as real as the entities they connect; and, indeed, they are conditions of possibility of the entities themselves. It follows that cultures are not different visions projected onto a single “true” underlying reality, but lines of development of worlds possible to humans, jumbles of

nature-culture regulated by a certain internal coherence, where hybrids of every sort find a place, bringing into existence subjects, relational stories, and provinces of meaning constructed in ways that are different from those familiar to us; and that these worlds maintain continuous and intense diplomatic relations with what lies beyond and determines, through its very existence, the interaction, the exchange, the dialectic between inside and outside, here and elsewhere, thus and otherwise.

A world is a set of conditions: those that make it possible and those that it makes exist within itself. To reason ecologically means to verify which conditions make possible the different forms of life and of experience. This changes the way we pose questions: which entities are possible in this context, and which are not? What is possible within this set of relations, and what is not? This also changes the meaning of knowledge, of the ways of producing it, of the knowing subject. The particular logic that underlies a human world also regulates the ways in which one can contact the entities that populate it. Knowledge loses the universal value that modernity has attributed to it and recovers its own existential value: it is not an abstract objective truth, universal and the same for all, but a set of notions, experiences and practices that make a certain context inhabitable and that find within that same context the measure of its own validity. For this reason, access to specific knowledge, as well as access to other cultures, always leads to a *conversion*, a transformation of the subject, that must create within itself a stable relationship with a certain zone of reality and, in this way, become other.

For those who acknowledge the ontological, ethical and cognitive self-determination of the different collectives living on the planet, facts and values come back to touch each other again. In the faltering of modern *hybris*, is made visible the “democracy of worlds,” the equal dignity of every culture and the amount of patience, resistance, kindness, irony, tenacity, courage, and intelligence that everywhere are needed in the making of worlds.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #23. The nights in the forest are interminable. The forest rattles with the sounds of insects, birds, mammals and plants. It is a continuous and varied sound in which I lose myself. If it rains, I can also hear the river that runs just below, and when it's windy, a sequence of four sounds travels in the air, repeating itself at regular intervals, as if all the forest were tuning up to a melody. It is another world compared

to daytime. I realize that it scares me and that all my rationalism is not enough to dispel fear. The few times that I happened to turn on the flashlight in the midst of darkness, I found on the beaten earth of my *tambo* a variety of insects entirely different from those of the daytime: other tracks, colors, sizes. Once, gathering up my courage, I left the *tambo*. As soon as I was outside, my flashlight shone on the barred eyes of a small nocturnal mammal that stood dazed staring at the beam, more frightened than I was.

In the invariable twelve hours of dark at the equator, some cannot sleep at all. There are tales of dieters that spend the night staring at the darkness beyond the mosquito net, until they lose every desire for dawn to come. But it is true that the line between sleep and wakefulness is very different here. I am doing better; I have such an amount of sleep to catch up on that I sleep twelve, maybe even fourteen, hours a night. It is hard to say exactly: under the thickness of the trees, I can calculate the sun's movement only vaguely. There is a moment, though, approximately at sundown, when the sound of the forest suddenly rises. It remains loud for half an hour, until darkness arrives, then it goes back to normal levels, but intoning the sounds of the night. When I hear the forest sing the end of the day, I prepare myself for sleep. Next to me, in the protected space of the mosquito net, are my clothes, books, diary, pencil case, flashlight. Every night the dark splits in two: I sleep, have a vivid dream, write it down in my diary; then I fall back asleep, dream some more and I finally wake up again when the sun is already in the sky. Before getting up I write down this second vision as well. Not far from here, the people of the forest spend the night alternating sleep and tales of dreams whispered around the fire. There is a kind of knowledge that begin to exist only when shared.

This goes on for seven days and six nights. The novena is already drawing to a close. During the day I read, take notes, go to the river, walk around the *tambo* as much as my strength allows. I even take a short hike up river and at times I do some *qi gong* exercises, but the syncretism seems to me irreverent. Not because *qi gong* is not okay here, but because I don't know how to bring it with the grace it requires. My gaze has somehow changed, or so it seems to me. I am better at recognizing insects, leaves, animals. Or maybe I am getting used to them. Quiet days, deep nights. Toward the end of Thursday afternoon something in me veers elsewhere. I put away the papers, on which I can't focus anymore. Anguish and

paranoia show up with their well-known masks, always the same ones – that is, precisely the right ones for terrorizing me.

The night is terrible. The dreams come as vivid as ever, but this time they are nightmares. Terror can be unleashed by an image, a sentence, a name. Sickening truths appear. *There is no other pill to take, so swallow the one that makes you ill.* I see myself disanimated in a disanimated world, a *chullachqui* in black and white, and in that form I understand that whoever knows how to move in the horror gains power, that this is not for me, that I don't know how to return to the animated (illusory?) world that I knew before – all at once. Until morning hurricanes of psychic slime rage: the invisible violence that regulates relationships; the unspeakable of the world that I inhabit; my collusions.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #10. It is a difficult passage, that might require a handrail. Other worlds, different ways of subjectivity, non-ordinary experiences, bewitched objects, ghosts: what are we talking about, in the end? Where the cultural ground cracks open below our feet, we need a reference point that allows us to look out for alterity and for multiplicity without plummeting into anguish or rage. In the regions where worlds meet, diplomats are interweaving a Tibetan bridge.

The process of worlding described by anthropologists is also an integral operation of *anthro-poiesis*, of construction of humans, which invests every plane of consistency of the subjects. The cultural, ecological, historical, social, affective, and institutional coordinates that we grow up in, the customary temporality, the provinces of meaning and the familiar order of experience shape our becoming, channeling not only cosmovision or language, but even cell composition, gene regulation, physiological function, the structure of drives, the psychic maps.

Half of the cells that make up our bodies are not “our own” cells, they do not carry our genome, but are other living forms (bacteria, fungi, prokaryotes) that are present in almost all parts of our body and that perform “for us” a series of physiological operations that are indispensable to life. Which ones these “other livings” are depends on the place where we were born, conditions of birth, hygienic and ritual practices, diet, travels. From the very moment of its birth, the individual is already a collective whose composition and balance depend on its relationships with the surrounding ecological landscape.

Epigenetics intersects with cultural anthropology: there is no bare nature in us, no mechanical development of a pre-written program, no biological data that is not channeled through a specific cultural matrix. Culture is not a matter of symbols, norms, and notions. It is also and above all perception, intuition, breath. The specificity of our bodies responds to the specificity of the world that we live in. The techniques of care, the relationship with self and those with others (both human and non-human), the expectations of those around the newborn, the practices of care, the ways of knowledge, the variety of entities that exist in that context, the circulation of goods and of social roles: all this shapes us as specific subjects, children of a history. What we are today was brought into being by the contingencies of a particular time and place, by an intersection of events that connect species and family, epochs and chronicles, ecology and politics.

The cosmovision percolates right into the cells, to the point that even health, sickness and the paths of healing depend on it. Not everywhere is health experienced as “a state of complete physical, psychic and social well-being,” or as a sort of capital to safeguard. Other human worlds construct it as equilibrium, or as flow, or as correct position with respect to the cosmic axis, or even as a reliable net of relationships. Much in the same way, diseases are not natural entities, something objective and universal, but the product of a history in which innumerable factors interact in complex ways. Medical anthropologists and ethno-psychiatrists have shown that their onset, course, and possible paths of healing are influenced by ecological relationships, climate, available food, the distribution of power and resources, cultural relations with life and death, mythologies, signs and symptoms, anatomical maps, hygienic practices, rites, nosographies, techniques and resources of care, and the social approach to crisis.

Between subjects and world there is a consistency (which does not mean harmony, nor absence of conflict) and a profound *implication*. We welcome what our world welcomes, reject what it rejects. We diligently believe what it is necessary to believe, and, with equal precision, we don't believe what it is necessary not to believe. We read those signs that we were trained to take in, and stubbornly ignore the others. We know what we must know, and we also know what we must not know, in an intricate game of public truth and public secrets.

The whole of these relationships, knowledges, and feelings *makes us* and *makes us do*. The result is what Ernesto de Martino called *presence in*

the world: a way of being in the world and of being human, elaborated by a group over the course of its history and deposited in individuals; a certain temporality, a certain spatiality, a certain habit; the possibility of dealing with problems with reliable tools; the capacity to work the margins of the existing when confronted with unprecedented situations. Presence cannot be taken for granted: at any time and under any sky it must be established (it is what happens in the long and delicate process of growth), protected (in circumstances in which it is exposed to risk), cared for (in crises of uncertain outcome), and strengthened (through access to particular statuses and knowledges). That is done according to the specific ways of a collective, through a myriad of ordinary actions, and, when necessary, through extraordinary interventions. In the end, every form of presence in the world meets its limits at the ontological and epistemological boundaries of the world that made it exist.

Against every heroic fantasy, the anthro-poietical project is made up more of patience than of momentum, more of the everyday than of promethean intentions. Nonetheless, there is truly something heroic in every passage to adulthood; it takes courage, and the support of a collective, to confront the proximity of death or to come to terms with the finitude of mothers and fathers; risky, and therefore touching, is access to eroticism; an enormous reserve of patience and imperturbability is necessary to take care of the places, persons and entities that populate the world; and every crisis that we face requires at the very least not to abandon ourselves to despair. Presence is the capacity to be in the world without seceding from it, without going crazy and without committing suicide: it is the capacity *to continue to make world*.

To say that one “sees Marian apparitions” is a bit like saying that one is seeing things and has gone crazy, but what should we say of those who never see her? For, just as there are those who occasionally see the Virgin Mary, so there are those who never see her. Some time ago, for example, I happened to read the report of a guy who, on behalf of the Civil Protection, had drafted an inventory of the works of art preserved in a monastery. Well, this guy went as far as to write, “At the end of the corridor there is a painting that represents a young mother with the baby on her knee. Particularity: the head of the woman is topped by a golden ring.” How far can this type of vision or, if we prefer this type of anti-vision, go? Because

after all, on closer inspection, there on the canvas there was nothing but a bunch of colored marks enclosed in an old wooden frame.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #11. For much of his life, spent defending the magical world from the disdain of its contemporaries, de Martino held that the modern world was the higher and more desirable one. While, in fact, in non-modern contexts presence is labile and continually at risk, the given-ness and objectivity of the modern and scientific world would guarantee such a solid presence that the problem of its establishment could be considered settled once and for all.

De Martino's descriptions of the crises of presence in the magical world are rightly celebrated. Presence falters when it is exposed to the unknown (the panic of the shepherd of Marcellinara on seeing the bell tower of his village move away toward the horizon) or when an event breaks up and sweeps away the everyday order and, with it, also the fabric of relationships and the reliability of the world. Failing also, then, is the distinction between subject and object, between word and thing, between true and false: it is no longer the leaves on the tree that rustle and sway, but the subject; the word is no longer a sign of a thing, but is the thing itself, and with the violence of the thing it can harm; the outside can invade the inside, the inside is dispersed in the outside. Balances are broken: one can become food for the sorcerers, predator of one's own kind, servant of an object. Or no longer be there.

It is a dangerous situation for whoever has lost presence and for whomever is around, for the stability of that world. There is a need to reconstruct an order, to recover a possibility of being by any means available, be they rites, plants, chants, prayers and or ointments. In the magical world, magic – which, in its simplest definition, is *efficacy of intentions* – is not the normal fabric of life, but a means of warding off the risk of disintegration. It presupposes that presence does not only come from the mechanics of the elements, but requires an intention, *a certain animation* that, when needed, can be provided by someone else. We, instead, would no longer need that means: solidly guaranteed by the given-ness of the modern world, our presence in the world would no longer need magical means neither to be established, nor to be protected or cared for. No one can vicariate anyone else: the individual is born, dies, and falls sick by themselves. In our world, therefore, magic disappears.

At the beginning of the 1960s, however, even comrade de Martino sets his eyes on something that the Frankfurt School theorists had already seen from the shores of North America, and begins to doubt the stability and the implicit superiority of the civilization that surrounds him. The files prepared for *The End of the World* mark this limit: the crisis is no longer the teetering of an archaic and fragile presence, but an inescapable possibility for all, a radical risk for individuals and collectives. Every order is inhabited by the possibility of disorder; every rhythm can be interrupted by an extraordinary event. The possibility that the world may end takes different names and forms according to circumstances, but has never really disappeared from the horizon, not even at our latitudes.

The unprecedented event can never be ruled out; presence can lose itself; the worlds can collapse. Modernity has tried to ban these risks by totalizing the real, drawing the predictability of what surrounds us to the utmost limits, with the *unus mundus* (“one world”) and decisions made in advance. It did not work. Not only because the need for something else has troubled the centuries of surplus value with insurrectional aspirations or because of the epidemic spread of psychic distress, but also due to what we now call the Anthropocene. Compared with other extraordinary events, this one is peculiar because it’s the product of our own activity: not something coming from outside, a meteor or an unknown invasion, but our own progress in its own making. How can we protect ourselves from a disaster brought about by what should have guaranteed us against any disaster? There is a deep Gödelian irony in this, that forces us to ask ourselves an uncomfortable question. If a myriad of human groups, in confronting the imponderable and crisis, have used means that we contemptuously call “magic,” couldn’t it be that “magic” is a good way to navigate what has not been decided in advance?

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #24. The next morning I’m shattered. When Edgardo arrives with the first dose of the plant, he doesn’t need me to talk to find out how I am. He stops a few minutes longer than usual to have a word, he is assessing the situation; then he decides that I can make it, smiles as he leaves and tells me: “Cheer up, tomorrow the diet is over.” I am so grateful I can’t say anything.

A little later the psychologist arrives for the last of the three check-ups. As always, she sits a certain distance from me, because, as they

explained to us, in the openness induced by the diet we absorb an enormous amount of energy from nearby people: the distance is therefore intended to protect the therapists. She watches me carefully while I put together enough English, French and Spanish words to tell her about last night. She suggests that behind all this there is a shadow theme (she says it just like that, in English), and that this shadow is that of violence. She advises me to make a list of all the times in my life that I have encountered violence. Then, like a medical officer, she leaves again for her rounds of visits. For a while I activate all possible resistance; finally I take out my diary, lie down in my hammock, and I write, in a smaller and smaller handwriting, everything I can remember: the wounds received (few), those inflicted (more than I would like), and above all those seen or told of. It never ends. I keep going for a very long time, one memory pulls up another until an image arrives that brings to an end the labour that began in the night. I cry all there is to cry and this too lasts for a very long time. The amount of violence I have crossed during my life – a quiet, sheltered and safe life – is astonishing.

In the 1960s, Jesuit Eric de Rosny is initiated by his master Din into the underworld of Duala healers. The process goes on intermittently for a couple of years and de Rosny needs epistolary support from the brethren of his French monastery. The crucial moment comes when, one summer, Din finally agrees to “open the eyes” of the pupil. In the weeks that lead up to the event, de Rosny makes three different hypotheses about what he will end up seeing. In the first, the vision gives nothing or, better put, reveals that there is nothing to see and requires surviving disillusionment. In the second, the vision is provoked by hallucinogenic plants, and is similar to the ecstatic experiences practiced almost everywhere in the world. In the third, the vision reveals the imaginary, the dreams and ghosts confined in the shadow, and teaches how to take them seriously, providing a code of interpretation. All are plausible hypotheses to a Euro-cultured ear. What happens, however, is entirely unexpected. In the wee hours of an August morning, after a nightmare, de Rosny wakes up and swallows the herbs prescribed by the master. Thus, all of a sudden, the long-awaited moment arrives, the Jesuit’s eyes open: *human beings kill each other*. Social relations are interwoven with violence; cruelty can be unleashed at any moment. One needs an initiation, a pedagogy, to look such brutal facts in the face without going crazy and without abandoning oneself, in turn, to

the funnel of violence and revenge. Perhaps this is why dreams talk about it so much and whoever *has seen* is a disquieting figure.

Now that I have just barely caught a glimpse of it, I want to go back immediately to the mirage of social peace. I feel an excruciating nostalgia for the Enlightenment, for a waking reason that chases all the monsters away, for democracy, for progress. For that magnificent dream of putting an end, once and for all, to evil and violence: for that illusion, for that delusion.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #12. Claude Lévi-Strauss, who did not lack courage, called it *symbolic efficacy* and we still have not found a better name for it. Analyzing the text of the Song of Muu, sung by Cuna shamans to unblock difficult births, and which recursively describes the situation of the birth itself, Lévi-Strauss holds that the shaman's song provides to the woman in labour an ordered language and a frame of shared social knowledge in which to express states, aware and unaware, that would otherwise remain unexpressed. The linguistic reorganization of events, brought about by the shaman on the basis of their knowledge, makes intelligible an experience that would otherwise be unspeakable and unstructured, and it is precisely this reorganization that would lead to the unblocking of the physiological process.

It is a visionary hypothesis, one that likens psychotherapy and shamanic therapy under the sign of the symbolic reordering of the world. The immaterial (the abstract, the psychic, the soul) acts on the material (the organic, the physical, the biological); signs and symbols can heal the flesh. A "symbolic manipulation" of the body's pain is possible: the organic efficacy of the shamanic intervention could shed light on the aspects of Freudian theory that have remained obscure. As with de Martino, also for Lévi-Strauss the observation of what happens in the spaces of crises imposes heterodox questions and theories.

Too delicate for limelights, the hypothesis creatively works at the discipline's fringes. Seventy years and many ethnographies later, we know that the Cuna shamanic therapy cannot work in the described way, because the song is recited in a secret language, unintelligible to the patient except for a few occasional words. It cannot, therefore, be the *content* of the song that shapes the pain of the woman in labour. This, however, still does not mean that the song is without efficacy.

It is possible, writes Taussig, that Lévi-Strauss projected onto the Cuna shaman the role of the academic master that he himself was: that of ordering the world through words. Not by chance, in his interpretation the least important element is the patient's experience, and what counts the most is the shaman's role as bearer of social knowledge. Based on his experiences in the Putumayo region of Columbia, Taussig hypothesizes instead that it is the patients themselves who accomplish the efficacy of the rituals by creatively interrogating, together with the shaman, social knowledge from the place where the worlds are made and unmade. The song, then, is not a call to a social order already known and deposited, but a search – in danger and instability – for an image, a resemblance or a nexus that allows the transit toward a new stability. The success of the therapy does not consist in restoring the previous normality, but in the uncertain and choral invention of a creative escape from disorder toward something unprecedented. Symbolic efficacy is not the action of a disembodied mind on a material body, but the working of the biosocial nexus that we are in every part of us, of symbols that have become symptoms.

At stake is the becoming, the possibility of a desirable transformation and the endless chasing of stability and change. In counterpoint to the modern cosmovision, Amazonian shamanism works for us like a vision machine: health is not an individual endowment, or a fixed capital, but a possibility of passage; therapy is not restoration, but the search for the “higher health” of the healed. There is no return but the invention of a transit, of an order where there is no order, of a possibility of future where presence is more fragile.

To whoever accepts diving into them, and even more to those who have to face them starting from a crisis, “symbolic efficacy” and “magic” tear open delicate ontological, epistemological, and ethical questions: what lies underneath the ordinary fabric of days, relationships, living, knowing? How do we contact it? How do we come back from it?

The Orphic way is notoriously an ascetic way, but of an asceticism that is not exactly that of an aesthetic of resistance, or of a cure for the self that would imply, according to a significantly social metaphor, governing the self. It could be called “mystical” on the condition of understanding – the papyrus of Derveni gives us a stunning example – that there is no other

consequent materialism but the mystical one and, vice-versa, that a saved humanity would perhaps be integrally mystical.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #13. The multiplicity and finitude of the worlds bring a different appreciation of what surrounds them and makes them possible, connects and separates them, singles them out and disintegrates them. The existential, cognitive and cosmic value of co-presence appears: *precisely because* they are multiple, the worlds are in relation to one another, they define themselves in confrontation with other worlds rather than as bubbles of autistic or totalizing sovereignty. Likewise, precisely because it exists in many forms and is finite, presence is never saturated, closed, or complete: it remains in relation with the common ground from which it emerged, with what is both itself and other than itself, the layer of endless possibilities that Simondon called *preindividual*.

The space beyond the margins is not precluded, and indeed is continually nearby and active. Assuming it is unique, that common ground – the “exceeding real” of the sciences – is not circumscribable. If we describe any human world as a beam of light that illuminates and tints with its own color a particular region of the real, then between the area in light and that in darkness there is no barrier, nor a precise boundary line. Beyond the illuminated cone there is not immediately the deepest darkness, but a band of twilight that progressively thickens. This twilight is the imaginary.

Here lies the buried, unconscious and repressed part of the foundation of a world, the prime folds that prepare it and make it possible. It is the zone where the futures are developed, at the interface between what already is and what we would like to make exist. And it is also the zone of discontinuities, of remnants, of discarded possibilities, of ghosts and of all that, in order for that world to exist, was excluded or eliminated, and which, for this very reason, never ceases to present itself: disquieting facts, forces and tensions, of which nothing is known for sure, because, by their very nature, they cannot be observed in full light. It is the place where history leaves ballast, where collective narratives, sayings, affects, scripts that harness desires, traces of power and domination, images that bring the other along with the same, all intertwine and clash. It is the “dream-myth” made up of discontinuities and survivals that links and gives shape

to all those who belong to a collective, that permeates their dreams, that changes as those very subjects and their world change.

In the imaginary there can be found the places of negotiation between what we are and know and what we are not and do not know, between the entities and the forces which we give a name to and all the others. Nothing too neat and tidy: risks and salvations, solutions and threats are indistinguishable; concepts and words are instable, their meaning can continually move elsewhere until it turns into its opposite. In their fluidity, the entities of the imaginary act as *switches*: they can convert any sign, any direction and any value into something else. Deleuze spoke of a becoming-active of reactive forces; others have spoken of dialectics and noted that the matches played in this field are decisive. But it is too much *hybris* to believe that we know what these matches are and how they will end.

In the imaginary – among dreams, myths, lightning fast intuitions, sudden fears, profane illuminations, ghosts, memories and remnants – it is difficult to rationalize what happens and to move according to preordained plans. The signs encountered there are clues, not certainties. The asset of each world depends in a crucial way on its relationship with this uncertain and loose zone of the real. Every culture has its own ways of contacting it: much of the anthropoietic, cognitive, and therapeutic work consists precisely in a negotiation (cautious or risky, expert or surprised) with the forces and the tensions that originate there and with the specters that are rejected back there. Cultural institutions themselves are nothing but the sedimentation of these exchanges in an enduring configuration that stabilizes certain signs and certain concatenations to the exclusion of others.

In the relationship between what has already been singled out and the pre-individual, what is at risk is us, in the most intimate and crucial sense possible: the process of individuation is a continuous dance between what is in act and the potential charge that every individual brings with themselves *and that brings them together with all the others*. Contact with the imaginary is a condition of life itself: the indefinite lies not only at the borders of the human world to which we belong, but also in the innermost parts of ourselves, where what we still are not is the tropism that moves, without any guarantees, toward an entirely imagined elsewhere. Maybe it's inevitable that the worlds produce, as they move, a certain degree of violence and that this, in turn, produces ghosts. But even so, there are many ways

to inhabit choices and to enter into relation with the unactualized and the unthought-of. Those collectives that know how to honor what has been excluded and to stay in touch with the forces of the otherwise have many more chances of being livable.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS #25. Saturday afternoon the *taita* comes for the second time to my *tambo*: eight days ago he came to ritually open the diet, now he comes to close it. Then Edgardo gives me a bowl with a salad of onion, salt and lemon. It is the salt, above all, that puts an end to this suspended time: its intake closes the rind, and stabilizes the human form that I have become. Even this, however, will take time and patience. The dietetic and relational prescriptions will continue for at least a month, even after we return to the valley. No sugar, no processed foods, no eroticism, avoid crowds and markets, beware of smells that are too strong, avoid any proximity to death, hospitals, or violence.

At mid-afternoon the horn sounds. Solitude is over. We all gather at Edgardo's house for a chicken and vegetable soup cooked in river water. I find my fellow exploring companion again; I feel I have an infinity of things to tell him. He has lost a lot of weight but is fine, in the midst of an interior work that shines. We look at each other smiling, each observes on the face of the other what has happened to themselves. The group of Argentinians chats loudly, amid laughs and interrupted stories. Without having to tell each other, we choose silence. After dinner, in the dusk, I exchange a few words with a young Australian. We tell each other the main facts of the diet, there is no need for a lot of words. "It's like they say: there are things that stick inside you like poisoned arrows and, until you take them out, the wound can't heal." I must have read this theory at least fifty times in Amazonian ethnographies and only now, in the words of this kindred stranger, do I understand its meaning. *The more you study the more you become an ass*, said my grandmother in her dialect from lower Piedmont.

The next morning, I close the backpack and prepare to leave. I should do something symbolic, a ritual, a prayer, an invocation to the forest – or whatever. But I am not able, I am a fucking Westerner and the forest will pardon me if I have no ritual formulas for greeting. I put my non-recyclable waste in a plastic bag: before leaving I also gather up the cigarette butts, bottle caps, and pieces of plastic, arrived here from who knows where, from the beaten earth in front of my *tambo*. I know by heart the

spots in the ground where they are stuck. The ants, in the meantime, keep on carrying away tiny bits of toilet paper from the latrine, where every night the earth made disappear everything that, during the day, came out of my body.

We descend to the valley in single file. In the night it rained hard: the two fords that, on arrival, barely wet my boots now require immersion up to the knees, the first, up to the chest, the second. A young man offers to carry my luggage so it won't get wet. He crosses the ford without hesitation, with my pink backpack over his head; then he comes back to carry that of an elderly man. We make a chain holding each other by the arms. The water is high and the current pushes from behind, in front of us is a waterfall of three or four meters. While we slowly move toward the other shore, one step after the other, an enormous metallic light blue colored butterfly flies a few meters away from us. The species of genus *Morpho* glide on the more open forest routes, such as river courses, and have in their wings iridescent slats that reflect the light according to unusual and mutable angles. Is that color really a trick, as the father of Adrian Leverkühn would have it, or is it an enchantment that we don't know how to recognize and that, just for this reason, gets in our way until we get lost? In Sparta, *morpho* was one of the epithets of Aphrodite "beautifully shaped," but also "she that changes form." Metaphysics, metamorphysics. The butterfly that flies just above our heads is as large as an unspeakable open book.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #14. Here Western modernity has erected all its defenses. To navigate the ontological, epistemological, and ethical darkness that surrounds every human world, we must first of all admit that the darkness exists; that our tools have only limited validity; that our world is only one among many – precisely what we usually refuse to do. By ruling out the existence of this twilight zone, it also banishes the tools that can be used to navigate it. Too labile and uncertain to guarantee decisions taken in advance, too moody to be foundational, for four centuries analogy and belief have been excluded from the epistemological toolkit, treated with condescension and even embarrassment.

Both have narrow margins of reliability and for this reason, rightly, they are watched with suspicion when it comes to formalizing on solid bases a knowledge already amply tested, guaranteeing its endurance in time. But where ambiguity cannot be removed and everything can transform

itself into its opposite, analogy and belief are, at times, the only resource available for inventing a stability without guarantees. Like tricksters, they can be found in all the places of passage between what exists and what is possible, between the individuated and the pre-individual, where knowledge, which still does not exist, begins to make itself out of a gamble. While, in fact, in entering into relations with an already defined world one can rely on guides and companions (adults for children, teachers for students, field informants for anthropologists), in the imaginary that is not possible: we leap without a net. The jump will succeed if what is sought for modifies in a congruent way both the subject and the context. Any new relationship is a gamble, and every logic begins as a risky analogy. In Melandri's blunt formulation, hermeneutics precedes ontology.

In all its meanings and resonances, "to believe" is the verb that regulates accesses to the imaginary. Compared with "to know," which refers to discursive knowledge and the possession of stable notions, "to believe" has to do with movement, with the set of transformations that are needed for the establishment of a meaningful relationship that structures the subject and makes the world reliable; i.e. with knowledge, whatever form it takes. To know means to enter into a reliable relationship with the entities of a world, to be able to contact them without getting hurt and without destroying them; it is the co-becoming of world and subject. Despite all of our efforts to hide it, in the process that leads to knowing there is a transformative force that invests the subject in its entirety: it's the cells, the bones, the nervous system, the eyes, the nose and the diaphragm that know; to know means to incorporate. The verb "to believe" designates, precisely, *the becoming a body* of knowledge, its embodiment, in all its phases and its dangers.

Hence its ambiguity, the nuances of its meaning. To believe can mean *to know* (understood as embodied knowledge: one has to believe that the world exists in order to get up every morning); *to suspect* (to sense a dissonance between one's expectations and the phenomena of a world: "I believe that things are not as they seem"); *to have confidence* (to foresee that the movement we are getting ready to make will succeed: "I believe that we can do it"); *to be persuaded* (by someone who will profit from the consequences: "I believe that this brand of toothpaste is better than that one"); *to hypothesize* (construing at one's own risk a theory on the state of things: "I believe that this is the disarming wire of this device"); *to*

want to make exist (to give body, within yourself, to an external cause, to a necessary reason for becoming: “I believe that God favors those who are honest”); and probably much else.

In all that, images seem to play a key role as the first thickening of the possible into a form that admits a certain degree of legibility. In Eleusis they saw, in the *jagé* nights they seek a vision, the incubation of dreams sought a figure of health. Images bring about the symptoms, fractures, discomforts, and the potentiality of the world in which they appear; they manifest the tensions between logic and magic, idol and sign, presence and ghost. From here, perhaps, come their peculiar power, the struggles over representability, the persistence of the *Pathosformeln*. Not only the “scopic” and objectifying image to which our culture has accustomed us, but the ambiguous vision of the dream, the intuition, the prefiguration, the sign, the active object that links different trajectories, the figures of song, the mythical frescos, the special power of tales.

Bion thinks that a great part of psychic activity consists of a dreamlike re-elaboration of brute, and often brutal, incoming data arriving from the world. This does not only occur in nocturnal dream: even when, awake, we are busy in all our other activities, an incessant and subterranean flow of *rêveries* associates and organizes, at an elemental level, the material provided by perceptions and emotions. The montage of these “dream images” is the first way in which we make sense of our being in the world, of the incessant flow of stimuli and sensations in which we are immersed. This process of *rêverie* is not innate: at the beginning of the journey, *someone dreams for us*, plunging us in the imaginary of a group, in the myth-dream of a collective. In the modern world, the function of transforming and processing within oneself the shapeless sensations of newborns is mostly left to parents; elsewhere, other configurations are possible. Moreover, it is not a predictable process: where the flow of the *rêverie* is disturbed (maybe because the imaginary is barred or colonized, or due to the diffusion of stereotypes) malaise creeps in.

The dreams that welcome us when we arrive depend on the dreamers, on their history, on their time, on the constitution of their world. The question is at the same time epistemological and existential: at the beginning of the journey that has shaped us, *someone has believed for us*. Has believed in the science of the pediatrician, in the efficacy of amulets, or in the benevolence of the ancestors. Has admitted and accepted as true and

effective things that only after a long time we were able to name and even, eventually, reject. Whoever has believed for us – in the double sense of *in our place* and *on our behalf* – has introduced us to the dreamed-constructed world of a collective, to its concatenations, to its timbre. They have shaped us according to those flows and those nexuses, making us able to navigate them. To believe means here to lean on the world, counting on its stability: not an abstract and cerebral wishful thinking, but a “cellular” faith, the certainty that what is around us is solid and real, that the world is reliable. That we can live in it.

Belief kills; belief heals. The beliefs held by persons in a society play a significant part in both disease causation and its remedy. In different societies, such categorizations, beliefs, and expectations are culturally organized, to various degrees, in ethnomedical systems. The significance of these beliefs in disease causation and cure is the same as that of microorganisms and pharmaceuticals; given certain conditions of host and environment, pathology or healing consistently follows belief. We describe these phenomena as “culturogenic” or, more specifically, as “ethnomedicogenic” disease and healing. Biomedicine, the predominant ethnomedicine of our society, participates equally in such causal processes.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #15. Beyond all that, *to believe for someone* also means to prefigure the possibilities of positive transformation. This is where believing as certainty (the security of the stability of the world) and believing as openness (the capacity to imagine that things can go in a different way from what was expected) converge: it is the very meaning of trust. These delicate operations connect the imaginary and the actual, in search of desirable possibilities. In this process, which is perhaps the most crucial of all, analogy is one of the most effective tools available.

Main “missing in action” of the modern world, snubbed because of its uncertainty and continually reduced to something different, analogy is not similarity between entities that belong to the same horizon, but *similarity of relationships*: not “A resembles B,” therefore, but “A is to B as C is to D.” This means that analogy is structural: it can afford to ignore the content, to dispense with essences, because the gap it opens is provided by forms, by relations. As such, it is capable of moving between

ontological categories, of tracking down possibilities of movement where there is no logical identity or referential stability, and where causality is bi-directional. In other words, in contrast to the veto over fruit salad (“don’t compare apples and oranges!”), the ban on mixing categories that we learned in math and philosophy classes, analogy is, *par excellence*, the operator of multiplicity. By temporarily stabilizing the real before forces and swerves, in their flow, become something else, analogy makes it reliable for the time it takes to pass from a known to an unknown zone, even when between the two there is no similarity of content.

Compared to logic and the principle of non-contradiction, analogy establishes a completely different distribution of forces, based on dipolarity: no longer “white *or* not-white,” but “black *and* white,” with all the intermediate shades of grey. Analogical dipolarity is every bit as rational a method as the monopolar logic for distributing the entities of the world, and a more inclusive one, since it includes mono-valence in itself as a limiting case. If modernity, always and in every case, prefers logic, it is because “white *and* black,” and “being *and* non-being” imply a certain readiness to live with contradiction and multiplicity.

And it is precisely multiplicity, here, that poses a subtle ethical question. According to Melandri, logic is the “problem child” of analogy, a little autistic genius that can’t see anything beside itself, but which is unbeatable as warrantor of a world’s stability and inhabitability: deprived of a certain consequentiality, in fact, worlds fall apart. This child must not be left alone, however, because it doesn’t know how to conduct itself in the world with the necessary grace. In fact, while analogy includes logic in itself as extreme case, logic does not know how to include analogy in itself. In the same way, disenchantment is the “problem child” of enchantment, an intellectually brilliant but rather anaffective kid, whose limits do not make it any less dear. The disenchantment that liberates us from the spell, the critique that dissolves modern sorcery – that of Marx and Adorno, of Anders and Cesarano – is *pharmakon*: it heals in the right dose, but in an excessive dose it poisons. To tame it, it must be combined with the art of the poets and that of the mystics, until a mixture is achieved that can demystify without desertifying. Admitting analogy, multiplicity, and enchantment, also means admitting logic, uniqueness, and disenchantment. It is no longer a matter of taking a stand for one pole over the other, but of finally seeing their endless co-implication.

In the Greater Antilles, a few years after the discovery of America, while the Spanish were sending out commissions of investigation to discover whether the native had a soul, the latter spent their time drowning white prisoners in order to ascertain, by long observation, whether or not their bodies would decompose.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #16. Winnicott wrote that children walk on paths illuminated by their parents' gaze. It is a splendid picture, which we interpret above all as an opening up of possibilities. In fact, it contains both opening and closing: where parents do not look, children do not venture. In the world we live in, the gaze of adults illuminates counting, entrepreneurship, and discursive knowledge; but it doesn't enable trance to exist, nor the possibility of learning from plants or the knowledge of thousands of songs. It couldn't be otherwise: each world exists according to a specific ontology and no world can make all of them true – no more than a city can be read with a map of any other city.

Some read this situation as repressive, confusing putting into shape for oppression. The question is delicate because, if the being put into shape is indispensable (without it, worlds are unliveable and presence disintegrates), the power applied in it continually risks sliding into domination. What is the limit of parents' authority over children? Every operation that mobilizes the imaginary poses analogous questions: where is the border between therapy and plagiarism? Where does command end? How can we tell madmen from prophets? Who draws the borders of truth? These questions don't admit to any definitive solutions because it is always possible for human beings to move between power and domination, between negotiation and oppression, between knowledge and abuse. In these moors, intentions (aware and unaware) are one of the most active forces, and the only possibility of ethical standing.

An unknown figure strikes the passerby – maybe it is the silhouette of a weird animal in the courtyard, or the shadow in a stranger's gaze, or the wandering of an unnamed sorrow – and it shakes the predictability of the world. The apparition causes a *not knowing if*, an anguished suspension of judgment that contradicts the tranquility of the ordinary. The world is no longer readable according to the usual categories. This dis-alignment, which at times is the beginning of the awaited change, can be used negatively in many creative and terrible ways: to drain the

wealth of the passerby; to cast curses; to make existence uncertain; to sow terror and paranoia.

This is how the spectacular images act: obsessively repeated, they hint at overwhelming forces, inescapable concatenations and a desperate failure of the wordly order. In their spectral likelihood, they dig into the psyche channels of fear and behavioral shortcuts. The emotional vortices described for certain historical periods and that overwhelmed entire populations are often linked to the spread of myths and images of terror. The hegemony of a small number of white Christians over Indian and African *irracionales* has passed through the myth of their invincibility and a shrewd use of cruelty. The legend of the Reich's invincibility was nourished by the staging of rallies and by the unspeakable of the death camps. Who can lose a war, who is capable of going that far?

Or, as in the case of shamanic therapy, the well-found image flashes an alternative scenario to what seemed inescapable, making motion and trust possible again. The flickering of the fabric that holds the everyday together opens up to the visionary possibility of *having faith that*. It is the moment when one senses that, in the plot of the real, a hole has opened from which something totally other peeps out. The woman in labour, who is experiencing the mortal risk of an adverse sequence of events, connects herself, along with the shaman, to the forces that allow for another sequence, a different outcome. An absurd suspicion of victory spreading in an exhausted army overturns the odds of a battle. Sensations at the stomach level save from the sniper's fire.

Auspicious or not, the sign of these processes does not depend on the content of the representation, but from the type of movement that develops around it. That is the same as saying that the process is not decided in advance, that there is no determinism. For this reason, in the crucial circumstances of the individual and the collective life, the intentions of those who act are so fundamental: when it comes to establishing something that does not yet exist, to fishing in the *mare magnum* of the pre-individual, or to the image that rips open an adverse mechanism, no guarantee is given except the possibility of trusting to the good intentions of whoever is carrying out the operation; and to the stability of the world.

From the intention to inhabit multiplicity comes a further ethical criterion, a most extravagant one: it is precisely the shrewd use of disenchantment, the *unveiling of the trick*, that allows us to tell sorcerers (those

who use enchantment to their own advantage, or to the advantage of their masters) from fellow explorers, charlatans and troublemakers from those who seek in the imaginary a chance to make world in uncertain circumstances. A light-hearted disenchantment, that no longer claims to be the ultimate truth of the world, is endowed, for just this reason, with a much higher function: that of urging magicians and poets, parents and teachers, therapists and revolutionaries to a more beautiful enchantment, to a sharper attention, to a deeper awe.

If, then, wonder releases itself when we experience something unexpected, for the moment to be magic a surplus of energy is required: an amazing experience becomes magical when it infuses, in those who live it, the knowledge that there exists a dimension that escapes our little boxes.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #17. Many of the phenomena that we had resigned ourselves to ignore become speakable again. The relationship with children is packed with events that hint at symbolic efficacy: the newborn that has kept parents awake all night and falls seraphically asleep cradled by the passing friend; the effect of the adult's hand that soothes the pain of a fall, therapy of choice at the playground and psycho-magic in its pure state; the singular power of fairy tales and nursery rhymes. Changed in sign, this form of efficacy makes it possible that, when questioned by an adult who assumes the reality of certain scenario, the children's answers will be congruent with that scenario even if the facts never occurred.

The therapist's gaze on the patient is a (if not *the*) fundamental therapeutic act: if the doctor leaves no room for healing, it is very difficult that the sick person can leave any. In the same way, the tranquility of the teacher that treats the students as if they were already what they can become is the very enzyme that allows the transformation to take place. In both cases, moving on the side of trust and leaving possibilities open means to be something quite different from a bureaucrat. It means being able to support the process of another fellow human, by making available a practice, a knowledge, a way of trust; it means being a catalyst that is itself destined in the end to disappear.

Upon awakening from certain dreams, in the presence of music, and in certain passages of life, the sense – whether perceptive, emotional, and

cognitive – of the world, and of us in the world, changes, as when one passes a mountain ridge. Between singing, dreaming and healing there seems to be, in some languages, an ancient philological nexus: the work of the poet and that of the therapist act in the same depths.

Witness to this, magicians, illusionists, and conjurers give us experiences still full of poetry. When we scorn their performances as tricks, we reveal the cleavage that runs through us. Because every technical marvel of the complicated world that surrounds us, is, in its turn, a trick, a tinkering with reality to outflank what is already given. The talent of the engineers and the ingenuity of the magicians are after all very similar. Both, in their practice, must continually invent solutions, dodge what they cannot eliminate, bricolage, sharpen an art of materials that is not found in books, but lies instead in the hands and the nerves of those who have long practiced it. A further element of affinity: engineering manuals as much as prestidigitation and illusionism textbooks are, for the profane, terribly boring. If we reserve the epithet of “trick” to the contraptions and gimmicks of the magicians, but not to those of the engineers, it is because we feel we must defend ourselves more from the former than from the latter. For while engineers work out mechanical causal chains over which, culturally, we all have a certain grasp, magicians and illusionists manipulate perceptual causal chains which we don’t know much about, that we take for granted and whose faltering destabilizes us. The ball that disappears in the magician’s hand catches perceptual boredom off-guard and forces us to open ourselves, even if only for the time of their performance, to the wonders of the world.

Divination regains its meaning, one that has less to do with predicting what will happen, understood as access to a secret and elusive knowledge, than with the conditions that, in the present, make the future viable. The divinatory procedure puts back in motion the dynamism of life in circumstances that block its impulse. It doesn’t operate on the contents of the future but on the conditions of “futurability,” on the existential structure of the present time, on the possibility of imagining oneself beyond the impasse. Many of the more refined devices – the I Ching or the Ifá, for example – combine a random process, such as tossing coins or tiles, with a predetermined series of signs associated with images. In this way, they put into relation the unpredictable essence of the unique moment with a stable structure of signs: they create an analogy between an uncertain

present and a reliable set of figures already tested for their capacity to mobilize the future. Divination is a tool that brings the present into constellation with a historical sedimentation stable enough to be reliable (the permanence of signs, the long history of their interpretation) and mobile enough not to imprison.

Processes of trust building are at work in empowerment techniques, in the decision-making procedures of activists, in the devices for accessing different forms of consciousness. In all cases, it is a matter of loosening or outflanking the armor of distrust, impotence, and cynicism required by the struggle of all against all, in order to make room to other experiences of the world and of oneself. They seem to be magical or heroic endeavors, but in fact they depend on the *technical* capacity to lay out situations that allow for non-ordinary processes of experience. Practice is essential, as is also the quality of one's instruments, the ability to adapt them to circumstances and the courage to invent new ones. It is indispensable, in these settings, to rely on a certain goodness of the processes: not by chance, they involve the presence of figures ("social roles," so to speak) tasked with codified actions, free from psychological interpretations, whose function is precisely that of guaranteeing the conditions that make trust possible. Unlike contexts aimed at consensus building or at manipulation, these settings are transparent in their intentions and allow for plurality, heterogeneity, and disagreement not only as their starting points, but as occasions that open up possibilities that wouldn't otherwise exist.

To conclude, the possibility of trust can extend itself to the point, to us unthinkable, of death. It is very possible that the conditions that make *buen vivir* ("good life") possible are the same ones that allow for a *buen morir* ("good death"), part of a becoming and of a continuity about which, in the end, we know little. Only the sovereign, on earth, is immortal, and, precisely because he cannot die, he is doomed to die a violent death – and sovereigns we don't want to be anymore.

A shaman once related to E.D. the differences between Western and shamanic approaches to therapy: "Psychologists take the patient all the way to the edge of the cliff and leave him there. What I do is push him over the cliff and go with him, and stay with him as long as it takes to bring him back."

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #18. In the image of the revolution heterogeneous meanings flow together. The first has to do with the state of things: revolution is the movement that overturns a hateful domination, an ancient system of oppression, a machine well seasoned with abuse. In this form there is no need of a plan, the melancholic impatience of the oppressed is enough; and it is akin with prophecy and with the divine violence defined by Benjamin. It is the anarchic revolution, which includes insurrections, exoduses, and every form of stubborn or explosive withdrawal from domination.

The second meaning prefigures a better organization of things, the establishment of a more inhabitable world: it requires the discipline of the revolutionaries and an outline plan. Here the violence that institutes law and the games of power between groups come into play. It is the mode of revolution that Marxism planned for the greater part of the 20th Century: here can be found classless society, common property in the means of production, equal distribution of resources.

The third meaning calls for utopia: it is revolution as overcoming of the dilemmas that trouble mortals, composition of contradictions and negation of the negation. Here we find the Land of Plenty, the Garden, the Arcadia, certain visions in moments of struggle; here insurrection borders on ecstasy, on falling in love, on the sudden appearance of another state of the cosmos. Law is suspended: not because the sovereign has decreed a state of exception, but rather because, in the world without contradictions, its institutions are out of order. It is the mystical part of movements, always difficult to speak of, taken between the enthusiasm of certain moments, the risk of existential drift, and the proximity to embarrassing theoretical knots.

In the last two centuries the intersecting of the first two meanings has taken the form of party militancy, while the combination of the first and the third is what the movements have sought, from wildcat strikes to certain psychedelic seasons. It has been difficult to thematically treat the three together and often they have polarized into antagonistic groups. Militants have accused mystics of intimism, of warrior inanity, of bourgeois hedonism, and of organizational incompetence, and have reproached anarchists for an excess of optimism on the ethical resilience of humans in the absence of command. Mystics and anarchists have described militants as penitent little soldiers at the service of yet another hierarchy,

ready to sacrifice every existential wholeness in the name of a hoped-for tomorrow; and they have carried on at times ignoring each other, at times according to a common feeling.

All the criticisms address real and hot questions. In revolution as militancy there is a sacrificial component that mortifies the self and the world and that, in the end, is a form of subjection. The minimalism of anarchist revolution and the optimism on the “aftermath” leave unanswered the question of power and of the process with which humans shape themselves so as not to slide back into domination (as anarchist parents soon learn with anguish). In revolution as ecstasy there is a dangerous element of individual elitism, *Übermensch*, abuse and ego-latry. *Corruptio optimi pessima* (“corruption of the best produces the worst”): revolution in its highest utopian form, in its most open and visionary form, continually risks transforming itself into the worst. Here, once again, we have to reckon with fascism.

The fact is that we saw the knots come to a head and we seemed to feel that even behind politics, the queen of all things, there were dark forces that she does not govern. Even fascism is perhaps connected to these dark forces. The world is mysterious, and this you can feel much better when you live for a while in the middle of the woods.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #19. David Graeber wrote that one of humanity’s misfortunes is its propensity to read the successful pursuit of arbitrary violence as something divine, as a sort of transcendent power; and he added that it is not at all clear why this is so. Maybe because, *however you access it*, the non-ordinary is charged with a sort of sacredness. The exceptional, the ambiguous, and the transformative potency that we encounter are the same: fearful, indispensable. Every angel is terrible.

It is the final lesson from the spaces of death. As non-ordinary, they too have to do with the imaginary, the pre-individual, with enchantment and the sacred, but in a demonic way. In them the conditions of possibility of experience are shattered: the opening is that of a wound, ambiguity and fluidity are dragged toward the expression of the worst. But avoiding the imaginary in order to avert risk is like pulling a blanket over your head hoping that, if you cannot see the monster, then the monster can’t see you.

However fearsome, the terrible angels must remain contactable. Even if they offer no guarantees, pre-individual, enchantment, and imaginary must remain accessible so that the world does not sclerotize. What we encounter there is by definition unstable, the forces that move there can be the path to liberation and revolutionary joy or they can be charged with the most terrible horrors. It depends on the intentions.

The problem is not *that* fascism dwelled in the imaginary – but *how*. There are intelligent and respectful ways to open paths toward this sphere and negotiate with its powers. These forces are honored when encountered without a goal decided in advance; with questions that allow for unexpected, ambiguous, or multiple answers; with no care for the ego. Everyday-ness and elsewhere can stand in a rhythmic contact that is not only practicable, but deeply healing and happy, opening to a life connected to multiplicity and becoming, dancing on its trajectory like Lucretius' atoms in the *clinamen* creator of universes. These ways require patience, attention, clarity of intentions and much effort.

Or the space beyond the margins can be opened with violence and cruelty, with acts that mess up the ordinary not to take care of it, or make it last in other forms, but to prey on it. As in camps, in torture, in the arbitrary will of the sovereign and in every context of abuse, fascism employs violence to access the imaginary and then it perverts it by putting it at the service of a purpose, bending it towards its own ends and turning it into an instrument of appropriation, domination, and inflation of the ego. Arbitrary violence is a fast and easy method, cowardly and arrogant, for accessing the non-ordinary without coming to terms with oneself and one's own misery, avoiding the existential risk of encountering *within oneself* what, under every profile, exceeds us. The passage to the act that violence accomplishes excludes mediation, shortens times, goes directly to the purpose and deludes whoever performs it to be, like the gods, the arbiter of the others' destinies. Violence is a way to make others pay the bill of never having come to terms with oneself. For this reason, fascism – the shortcut to the non-ordinary, the temptation to dominate the imaginary – must be first recognized in ourselves before we spot it in our adversaries.

Here, in this risk and in this indeterminacy, the choices we make are the most crucial, the deviations between trajectories the most abrupt. Salvation and damnation manifest themselves together when the world

falters. In the flowing of anguish and vision, of ecstasy and hazard, every transit within the pre-individual loosens the calcification of ordinary functioning, suspending the inevitability of the sequence of events. It allows non-ordinary events and different concatenations, for the worst and for the best. In that sphere it is not we, in the fullness of our subjectivity, who decide for one outcome or the other, but “we as ghosts,” in the flickering of our presence in the world, in the moment of risk, when powers not otherwise knowable are revealed.

In the end, what differentiates us from the fascists might be just that: the taking part, always and in every case, for the happiness that runs through relationships and for the possible multiplicity; the capacity not to appropriate. The rejection of every domination, the loyalty to joyous passions even in weakness, revolution as an emergency brake: the martial art of the strength that remains.

“Let it be known that among partisans there is no melancholy!” (quoting of a sentence from a wall newspaper of Ligurian partisans).

The advice to disparage happiness comes not from heroism but from the exploiter.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #20. Some will object that this distinction is unrealistic because it calls for a humanity made up of saints, ascetics, sages, diplomats, yogis, and zen monks: subjects capable to keep temptations at bay, to cultivate virtue, to feel the world according to compassion and to co-become with a multiplicity of entities and collectives. In brief: a redeemed humanity, that obviously has never been seen on this planet, and is, therefore, not even conceivable. But the question can be turned upside down.

We might ask ourselves, for example, when ever (let’s say, ever since Crete) the humanity that we are has been able to develop itself outside of some form of domination, whether it be religious, state, patriarchal, or of clans. The times when, even if only partially, something of the kind happened, we remember as crucial points of history: Orphism, certain aspects of Athenian democracy, Italian medieval communes, early Christianity, and, closer in time, some heretical movements, the Paris Commune, the Workers Councils, the unspoken of 1968 and of feminism, the Zapatista

movement, the democratic confederalism of Rojava. It little matters that, with the passing of time, none of these experiences has withstood the onslaught of the hegemonic hierarchy of the moment, the violence of conquerors, or the temptation of collusion: the shortcut of domination is an overwhelming historical constant. Constant, however, does not mean inevitable, and history, as we have experienced and construed it so far, is not the whole of the imaginable.

Here, as always in real things, everyone makes their own choices and bears the consequences. Does power automatically slip into domination? Are hegemony of the few over the many and the formation of hierarchy inevitable among humans? The fact that domination, violence, and exploitation are present in most of the history we know does not yet make them invariant. If we think of them as transcendent, we will have to wait for the Messiah and many times already we have noticed that the anti-Christ is more timely. If, on the other hand, they are historical phenomena, then we can research on the conditions that make them less likely; on the inhabitability of the world; on freedom as *clinamen* instead of as autism; on the weak messianic force of which we are collectively endowed. For, finally, it is well possible that in the transition between power and domination there is no automatism, nothing natural; that it happens due to inattention and carelessness, due to strategic errors, due to weariness and nastiness. After all, ancient virtues were none other than this: a training in being in power, which is the very substance of relationships, without slipping into domination.

The distrust toward the practices of *buen vivir* is perhaps the clearest sign of our servitude to the world-as-it-is. Yet the happiness of mystics, of partisans, of whoever practices “zen subsistence,” of certain anarchist groups, of psychonauts, and of passionate researchers has something recognizable about it. Observing it, the suspicion arises that the desperate humanity, the bewitched people of the spectacle, the crowds acclaiming their leaders, are the product of precise and pernicious historical conditions, the outcome of a specific cultural shaping. A shaping that can be *counter-effected* starting from the fact that the happiness we experience always comes in the relationship with others, in a state of openness and surprise, in letting go of compulsions, in no longer possessing oneself.

All this points to a different relationship with power. Apart from mystics, it is not a question of rejecting it and abolishing it, but of intensifying it, spreading it, and sharing it; of multiplying thresholds and differentials, roles

and interweavings; of keeping it mobile so that it does not sclerotize into domination; of preventing hierarchy from solidifying. This will transform our idea of the desirable and of happiness, and finally also that of revolution, which does not need a redeemed humanity (that is, one transcending to another world), but a humanity restored to this world and its complexity.

The multiplication of the worlds seems to be the only condition for there to be at least one in which we can live. Those who are imprisoned in jail know this well.

And it is through them that this happens. Because they are what we are made of.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #21. If the domination we do not want extends as far as the imaginary, then its disassembly (in us, first of all, and then in the world) requires knowing how to sink into the non-ordinary in order to know its innervations and ramifications; and in order not to abandon things to themselves, and us with them. In the same way, if happiness originates in the imaginary, then to go to its roots one must venture periodically *where angels fear to tread*. The question is played out on boundaries, on intentions, on the relationship that a specific world entertains with what is outside of itself and with what is other – with *transcendence*.

In theology and philosophy, transcendent is what “stands above,” and is therefore implicitly superior, to the immanent sphere of ordinary experience. To transcend means, in our vocabulary, to go upwards, toward the divine, in a place accessible to mortals only exceptionally. Most important in our tradition, the passage to the other sphere as an *upward exit* is typical of monotheistic cultures. Elsewhere, what we call transcendence takes completely different forms.

In collectives that call for the co-presence of human beings and various non-human or alter-human entities, with whom it is necessary to negotiate, transitions are not necessarily toward the high, but also in horizontal trajectories. It is not a matter of *trans-scending* as much as of *trans-fering* from the customary sphere to those populated by non-human persons, spirits of animals and plants, ancestors, gods; entities that are here with us, continually present and active, but in a different province of meaning, requiring a specific kind of access. This is also the etymology of the word

transe: the passage through a threshold, leaving one contextual space to access another.

And then there is a going downward, an *infra-scendence* that brings us toward the earth, the intimate, the first and the deep. The Latin expresses this movement with the verb *devenio*, appropriately transited in the Italian *divenire* (to become). Simondon has described it in a masterful way: every new process of individuation passes first of all through a dis-individuation, requires a certain silence of the world, and immersion in the shadowy and potential part of our world that connects us with everyone and everything.

We can now gather up these movements into a common factor. The etymology of the Greek word *ekstasis* is not stable and its meaning is ambivalent. If *stasis* means remaining still, staying in the assigned place and stagnation, then *ekstasis* is the exit from the position that one held, from command, from being blocked. It is what leads out, the fact of finding oneself beyond all foreseen situations (and, therefore, also outside of oneself, as in madness).

The Latin *ekstasis* begins to mean what it does for us: abduction into the ultra-mundane, and, at times, contempt for the mundane world. Modern cynicism has taught us to disqualify these experiences as superstitions, fantasies, or hysteric manifestations. Reason enough to rethink them completely and to question them and find what, in them, is irreducible to the system of surplus value. For some the breaking out from the mundane to search for a higher ordered totality is an ineluctable exigency: mystics, monks, ascetics, saints, bodhisattvas. They seek, and at times encounter, a unity that not only does not exclude multiplicity, but makes it flourish and of which, as testified by most mystic traditions, little can be said in the languages of humans. Perhaps they are indeed higher forms of humanity, that achieve the vertiginous goal of totality without totalization, passing through the “out-of-scheme” of self abandonment. For those who instead remain in the world and try to make it work – and that is most of us – the totalization of existence is the risk to be avoided.

The Greek *ekstasis* was not ultra-mundane and we can take up the word for our own use to indicate the movement that removes *stasis* and puts us back into relation with the pre-individual, with others, with the world, with multiplicity. Not a “state,” but a transit, the cadence of staying and going, here and elsewhere, this way and otherwise. In these moors, the connections that keep us alive (that *are* our life) make themselves

perceptible, and the toxic illusion of the autonomous and self-sufficient individual collapses. We arrive at the common layer, at the structure that connects. In extensive mode, *ekstasis* is openness to other worlds already existing and real, to other ontologies and epistemologies; it is exploration of the cones of light that we call “cultures” and of what they make exist, without falling into disqualification and into the fury of the unique. In intensive mode, it is the plunge into the power of the pre-individual and the imaginary, without vanishing into the indefinite, without using violence against them or perverting them to one’s own purpose. It is the search for a rhythm between different and contradictory provinces of meanings, that only in their multiplicity prevent sclerotization, and the capacity, in the disorder and incoherence of the imaginary, to look for the regularities and the coherence necessary to life, a normality that is not coercion, but the shelter and fabric of exchanges.

Needless to say, in these zones there are no guarantees. Those who know something about them easily turn into ringleaders, and troublemakers abound. But the possibility itself of experience is born here, where the intentions of the ones meet and clash with those of the others, where everything can transform itself into other and trust must forever be built. This is why access to the pre-individual and to the imaginary can no longer be abandoned to the anthropological ruins of fascism, consumption, and spectacle. It is a matter of *becoming capable of*.

Is it possible to dissociate, in all great spiritual movements, the part that thirsts for God from the part that revolts against a regime of economic oppression? Ah, I know very well that, in the struggle against money, those monks, those deacons, those brothers followed the opposite path than that of our labor unions, of our socialists. For them salvation was only found in a categorical refusal, in a ruthless struggle against their sensitive nature: vow of poverty, vow of chastity. In sum, to use today’s words, only in the reduction of the power of consumption. While instead what the peasant and the worker of today claim is not a reduction but on the contrary an intensification of this power. That doesn’t detract from the fact that these “spirituals,” as they were called, have always ended up preaching – if not them, at least the children of their children – communism and the way of brotherhood.

Unfortunately, we Westerners, unlike the Zapatistas or other Indigenous peoples, do not have any Mayan tradition at our disposal, no ancestral knowledge, not even a liberation theology to serve as the living fabric of revolution. All we have is the possibility to learn how to use the field of ruins – of tradition, knowledge, and theology – that characterizes the landscape of our completed modernity, the reign of the absolute commodity.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #22. Sleep, wonder, celebrations, non-ordinary experiences, trance, revolt, relationship with the invisible, encounter with complexity, dis-appropriation, the practice of other worlds all have this in common: they remove us from *stasis*, they open us to the multiplicity, they create new connections and new meanings. They transform us. They make us capable of. It is unrealistic to think that their grace can last forever, save for those who choose to radically exit from the mundane sphere. But still more dangerous is to close our eyes to their beauty, to the happiness that runs through them. Our need of enchantment, of magic and of elsewhere, is at one with the struggles for other possible and real worlds. What can be, for the *other* romantics, a politics of *ekstasis* that is worth the risk? That is, how can we remain solidly, cheerfully non-modern without being tempted by other forms of domination and without blending in with those who have long made enchantment into a force for reaction?

Voices interweave and mingle: those who already practice realistic utopias, those who engage in intellectual guerilla, those who speak with plants, those who negotiate with ghosts, those who navigate between different temporalities. There is no founding myth, nor any canon. Histories interweave and tell of ontological experimentations, they describe non-anthropocentric worlds that no longer need heroes, hierarchies, or cruelty; they tell of collectives who have chosen to remain inside these new fables to the point of making them true.

Once upon a time there was a gray and sad realm, where trees and rivers had ceased to speak, where humans were in endless struggle with each other and knew no joy. One fine day, however... Whatever fable of re-enchantment is about to be told, the day of its incipit is always fine because it brings escape from sad passions, those that the domination system must continually induce and amplify in order to ensure its hold. Sometimes this escape was long prepared for and dreamed of, with effort and stubbornness. Other times there was no need to invent anything:

enchantment arrived by itself, popping up like grass among the cobbles of the streets. It little matters if the escape is accidental or planned for, desired or unexpected, if it is a bright memory or if its memory will fade along the years: whoever has experienced it was marked by it. Waves and long frosts of sad passions have then come and gone, according to the seasons and the events, at times sighted from far off, at times allowed to arrive out of laziness or simple weariness. But the fact that now and then it suddenly happens that we find ourselves outside of their grasp, should put us on notice: escape is possible, it is not a prisoner's dream but something that can actually happen. Perhaps the beginning is just this: the rejection of sad passions. Withdrawal is an active movement: sadness and cynicism require no effort because everything, all around us, is organized to induce them and make them triumph; to refuse their command means escaping from impotence and making us capable of – whatever it is that we have to do.

Then, as always, outside of the wall of the bewitched city you take to the woods, you go to lose yourself where things incessantly flow the ones into the others. Just beyond the threshold, when needed, attention for what exists wakes up, together with the capacity to perceive the relations, interconnections, and threads that bind our existence to that of everything else. It is a sensibility that you can cultivate, like a plant – or maybe it's sensibility itself that cultivates us. It is clear, from here, what harms it: prolonged exposure to fear; acceptance of the least worst; subservience to a logic that pursues non-human ends; dependence on toxic links; cynicism; urgency; habituation to violence. For this reason, many among those who return from the woods immediately set about building safe spaces even within the walls, magic circles that protect against automatisms and the military occupations of the unconscious. They plan shelters from sclerotic dis-enchantment and relational desert; places that make it possible to consent to ties, to practice diplomacy between intentions, and to call into question an anthropological model mummified around profit and the struggle of all against all. These magic circles are made of time, care, technic expediency, and a shrewd use of power.

Often in these spaces, just as in the thick of the woods, one encounters ghosts. Whoever is capable of seeing them knows that there will be no respite without giving them their due; and since they are legion, the work will take a long time. The ghost is on the side of those who feel the world

differently from how it is described. Something happened that gives reason for this dissonance: we were not crazy, or hypersensitive, or paranoid to think that this corner of the street was disquieting; to smell graveyard in luxury apartments; to see zombies in the city skyscrapers. The ghosts free us from the oppression of having to adhere to a public truth that continually clashes with what we feel. Fear of ghosts might seize us, because for a long time we thought them dead and buried; other human groups encounter them in a gentler and most tranquil way: from them we can learn how to transform terror into hesitation before the unknown and into compassion for pain. And so, as far as we can, better not to run away, negate them, or forget them. Better not to dull or hide what they make us feel. Better to admit that the social figure of the ghost says, in our times, things that cannot be said in any other way. It unveils the tradition of the oppressed, the traumas and wounds that drip down along the generations, the silent and relentless work of memory, of mourning, of utopia. We (too) are the vanquished, these ghosts are our own, all the paths of life that were imprisoned, humiliated, and made to serve. The ghost carries along (or perhaps *is*) a counter-memory. It shows what was and must not be seen, but also what never was and could have been. As well as what, in the present, could be but is continually and violently prevented. In a different course of time life would have taken a different turn and that course still karstically runs. The spectre of a wound is also the spectre of a possible healing.

And in fact it is not very useful to underline with a pathetic or fanatic tone the enigmatic aspects of the enigmatic; we are able instead to penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we find it in everyday life, thanks to a dialectical optic that recognizes the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as the everyday. For example, the most impassioned investigation of telepathic phenomena will not teach us, on the phenomenon of the reading (which is an eminently telepathic process), even half of what the profane illumination of the reading teaches about telepathic phenomena. Or (to give another example): the most impassioned investigation of the inebriation from hashish will not teach us about thought (which is a narcotic par excellence) even half of what the profane illumination of thought teaches about the inebriation of hashish. To read, think, wait, take walks, are forms of illumination no less than the consumption of opium, than

dream, than inebriation. And they are more profane forms. Not to mention that most terrible drug (ourselves) that we take in solitude.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #23. In these tales we hear many of the modern strongholds creak. Scientist snootiness is put out of order by a light-hearted practice of the sciences that starts from the imaginary point where they originate. In laboratories, where researchers are changed by the “object of knowledge” that they themselves change, new subjectivities of knowledge emerge; history and philology teem with ghosts; in the folds of the philosophical canon we meet a variety of “lefts” – Aristotelian, Hegelian, Marxist – and secondary and alternative paths, at times mystic and liberating, that often have a vaguely scandalous air to them. Not necessarily the most interesting cognitive traditions to test in our present and to inherit are our own. A number of Westerners is reclaiming modes of livelihood, knowledge, and care that seemed doomed to disappear due to technological advancement. It is not a stopgap: knowledges are alive when they are needed, and nothing guarantees us that, in the near future, ecological knowledges will not be more useful than those that require the economic, machinic, and extractive power of the states.

Falls the binary opposition between peace and war, which, as usual, hide what must not be seen, the excluded third that opens a different scenario. Conflict and war are not synonyms and – just as with poverty and misery, death and annihilation – must be uncoupled. Conflict is the hallmark of multiplicity, a fertile ground for change that only appears in the absence of hegemonic forms, where uniformity and totalization are out of the question. As such, it opposes the secret kinship between the ferocious destruction of alterity that we call war and the leveling out of multiplicity under the banner of progress that we call peace.

The separation between politics and private life disappears. The work on oneself necessary to a good use of power, the practices for keeping at a distance from domination, are indispensable. As feminism never stops repeating, revolution is always already now – or is not. The way we treat ourselves and others along the journey toward other, and especially in moments of discouragement and boredom, is already revolution. Revolution is there every time it is made to exist in the present, not in the sense of a relentless upheaval of the world, but as constant attention to the quality of relations, to exchanges, to beauty, to the traces of becoming. There

is no need to wait for anything, really: no objective condition, no anthropological mutation, no messianic event. No tomorrow that will sing, if today's vocal cords are cut.

So crumbles the prestige of the sovereign subject, with its propensity for arbitrary violence, indifference, and utilitarian use of the world. Where there is a king, there also are subjects; where there is a king, there has been violence: getting out from this infernal device would allow us to liberate the subjected parts of ourselves and interrupt the circuit of the pleasure as discharge; and then to feel the multiplicity in us, the different stages of our being, the attachments that run through us, the chances to diverge from the expected trajectory and to co-become with others and with other.

Here, another history peeps out: along with the diffuse and autistic sovereignty of the individual-subject, we could take the opportunity to drop as well our propensity to sovereignty *tout court*. Thus, we might organize ourselves in such a way that hierarchies are continuously knocked out. This is the conundrum of transition: how do we move, with the least possible violence, from a world organized for surplus value, struggle, and sad passions to a world organized for multiplicity and a certain happiness? On the fringes of the high canon, still unable to do without the institution of sovereignty (concentrated or diffuse as it may be), the most interesting proposals converge on the overturning of the vector: maximum power to local assemblies, municipalities, collectives, factory and school councils, while to supra-local levels are given functions of connection and negotiation, an upturned pyramid that looks like a spinning top.

The ladder of progress collapses under its own weight, crushing the colonialist West sense of superiority, liberating a multiplicity of external and internal worlds: from the Zapatista *queremos un mundo donde quepan mucho mundos* to the *I am we*. There is no reason to think that the search for horizontal power (that we call democracy), the exploration of existential trajectories (that we call freedom), and the possibility of co-existence (called pluralism) are modern inventions. They arise, if anything, as happy possibilities at the confluence of multiplicity and wherever human beings are in search of good ways of life. There are groups organized to prevent state domination from emerging (the so-called "Clastres' machine"); others that practice sophisticated forms of collective decision-making and circularity of speech; still others that refuse to block subjects in a cage of fixed and unchangeable parameters. This is why the long ride

of anthropology remain for us today an extraordinary way of getting lost and finding oneself again, that is, of getting free. On the planet there exist complex worlds, as difficult and deep as our own – and *others*. When you sense scandal, there you are. Afterwards, it is a matter of endurance: understanding what is around you requires patience and dedication, good mediators, some grasp of language, a certain agreement on intentions. In the co-presence of alterity, cosmopolitics is the art of deciding collectively in the presence of those who will face the consequences of the choices made: it little matters whether they are human beings, animals, plants, rocks, spirits, landscapes. It is politics beyond the colonial bug, and it requires diplomats, bootleggers, people able to live in more than one world and capable of binocular vision. We will no longer go far from home to force others to become like us, but to learn what is needed. The end of our world does not coincide with the end of every possible world. Knowing this increases our strategic intelligence.

It is not only the violence of domination that leaves enduring traces in things. Any form of collective intensity imprints its marks: intensity of struggle, of affections, of knowledge, of love. The places where a fuller and happier presence has opened up for us-with-others are charged with an aura that is the exact opposite of the ghost. These places and those echoes are, from the very start, the ancestors of what we are, the happy childhood that it is still possible to build for ourselves, and from which, at that point, we will come.

I have a magic box at home. It is rectangular, and sits three or four meters from my desk. If you put something into the box and you move away from it, when a half-hour later you come back, the object is cold. I have no idea how it works. But if you can't get out of your head the idea that it is a refrigerator, then you have lost touch with mystery.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #24. These stories also transform the idea of utopia, the non-place at the same time childish and indispensable, that blazes at certain moments, thought of at times as a happy island where all that is desirable gathers, at times as a star that orients movement. We must, however, be realistic – our storytellers say – of a realism that aggravates issues rather than simplifying them. For those who live in the world, birth, death, love, life in common and catastrophes will continue

to give us a hard time, sub-lunar contradictions won't find ultimate solutions, and happiness will not be the ordinary state. But the possibility that other exists and that, in existing, is happy, is the very meaning of the worldly adventure.

Even here, attention to multiplicity is a guarantee against the totalitarian temptation: utopia retains its value as a course beacon, but in a somewhat different way. In the multiplicity of worlds, we can suppose that what we deem desirable, that here does not exist, exists elsewhere instead. What is *without place* is such only within a specific horizon and nothing forbids that, under different skies, it may exist, that we can encounter it on this planet and in this life. Experiencing what we yearn for would allow realistic reckoning with the ontological and ecological conditions of its existence, outside of any metaphysical abstraction. Sometimes what we yearn for requires conditions that we are not prepared to welcome, sometimes it is more complicated (or simpler) than we thought; sometimes it seems little thing, sometimes it overwhelms us like a calling.

There is a whole art of conditions of possibility to learn. What does an environment that allows for trust, relationships, intelligence, and sensitivity look like? On what assumptions are based different forms of life and experience? What in a world is brought into being has deep roots, that sink into the folds of the imaginary. For this reason, it can't be transferred, without mediation, to other contexts and it requires, in order to exist for us, that we step out from, and transform, ourselves. In the art of reasoning through the environment, many do better than we, and this should put us in high spirits. We can learn from the bejeweled network of the Buddhists, from the long exchanges of village democracies, from the roots of plants, from the Taoist *wu wei*. These traditions teach the possibility of ethics in the face of a world that is not decided in advance. Thus, activists are learning to give voice to human groups whose voice is not recognized, to those too far away to make themselves heard, to non-human living beings, to the planet. This has changed them, making them capable of previously unimaginable paths. For those who accept multiplicity, the fact that in our world forest spirits and rocks don't speak does not mean that others are unable to contact them and negotiate with them.

Utopia will then be the fact that *the entirety of the desirable cannot take place in the world where we now are because it exceeds every single world*. Only a plurality of worlds can realise it just as, as Dante points out, the power of

the possible intellect can only be realised by the *multitudo* (“multitude”) of the human race. Utopia remains unattainable: no longer because the conditions of its existence are impossible, but because the possible happy conditions are countless.

From the depths of torpor, almost from sleep, a solitary thought. After the initial gash, psychoanalysis has ended up relying on the assumption of a necessity: that of defending oneself, controlling, being alert, keeping away... But surely, this is its limit: the idea of a man who always have to defend himself, from birth onward, and perhaps even before, from an internal danger. Harnessed, armored. And it is essential, of course, that the weapons be well made. If they are not so at the beginning, they need to be made adequate: with psychoanalysis, precisely. Otherwise disarmament, if not disaster, results.

But if this is true, then we must reverse perspective, putting ourselves on the other side (of the barricade, I almost wrote, but using this word I remain in the realm of military art). No inhibition, repression, denial, etc.: the different stratagems, the partial defenses of a general defensive setting. From the pointed forest of defenses there is no way out. But instead welcoming, acceptance, intrepid trust on what looms on the horizon.

Nautical, Ulysses. Crete’s palaces open to the sea, defenseless.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY #25. Finally, we can make the world more complex and rugged, more exiting and demanding. There is an effort that make things possible: not even celebrations can take place, if they are not prepared for. In that, we need to learn respect for the distances; to multiply spaces and thresholds; to build settings and study what happens in them; to get out of uniformity. Precisely because they are not destructured, non-ordinary space-times require intelligence and attention. Whether it is transcendence, infra-scendence, or *transe*, the movement of going is prelude to that of returning, which is still more crucial and delicate because it requires the integration of moments, the weaving of a connection between here and elsewhere, so and otherwise.

Against the flatness and general equivalence which we are used to, in these ventures we cannot improvise and must proceed slowly, seeking to reduce risk and keeping in mind that the non-ordinary cannot be made

entirely secure. At times to enter into a different space-time little is required, simply suspending some commanded continuity (a diet of a few days, shutting off the cell phone, conscious immersion in a different ecology, remaining silent, are all possible means of access); other times it requires a complex device and the support of experts. The threshold is crucial: without thresholds, there is no setting; without settings, no transformation – and no celebration.

Contact with the pre-individual is intrinsically dangerous: *the beautiful is only the beginning of terrible*. And it is, par excellence, *pharmakon*, exposure to a power that can take auspicious or inauspicious sign depending on the intelligence of those who experience it, on their *kairos*, on cunning, and on luck. For it to be propitious, it is indispensable to recover (and, in case, to reinvent) competence in transformative processes, the wisdom of those who know how to support human becoming by recognizing it has a direction even when it goes astray. Enabling oneself to do this means transforming oneself: no longer armoured individuals bouncing on a pool table according to pre-programmed trajectories, but living threads of a living plot, seafarers in difficult zones of reality, representatives of worlds in the making.

To the point of changing our relationship with the knot that binds life and death: happy is the life that is not paralyzed by fear of death and we never fear it so little as in the flashes of lived happiness. This is well-known to those human groups who periodically meditate on it, observe it, border on its shores. Initiation rituals, just like ecstatic practices, often require coming closer to the border, a controlled exposure to radical risk. The idea is that one can stay in the world in a full sense only if its limits and the limits of life itself are known, or, at least, if they are not repressed. Not by chance, these practices often involve a passage through pain and the disappropriation of self. These *other* “spaces of death” are intelligent ways of staying in touch with the problem, inescapable to mortals, of the end: the exact opposite, both in intentions and in outcomes, from those produced by domination.

The “Lord of the limit,” as Martino would have called it, is the one who, having long practiced it, has experience of an elsewhere, knows how to access it, how to get out of it, and how to bring other people out – but we need another name for these people, one that tells a less arrogant and a more plural story. As in the Amazonian rite, the interrogation of the

imaginary can be of all those who go together to see, the expert being only, in this case, a technical figure of passage and support. We then need to figure out how to bring and support one another, beginners with beginners, and how to develop collective consciousness of processes, risks, hesitations, passages, transformations. Without rushing them, without directing them. Reciprocally containing each other's drifts. Learning to be without judgment and to be present, with all the attention and fondness we are capable of: a collectivity is such only to the extent in which it is able to share the possible encountered therein, an uncertain becoming. The temptation to dominate it, to possess it, to enslave it, is part of the fascist approach. The revolutionary recourse to *ekstasis* does not seek to make itself master of the forces that "lie underneath," but to become their lover.

Just as it doesn't seek to appropriate to itself the forces of *ekstasis*, the utopian-revolutionary current knows that there are as many liberations as there are different kinds of chains; and that revolutions worth remembering are those that have unhinged the inevitable in favor of the improbable. The future cannot be captured by any plan devised from within our enslaved present. If anything, it is something that we still don't know and to which we aspire without knowing its name; something we cannot appropriate to ourselves, but that will take us and transform us. It has more to do with the dream of having a child than with the planning for a new shopping center.

In the black feminism of the United States, they call it *yearning*: it is the dance step by which we accept that the other – this so-desirable and desired "other" – was not born *from us*, nor *for us*, but from the situation that is capable to bring it into being and of which we are a part. The nostalgic sadness of monsters, of ghosts, and of all romantic daydreamers is nothing but a very long yearning: for a love that invents its name, for a higher form of humanity, for a place that knows how to be, when it is time, happy.

Trail directions: 1) Never mistake *ekstasis* for the goal. *When it happens, it immediately turns into the half hour of air granted to those who consent to the cage.* 2) Use *ekstasis* as operator of multiplicity. *The alternative to modernity and its totalitarianism is not barbarism, nor a hypothetical "other modernity" that would end up being equally unifying, but the multiplicity of external and internal worlds.* 3) Practice. *Develop the capacity to venture out into places highly charged with ambiguity and*

un-decidability without falling for the mermaids' songs. Education – understood as the art of channeling empowerment – helps: not everything is made for human eyes. Learn from Greek myth. 4) Take care of little things. Insensitivity leads us to seek extreme sensations. Whole worlds open wide in the folds of the everyday, if you know how to see them. 5) Make good use of ancient virtues. In the ek-static dimension we need cunning, patience, a good amount of intelligence, and the capacity to foresee developments. Study the metis of the Greeks, the wisdom of Aristotle, the conjectural paradigm according to Ginzburg, the analogy according to Melandri. 6) Make good use of power and of knowledge. The problem is not power but its sclerosis: domination. No one knows all the ways of ekstasis: in each of them, use as skippers those who have more experience and accept being skipper of those who have less. 7) Not for oneself. You don't go "where angels fear to tread" to add a notch onto the atlas of the exotic, to get high, or to put on airs once back home. You go as a representative of a group to seek an instant of foresight. To negotiate with the forces inside of us that bend us to lesser evil and to resignation. To make contact with what moves in the grey zone that lies between the world as we have made it and known it, and all that part of reality that we don't know. To re-establish contacts with the entities that populate our world and get to know those that stand on the threshold of the existence of worlds.

In conclusion: the world is great and terrible and complicated, and we are growing a wisdom that will become proverbial.

Constellation [From Latin *constellatio* -onis, derivative of *stella*, "star"] Designation of traditional groupings of stars on the celestial vault, visible by *pareidolia*; literally, a set of stars [From Latin, *cum* + *stella* -ae].

Disaster [Derived from Latin *astrum*, "star," with prefix *dis* indicating alteration or separation] Serious misfortune that causes damages or losses of vast proportions.

The difference between a constellation and a disaster is in the eyes of those who look to the sky.

SHIP'S LOG

THE WAY OF DISENCHANTMENT

#1. To the classic works on capitalism as enormous and incessant production of disasters (Marx 1867; Polanyi 1944; Arendt 1951-1966; Anders 1956; Debord 1967; Cesarano 1974) we can now add some recent texts that have reopened this critical thread: Pignarre & Stengers 2005; Dardot & Laval 2009; Han 2014, 2016; Curcio 2015; Berardi 2017; De Michelis 2018; Finelli 2020. On the anthropocene – which, however, as has been widely observed, would be better described as the capitalocene – Chakrabarty 2009; Stengers 2009a; Latour 2013; Danowski & Viveiros de Castro 2014; Lundi Martin 2015; Haraway 2016; Tsing *et al.* 2017. On the end of the world, cultural apocalypse and alienation, again, as always, de Martino 1977.

The scientific literature on contemporary psychic illness is huge, and, as the scientific posture imposes, not easily digestible: Steel *et al.* 2014 offers a first overview. The exponential growth of mental distress among the young is scientifically treated in Campbell & Marsh 2016; for a human-friendly reading, see Monbiot 2016.

It is Davi Kopenawa, Yanomami forest dweller and shaman, who enables us to say in our languages that the forest is still alive – but not for long, going along this route (Kopenawa & Albert 2010). In September 2018, in a worthy public encounter at the University of Turin, the distance between the New Age perspective of part of the public, awaiting ontological-epistemological revelation, and the very urgent material and political concerns of the speaker was made tragically clear.

On Mrs. Thatcher's infamous "There Is No Alternative," Fisher 2007. Mark Fisher has become, in recent years, the holy martyr of critical thinking: the neoliberal Goliath that killed him, however, did not overcome him in an overt struggle, but by the occult arts of his sorcerers, by the poisoning of consciences that leaves perpetrators and profiteers with clean hands. In paying tribute to Fisher's intelligence and integrity, the nihilistic

outcome of accelerationism and speculative materialism, and the need to resist their macho-Marxist posture, should also be noted.

#2. On the semantic slippage into superstition, Salzman 1987. The modern declination of the fact that others believe, while we know, is well described in Stengers 1994. I use *sciences*, plural, to indicate the heterogeneous set of cognitive paths of Western modernity, and *science*, singular, to indicate the ideological object of scientism.

#3. Examples of the freedom of thought of US activists are found in Matthews 2003; Starhawk 2004; Apffel-Marglin 2011; Federici 2018. In Europe the discourse has been taken up again, with much courage and with the usual intelligence, by Isabelle Stengers: Pignarre & Stengers 2005; Stengers 2018. The definition of left is taken from Deleuze 1990.

On the need of not racializing fascists, that is, of not giving in to the mimetic temptation, Scalzone & Zaccaria 2018. The best recent analyses of fascism and its being a stumbling block are found in Di Vittorio *et al.* 2009; Pezzella 2019.

#4. Comaroff & Comaroff 2012 oppose modernity (the utopian element) and modernization (the element of domination) in an illuminating reading “from the South” of the world. On the origins and development of modernity, Todorov 1982; Toulmin 1990; Latour 1991, 2000; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999. To catch a glimpse of its violence, Galeano 1982; Mies 1986; Shaw 1997; Federici 2003; Prospero 2005; Vasapollo, Jaffe & Galarza 2005 – as well as the entire works of Marx.

#5. The “great partition” that separates nature and culture, Western and savage, mind and body, reason and passion, human and animal, men and women, is open to question: Latour 1991, 1994; Stengers 1994, 2018; Bazar Elettrico 2017. Capitalism is described as a religion of endless worship in Benjamin 1921a, a concept taken up by Pezzella 2014 and Stimilli 2015. The remark on the totalizing proclivity of the modern age can be read in Horkheimer & Adorno 1944, p. 18 (the expression “the process is decided in advance” is taken from the Italian translation of *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, while the English translation by Edmund Jephcott reads “the trial is prejudged”).

#6. The best description of the modern arrogance is found in Latour 2000a. Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi have described what happens when, on the mock board of colonialism, the two social figures of colonialism, the colonizer and the colonized, meet: it is not only a question of extrinsic relations of force, the entire personality molds itself around that material and symbolic relation of subjection (Fanon 1952, 1961; Memmi 1957). In this game of mirrors, it is difficult to determine with certainty what part of the phenomena that modernity has stigmatised stems precisely from the colonial encounter: Dirks 1992; Shaw 1997. Terrorism as a blowback effect of the global policing is described in Calasso 2017. On the “others of others” and the fundamental role of co-presence among groups, Anderson 1991; Viveiros de Castro 1996; Remotti 2002; Povinelli 2016; Sahins 2017a.

#7. The abolition of qualities from scientific investigation is described, among others, in Prigogine & Stengers 1979. The standardization of time and space is described in Kern 1983; on the historicity of perspective, Florenskij 1920; for a political analysis on the different temporalities of the present, Baschet 2018. The disappearance of other forms of experience is particularly evident in the comparison with other worlds: Coppo 2011; an outstanding meditation on the “time of festivity” is found in Jesi 1977. The attack on sleep is the central theme of Cray 2013. On the standardization of psyche and emotions currently underway, Han 2014.

#8. If on the unification of economic regimes or of forms of life there is a vast available literature, the unification of imaginary universes has remained in the shadows, perhaps due to its elusive nature or maybe because, more than any other, it has been made unspeakable. Structures of feeling are described in Williams 1977; for an example, one may think of “scholastic feelings”: despite the very profound historical differences in the world around us, scholarized generations produce “school narratives” that are surprisingly stable. Bifo (Berardi 2020) distinguishes between *imaginary* (the fossil deposit of the collective mind) and *imagination* (the new energies, free and creative); due to the intrinsic ambiguity of this zone of the real, I prefer to use a single term. The journal “Altraparola” (www.altraparola.it) has published useful analyses of the contemporary social unconscious and of the type of subjectivity that it produces. The concept of the myth-dream is found in Burridge 1960, then reprised in Bastide 1975.

#9. Every form of scientism, just as every sober appeal to “let the experts do their job,” is part of this approach that, in reinforcing our presumption of cultural superiority, shatters all political space. We had a clear example of this during the COVID-19 emergency, when dogmatic appeals to science, combined with the panic induced in the population, reduced the critical wiggle room, leaving the field open to conspiracy paranoidias of every sort. Worrisome is the epistemological destitution of the left, revealed in these months: when Science commands, the right to dissent and critical reasoning must fall silent, as if philosophy of science or critical feminist epistemology had never existed. To immunize oneself once and for all from this mental monoculture, Feyerabend 1975; Prigogine & Stengers 1979; Haraway 1988; Stengers 1995-1997.

#10. As evidence of the criminal specificity of silencing, in the places where the world has never ceased to speak, the mix of material and symbolic violence with which the capitalist dynamic paves its way can still be directly observed: Taussig 1980. A world organized in such a way as to banish violence as much as possible – not only on the living, but also on what we think of as inanimate – is described in Povinelli 2016 (and, before that, in Chatwin’s *The Songlines*). Dream Time and a sung geography are incompatible with extractivist logic, and precisely because they are a noble and intelligent way of being in relation with the world, they are easily undermined by the petty and arrogant ways of the colonizers.

It is inevitable to ask ourselves what effects the ban on celebrating funeral rites, imposed during the COVID-19 emergency, would have among a population that was not completely unaware of the voices of the world and of the relational constitution of the subjects, of the many others that speak in us and of the danger of the ghosts: Galindo 2020.

On sociolatriy, Calasso 2017; Sahlins 2017b.

#11 The works of Smith, Ricardo, Hume and Malthus testify very well to the anguish in the face of the new poors and of the responses – perplexed, optimistic, cynical – that were attempted. Primitive accumulation is the object of a famous chapter of the first volume of *Capital*: Marx 1867. On the polarity between wealth and misery, and on the possibility of an intensive sufficiency, Sahlins 1972; Polanyi 1944; Taussig 1980; Illich 2005;

Sini 2005; Rahnema & Robert 2008. On the intergenerational transit of traumas, Schutzenberger 1998; Schwab 2010; Bouznah & Lewertowski 2013. The description of psychic repression as a continuously active force is found in Freud 1937. Mythological machines are the object of a contemporary classic: Jesi 1979. The effects of the forgetfulness of ghosts is described in the masterful *Austerlitz* by W. G. Sebald.

#12. This paragraph was born of my encounter with the work of David Graeber, and, in particular, his analysis of sovereignty: Graeber 1997; Graeber & Sahlins 2017. This is his definition of sovereign power: “the power to violate the terms of the ordinary moral order, to create rules, give unquestionable, unaccountable orders backed up by threat of punishment” (Graeber 2017a, p. 397). The symbolic power of the king’s body (Kantorowicz 1957), which we have never rid ourselves of, is well visible in the French debate on the annual publication of a “bulletin of health” testifying to the full capacity of the President, and in the Italian obsession for Berlusconi’s senile affairs.

#13. The peculiar eclipse of virtue in the modern age has as its point of no return Bernard de Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees* and is well described in Sini 2005. On the construction of the subject in contemporary life, Benasayag 1998; Dardot & Laval 2009; Balicco 2015; Curcio 2015; Eisenberg 2015. On freedom as the absence of attachments, Latour 2000b; on the psychic repression of death, Ariès 1975.

The reduction of every value to the suffocating horizon of individual life and to the umbilical cord of the market (and of its powerful contemporary avatar, the Internet) was never so evident as during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we chose to barter away every relational fullness in favor of a supposed individual security.

#14. The need for the modern individual to remain in a single state of consciousness (that of rational wakefulness) is a theme of Coppo 2011. On violence as a productive force, Mies 1986; Mmembe 2003; Berardi 2014; Mastrogiovanni 2014.

Experience and the conditions that make it possible are the object of Benjamin 1933; Agamben 1978-2001; Didi-Huberman 2009.

#15. Before the industrial revolution ravaged England, rudimentary processing plants were already at work in sugarcane plantations; next to the machinery, a machete was always on hand to sever limbs entangled in gears: Mintz 1985. On the strategic use of substances as means of opening faraway markets, Rahnema & Robert 2008; the long-term effects of these policies are described in Duran & Duran 1995; Alexander 2008; Garcia 2010. On the contemporary toxicological regime, Preciado 2008; Moore 2017; Peper & Harvey 2018.

The Aristotelian definition of pleasure is found in Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The burgeoning expansion of the sex market and its supply chains, spanning between legal and illegal economy, crime and legality, horror and free choice, is causing changes in the drive structure of the world population, overriding local regulations and making all conform to the same imaginary. Preciado 2008 analyzes the command of pornography over contemporary subjectivities, coming to conclusions that are quite far from those presented here; Han 2012 argues for the abyssal distance between these coercive practices and eroticism, while the sacredness of pleasure is treated in Eisler 1996. Benasayag 2015 opposes the satisfaction of instincts to the very possibility of having a destiny, and therefore an experience of life.

#16. The debunking of Carl Schmitt's mistaken etymologies is found in one of the most important texts of recent years: Ferrando 2018. On modernity as an enchantment that undoes every other enchantment, beyond generally reminding the reader of the sarcastic remarks disseminated in Marx's works, see Walter Benjamin's *Passequenwerk* (Benjamin 1982) and the entire works of Luciano Parinetto (Parinetto 1989, 1990, 1998).

There are striking resemblances between the emotional Romantic climate of the early English industrialization and the imaginary figures that emerge, around the world, in the transition from a subsistence economy to market economy. Anthropology has many times described, based on direct observations, the transition that Marx reconstructs for Europe under the title of "primitive accumulation": Taussig 1980; Comaroff & Comaroff 1993, 2012; Santos-Granero 2003.

#17. On the age of empires, its creativity and its ghosts, Schorske 1980; Hobsbawm 1987; then, obviously, *Heart of Darkness* by Conrad and its

prolongation in *Apocalypse Now* by Francis Ford Coppola. The definition of the decades from 1914 to 1945 as “the 20th Century Thirty Years War” is found in Mayer 1981. Hyslop 2011 traces the historical connections between extensions of military control of the population and concentration camps.

#18. It is easy, in retrospect, to distance ourselves: despite a very dense historiography, the problem that historical fascism continues to pose to our present lies also in the attraction it exerted on the best spirits of its epoch. Some of them remained close to it (notoriously Heidegger, but for certain aspects Jung as well); others instead – and these, for our purposes, are the most interesting – joined the Resistance and then became part, after the war, of the revolutionary and liberatory left: Ernesto de Martino, Giorgio Cesarano, Maurice Blanchot. Very few, and among these Benjamin, could read from the very start the “signs of fascism.” The entire work of Furio Jesi (Jesi 1967, 1973, 1979) is a very long struggle with this problem and there is something tragic in the way in which, at one point, he seeks to resolve it describing the intellectuals as “only” sick and the Nazis as “only” gangsters. It would be nice if it were the case, and much simpler.

On the philosophy of totalitarianism there exists a harvest of texts to which it is useful to refer just when, as some had warned, the risk seems anything but conjured away: Bataille 1933; Levinas 1934; Halévy 1938; Klemperer 1947; Arendt 1951-1966; Bauman 1989; Forti 2004; Recalcati 2007; Forti and Revelli 2007. This is the most lapidary summary: “National Socialism was a fulfillment, the one by far most terrifying, of the metaphysics of the Moderns.” (Lacoue-Labarthe 2002, p. 20).

#19. Mauss’s remarks on the society of men, elaborated in response to a lecture by Élie Halévy, are reported and commentated on by Calasso 2017. Power is understood as a ubiquitous and constitutive element of relationships, rather than as a chain of command and domination, in Michel Foucault’s works: Foucault 1977, 2001. On the *ultimately* reactionary position of Georges Bataille and René Girard, see David Graeber in his attempt to elaborate something different: Bataille 1949; Girard 1972; Graeber 2011a.

#20. On the spaces of death, the fundamental text is Taussig 1987; insights are found in Gordon 1997. The historicity of these spaces is definitely proven by the *training* of the executioners, who are neither sadists, nor madmen, nor perverts, but perfectly normal individuals, chosen from among those who don't have, at that moment of their life, any strong relationship, trained to carry out their task through a dissociative process of habituation to violence and to absurdity: Sironi 1999, 2018; Das *et al.* 2000. On the shame of the victims, completely repressed in the victimizing rhetoric and crucial junction in therapeutic pathways, the long tale that Vercors publishes in 1944, titled *Les Armes de la Nuit*, is terribly precise.

The effect of emotional deprivation on newborns and children is well described in a little jewel of scientific literature: Gardner 1972.

Finally, the long reflection of Giorgio Agamben on bare life is found, *in primis*, in Agamben 1995, and then developed along the entire arc of his work.

#21. Thus writes Michael Taussig: “And if the Fascists were willing and remarkably able to exploit these dreams, that did not mean that myth and fantasy were necessarily reactionary. Totally to the contrary, the Left had abandoned this terrain where the battle had to be fought and whose images contained the revolutionary seeds which the soil ploughed by Marxist dialectics could nourish and germinate.” (Taussig 1984, p. 89). With some exceptions, of course – or, even, with a continual exceptionality of lived experiences, both when they happen and in their memory. Exceptionality that, however, is poorly conceptualized, often referred back to the character of the years of youth, or to the exaltation of the moment, and almost never put into relation with other zones of experience.

On the escape routes of critical thinking from the cage of evolutionist positivism, the best reading available today is the series of volumes entitled *L'Altronovecento* (“the other 20th Century”), edited by Pier Paolo Poggio: Poggio 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016; Cappitti, Pezzella & Poggio 2018. Bullshit jobs have been thematised, with all the force it took, by Graeber 2018.

#22. The reasons why Nazism was not a “parenthesis of barbarism” are exposed in Burgio 2010, and, in a lapidary way, in Fortini 1967-1989. Immediately after the war, the clearest voices are Arendt 1951-1966; Fanon 1952, 1961; Césaire 1950. The two authors who argued most strongly for

the continuity of the totalitarian paradigm are Pier Paolo Pasolini (Pasolini 1976) and Giorgio Agamben (Agamben 1978-2001, 1996); theirs is a well-founded perspective that however risks, depending on the mode in which it is taken up, to bar the horizon of political struggle by entrenching it in the categories of the adversary (Didi-Huberman 2009; Lenzini 2020).

#23. The new enclosures and the continuity of violence have been theorized by the Midnight Notes Collective (<http://www.midnightnotes.org/>); see also Mezzadra 2008 and Tsing 2005, 2015. On the transformations of capital's domination in the neoliberal era, Comaroff & Comaroff 1993, 1999, 2012. On necropolitics, González Rodríguez 2002; Mbembe 2003; Berardi 2014; Mastrogiovanni 2014; a subtler, but maybe even more disquieting, mode of necropolitics is described in Taki 2019. The proximity between legal and criminal economy is described in Dal Lago & Quadrelli 2003; Saviano 2013.

#24. Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro have given us a description, as biting as it is precise, of “we – the people of the (capitalist) Core, the overweight, mediatically controlled, psychopharmacologically stabilized automata of technologically ‘advanced’ societies that are highly dependent on a monumental consumption (or rather, waste) of energy” (Danowski & Viveiros de Castro 2014, p. 96).

The victimhood paradigm is treated in Comaroff & Comaroff 2012 and Giglioli 2014; Angier 2005 discusses its relation to humanitarianism.

For a study of the social history of images in relation to cruelty, Amato 2014.

On the permanence, in the folds of common mentality as well as in the sciences, of mental tics worthy of the worst days of the short century, see the essential Devereux 1967, then see Despret 2012. On theoretical violence in clinical settings, Sironi 2003.

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS

#1. It took many years for things to be tellable in this way. In the days of the referendum, Greece and Athens looked nothing like the apocalyptic scenario described by Italian news: we realized the perceptual distance

when friends began to call us from home to ask if we could find food in supermarkets, if we needed them to send money. For the second time after the G8 in Genoa in 2001, in those days I *physically* felt the dissociation between the spectacular information and what actually happens in the world. The COVID-19 emergency completed and radicalized the picture: not only were spectacular information and facts of the world separate spheres, but it was the former, in its spectrality, that decided moods and reactions. On the mysteries of Demeter, see above all *The Hymn to Demeter* (for example, Zanetto 1996); then Sabbatucci 1965-1979; Scarpi 2003; Tonelli 2015. On the *kikeon*, Wasson, Hoffman & Ruck 1978. I came to suspect that the road to Amazonia passed through Eleusis thanks to the pages of a novel, *Qualcosa di Scritto*, by Emanuele Trevi.

#2. *Yagé* is also known by another name, that here I use as little as possible – partly because in the Amazonia that I visited it retains a certain sacredness, and partly because in the West it has entered into the fashionable circuit of the exotic high. On the Amazonian therapeutic tradition, Chaumeil 1983; Rival 2005; Beyer 2009; Fabiano 2015. An entire poetics of grasses growing on ruins is found in the work of W.G. Sebald (for example *The Rings of Saturn*) and in the fringe areas between architecture, landscaping and botany: Ferran, Mattogno & Metta 2019.

#3. On the epistemological obstinacy of modernity in relation to the Greek mysteries, Agamben & Ferrando 2010; the Eleusinian vision could not be told not because it was secret, but because it was unspeakable.

#4. Karamakate is the main character in one of the most beautiful movies of recent years: *El abrazo de la serpiente* (“Embrace of the serpent”), by Ciro Guerra. The clandestine and highly intelligent pathways of the migrants towards Europe are recounted in Queirolo Palmas & Rahola 2020.

#5. It is possible, however, that Pausanias the Perieges was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries: maybe it is to dampen the troubling implications of this possibility that we continue to describe him as a sort of *ante litteram* tourist.

On the Greek events, which could have been a prelude to much more, Varoufakis 2017. It is significant that the collection of movement texts of

the quintessential anarchist anthropologist was first published in Greece: Graeber 2011b. For an insight into the Westerners' search for the sacred (or for getting high), Amselle 2013 and Consigliere & Coppo 2014.

#6. On the poetics of places, Norberg-Schulz 1979 remains unforgettable. Places of excess (for us), desert and forest are also places of augmented visibility and alien poetics: Tarì 2020a and the Beato Angelico's *Tebaide* shown at the Uffizi gallery in Florence.

#7. In the background are the piano notes that open *Year of the Cat* by Al Stewart. Thomas Ladenburger has composed a photographic and filmic ethnography of the Jemaa el Fna titled *Al Halqa* ("In the Storytellers' Circle"), which is also a virtual museum of the square.

#8. The contact with sprits and deities through music, and the induction of non-ordinary states of experience, is a constant of Mediterranean civilization since ancient Greece, as is testified by Plato in the *Ion*, right up to the Tarantism in Salento (Italy) (de Martino 1959, 1961) and, today, to the Gnawa rites of Morocco (Schuyler 1981).

#9. From many points of view, a history of slavery that allows for a non-banal comprehension of it is yet to be written: Agamben 2014. In 2019, four hundred years after the arrival of the first slave in the Americas, the history of colonial slavery was an object of notable journalistic investigation in the United States and in Great Britain: for example, Elliot & Hughes 2019; Khushbu & Juweek 2019.

The same is true of the logic of domination that underlies most of human history, and that sometimes overcomes even the capitalist disaster. Only the anarchist perspective is able, at times, to trace a sort of ultimate horizon of critical thinking. For some recent coordinates, Bookchin 1982; Graeber & Sahlins 2017; Vaccaro 2020.

#10. The power of *mania* and the various ways to practice it are the object of Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Ion*: Velardi 1989. On BDSM, obviously, Foucault 1984, from which spread a rich literature. Little, however, seems left of that possibility of liberation in the subjugation of these subcultures by market dynamics and fashion aesthetics.

#11. What was, what was happening: frenzied and confused readings at the time of events, positions ever at risk of tripping, blown bridges. These are the main references I can provide: Nahoum-Grappe 1996; Claverie 2003; Karahasan 2012.

#12. Maybe the journalist was one of the three RAI reporters from Trieste that entered the old Muslim city on 28 January 1994 to tell of the “war children” and were killed by a Christian grenade: Marco Luchetta, Alessandro Sasa Ota and Dario D’Angelo. I don’t know for certain, but I well remember the anguish in reading a newspaper article, published by “Il Manifesto,” that connected the destiny of the bridges to that of the human beings who cared about them.

The relationship between original and copy says much about our world, its museums, the dynamic of valorization and our unhappiness when we travel the globe in search of the authentic. *Anarcheology* is the title of a brief video by Christoph Keller that concatenates, in only fifteen minutes, three ways of reading time and memory.

#13. On the political organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nardelli, Dzidic & Jukc 2014.

#14. On the history of the Balkans, and on the very idea of “Balkans,” Mazower 2000. The way geopolitical relationships affect the imaginary, the implicit and explicit memory and the drive structure of subjects is the theme of Sironi 2007. Women’s issues and feminism are, for every part of me, minefields: among recent texts, the two I felt closest are Tiqqun 2001 and Ruggiero 2013.

#15. The war events of Sarajevo and Bosnia sound for me, even now, with the timbres of *Línea Gotica* by CSI.

#16. In the afterword of Taussig’s text on cocaine, and therefore on Columbia, La Cecla states: “I must say that in Bogotá the first question that I ask myself is ‘what have I truly understood up to now of Columbia?’ Because it is certain that Taussig and his gaze dragged me there, but now that I have read, have seen, have spoken with many people, everything is more complicated. Eight and a half million killed in seventy years, a country on

the brink of madness, where surviving violence was the fortune of a few, the first country in the world for the number of people ‘displaced’ from their homes, the atrocious immense favelas. And it’s the normality here, this getting by between safe areas and shadow areas where you can be robbed, but also kidnapped. There are whole areas of Columbia where thousands of children don’t go to school because it is too dangerous. And yet Michael’s lesson is that even here, or maybe above all here, there is a way of being with people that gets your guts, and that follows you everywhere.” (La Cecla 2019, p. 335).

#17. Postcards from Genoa for English-speaking readers: the Morandi Bridge was an 1182-meter-long highway viaduct suspended over the Polcevera River, passing over a highly populated neighborhood of the city of Genoa. On August 14, 2018, during a storm, a 210-meter section collapsed, leaving 43 people dead and 566 displaced. The disaster is attributed to poor maintenance of the highway structures by the managing entity, Atlantia S.p.A., controlled by the Benetton family. (It has nothing to do with it, apparently, but it is curious that one of the totem-novels of my early adult years was entitled, precisely, *The Bridge*; the author is Iain Banks.)

Built in the 1960s, Genoa’s Strada Sopraelevata (“elevated road”) is a fast-flowing urban road, about 6 kilometres long, located at a higher elevation than the ordinary roadway, that bypasses the entire city centre.

Costa Concordia was a 114,137-ton cruise ship operated by Genoa-based Costa Crociere cruise line. On the 13th of January 2012, at 9:45 p.m., the ship had a serious accident just off Giglio Island (Tuscany): the impact against a rock caused a leak from which water entered the lower levels, killing 32 people. Commander Francesco Schettino, who was responsible for the disaster and abandoned the ship during the accident, later became a TV celebrity.

#18. The series *Children of the Stones* is currently available online. An update worthy of our age could be titled *Children of the Infrastructure* and would touch deep chords: Ferrario 2018 and the documentary to which it refers, opportunely titled *La Zuppa del Demonio* (“the devil’s soup”).

#19. On the inability to think about the transformation of the landscape, Metta 2019.

#20. We are in the midst of it and so the bibliography is not yet settled – but this is of lesser concern, because in fact neither is a consensus view of reality, events, facts and causes. Some texts, written during the global confinement, have produced in me a deep resonance: *What the Virus Said* (Lundi Matin 2020); *Diario Virale* by Wu Ming, together with almost all of the “Giap” blog posts (Wu Ming 2020a, b, c); *Petit Manifeste par des Temps de Pandémie* (Collectif Malgré Tout 2020); Berardi 2020; Tarì 2020b. The quotes at the end of the paragraph are from Fabrizio De André’s *Smisurata Pregghiera*, the text of which is taken from the *Summa di Maqroll il Gabbiera. Anthologia poetica 1948-1988* by Álvaro Mutis.

#21. On cocaine as pivot and metaphor for the economy, there is an ample literature; here I only point out, for affinity, Taussig 2004. The question of addiction should also be addressed according to a historical poetics of substances that would allow, at least, for not making things worse: Zoja 1985; Garcia 2010; Balicco 2018.

#22. On the naming and the meaning of some of the master plants used in Amazonian medicine, Politi *et al.* 2019.

#23. The verse is taken from “Sleep Now in the Fire,” by Rage Against the Machine. Kohn 2013 describes a nocturnal alternation of sleep and storytelling among the Runas of Ávila, in Ecuador, and discusses the deep epistemological implications of sharing the interpretation of dreams.

#24. It is worth reading in full the passage in which Eric De Rosny describes the revelation: “And suddenly the long-awaited moment comes: my eyes open, human beings kill one another [*s’entre-tuent*]. I have a visual sensation of it. Everything that Din has been repeating me for a long time unfolds before my eyes like a movie: the vision is first of all the revelation of violence among human beings. – It takes great strength of character to look brute reality in the face. – Without initiation, without pedagogy, this vision makes you neurasthenic or it pushes you into the circle of violence. – Society is organized to hide from its members the violence that can be unleashed among them at any moment. – This is why dreams speak of it so much. – A dangerous revelation for society, that is why the *nganga* [the healer] is a disquieting personality.” (De

Rosny 1981, pp. 354-355). The aftermath of the adventure is told in De Rosny 1996.

#25. Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* and *The Magic Mountain*, of course. In the best Anglo-Saxon essayist tradition, the entry *Morpho* in the Encyclopedia Britannica combines scientific information with a certain poetry.

THEORY OF THE MULTIPLICITY

#1. On the poetic force of storytelling, Campbell 2002; Mathew 2003.

#2. In 1890 the Paiute prophet Wovoka began the Ghost Dance religious movement, which rapidly spread to many Indian tribes: the circle dance summoned the spirits of the dead and asked them to fight again, together with the living, to put an end to White domination. The Lakota took this possibility of resistance so seriously that the US Army had to carry out the Wounded Knee massacre in order to restore some colonial order among rebels. *Music for the Native Americans* by Robbie Robertson is the recommended listening.

Few texts *on* Romanticism are also great texts *of* Romanticism: such is the case with Löwy & Sayre 1992. For an immersion in Romantic castles halfway between essay and hypnosis, Le Brun 1982, then Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1978.

#3. Concerning epistemology, first of all Feyerabend 1975 and Haraway 1988.

To begin mapping the traces of happiness, Arendt 1954-1961; Pezzella 2009; Romitelli 2015; Tarì 2017a, 2017b. On the possibility of reclaiming all of our experience, William James writes: "to be radical, an empiricism does not have to either admit in its constructions any element that is not directly experimented, nor exclude from itself any element that is directly experimented." (James 1912, p. 22).

#4. An adequate account of what happened in the sciences would take too long; these are among the most useful texts: on logic, Łukasiewicz 1909; on Gödel's theorem, Hofstadter 1979; on physics, Prigogine & Stengers 1979; Rees 1997; Barad 2007; Lederman & Hill 2011; on the paradigm shift

in contemporary biology, Turnbaugh *et al.* 2007; Margulis & Sagan 2007; Guerrero, Margulis & Berlanga 2013; on ethology, Lestel 2009; Despret 2012; on the intelligence of plants, Mancuso & Viola 2015; Coccia 2018.

#5. The insecurity of the dead appears in the *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (Benjamin 1955).

Philosophical Archeology – a narrow ridge between the precipice of progressivist evolutionism and the overhang of the universal archetype – is today one of the most poetic and vital threads of philosophy: Foucault 1969; Didi-Huberman 2002; Agamben 2014. First-rate materials are collected on the website of the Laboratorio di Archeologia Filosofica (www.archeologiafilosofica.it). There are texts that can be considered as true initiations: Melandri 1968 is one of these.

From its very start, and until the end of the 1930s, the theory of evolution of living things is visionary and paradoxically not very progressive (von Uexküll 1934; Goldschmidt 1940; Gould 1977); its reduction to adaptationism (“survival of the fittest”) is one of the several intellectual tragedies of the second half of the 20th Century.

For prehistory, Greaber & Wengrow 2018; Lewis-Williams 2002; for classical Greece, the pioneer: Dodds 1951; then Jesi 1973; Carchia 1979; Hadot 1995; Baracchi 2014; Ferrando 2018; Coupât 2019.

#6. Freud thought that psychoanalysis, with its attention to dreams, would be taken as a “plague,” but a century had to go by before Tobie Nathan, from his eccentric position, could propose to professionals of the psyche a different dream ontology (Nathan 2011). Other visions of the dream, or visions of dream, can be found in Shulman & Stroumsa 1999 and Baccarin 2020. On DMT, Strassman 2001.

The finite provinces of meaning were theorized by Alfred Schütz, an American sociologist, at the end of World War II: Schütz 1945; a recent reprise is found in Gargani & Iacono 2005.

On the possibility that madness is a transitable crisis, rather than a definitive collapse, see the ethnopsychiatric (Nathan 2001; Coppo 2003) and the anthropological literature (Consigliere & Zavaroni 2018), and the history of WHO longitudinal studies on schizophrenia (Novick *et al.* 2012).

#7. The concept of *dividual* was worked out in a splendid series of anthropological reflections: Strathern 1988; Bird-David 1999; Comaroff & Comaroff 2012; Viveiros de Castro 2012b; in Italian see also Capello 2016 and Mancuso 2018.

Sahlins 2013 is an excellent introduction to kinship in an anthropological vein. The ban on metamorphosis is described in Calasso 1990.

#8. The reflections on objects, on their way of being and on their activity has in recent years been quite lively: Latour 1994; Gell 1998; Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007; Coccia 2020.

At the origins of hauntology, as Derrida himself recognizes (Derrida 1993), are two psychoanalysts of Hungarian origin, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, that, starting from the 1960s and 1970s, developed the theme of the uncanny investigated by Freud (Freud 1919), carrying it to unforeseen consequences. Their work indicates in fact that the propensity to annihilation that dwells within us is not an original principle of life or of the psyche, but the outcome of a traumatic history, the effect of violence (Abraham & Torok 1987). In its turn, Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* opened a line of research that has produced notable texts, both for themes that it has become possible to deal with and for the mingling of writing, inflection, and poetics: Davies 2007; Rashkin 2008; Del Pilar Blanco & Preen 2013; Beneduce 2016; Good 2020; in Italy, born of rather different concerns, the excellent Teti 1993-2018. Gordon 1997 remains the most beautiful and irrevocable.

Surrealism's profane illuminations, together with the possibility of a Gothic Marxism, are found in Benjamin 1928; Cohen 1993; Löwy 2013, 2019.

#9. The juxtaposition of the two types of resistance is proposed by Silver 2003; see also Taussig 1980; Santo-Granero 1992. Even more neglected than Marx, Polanyi 1944, reread keeping an eye on the present constellation, would have much to say. On the multiplicity of worlds, first of all Descola 2005; Viveiros de Castro 2009, 2012b; Singleton 2015; and then, widely, the texts produced by the so-called "ontological turn" in anthropology (in Italy, at the moment, there are three collections available: Consigliere 2014a, b; Brigati & Gamberi 2019). On worlding, Descola 2013. On the political and existential value of the ontological self-determination of peoples, Viveiros de Castro 2003; De la Cadena & Blaser 2018. In the field of ethnopsychiatry, these developments are beautifully exposed in Coppo 2010.

#10. The fall of the barrier that separates facts and science on the one hand, history and values on the other, leads to a radical rethinking of “human nature,” an old question around which the best and worst of modern history has been played out.

Again, it is impossible to give an exhaustive account of the available literature. These are some basic readings that happily interweave biological and cultural anthropology: Scheper-Hughes & Lock 1987; Csordas 1990; Despret 2001; Benezra, DeStefano & Gordon 2012; Ingold & Palsson 2013; Remotti 2019.

The historicity of health and of illness is one of the most delicate and impassioned themes in the research area that crosses medical anthropology and ethnopsychiatry. In a now vast literature, see at least Good 1994; Baer, Singer & Susser 1997; Coppo 2003; Marmot 2004, 2005. The definition of health proposed by WHO is discussed in Guerici 2007. Taussig 1999 describes “knowing what not to know” as a form of social power.

De Martino discusses presence in the world in the whole body of his work: de Martino 1948-1973, 1959, 1961, 1977.

#11. For an exemplary arc on the crisis of presence, see first *The World of Magic* and then *The End of the World* (de Martino 1948-1973, 1977-2016).

A matter of poetics: the demartinian concept of presence underlies some texts by the Tiquun collective: Tiquun 2001; Groseille 2018 for a clarifying comment. Moreover – even if just thinking it hurts – it should not be taken for granted that disasters don’t free up an amount of intelligence and energy previously trapped in an asphyxiating normality: Solnit 2009.

#12. The fundamental texts for the development of this paragraph and the following one are Lévi-Strauss 1949; Taussig 1987; Severi 2004.

#13. This paragraph relies mainly on the work of Gilbert Simondon: Simondon 1964-1989. Exploring these uncharted areas also are Burrige 1960; Bastide 1975; Castoriadis 1975; Lapassade 1976; Williams 1977; Rouget 1980. One is bound to note that all these texts historically belong to the last long season of political struggle, when the urgency of things and the courage of the explorations allowed hypotheses that, in the subsequent decades, would return to being unspeakable.

#14. The theory of knowledge hazarded in this paragraph and in the following one is born at the crossroad of the works of Enzo Melandri and Gilbert Simondon – of what I was able to understand of them which, I suspect, is a minimal part of what actually lies in their pages (a hermeneutic condition at once humiliating and enthusing). It finds confirmation in the anthropological research on embodiment: Hahn & Kleinmann 1983; Scheper-Hughes & Lock 1987; Csordas 1990.

Not by chance, analogy and belief are battlegrounds at the intersection of anthropology, philosophy, mythology, and archeology. Belief has been amply treated and deconstructed in anthropology: Needham 1972; Pouillon 1998; Hamayon 2006.

On image, Benjamin 1955; Didi-Huberman 2002. On the ideological use of images to create widespread consent, the old Barthes 1957 is still an instructive reading. On *rêverie*, Bion 1962 and Bartolini 2019.

#15. On analogy, the reference is one and obvious: Melandri 1968. Another extraordinary text of great utility is Ginzburg 1979.

#16. The possibility that trust is an indispensable ingredient of some crucial processes is discussed in Hahn & Kleinmann 1983; Nathan & Stengers 1995; Hahn 1999.

The efficacy that comes from the combination of repetition and image is well known to propaganda professionals, from commercial advertising, to which we are accustomed, to the political and even totalitarian propaganda. Extraordinary analyses of the “psychic whirlpools” that form when a regime is imposed on the social unconscious are found in Klemperer 1947; Beradt 1966; Sereny 1974; Sironi 2017; and, obviously, in literature, starting with *Darkness at Noon* by Koestler. If, until a short time ago, these phenomena could seem entirely exceptional, what we have witnessed in Italy during the COVID-19 emergency calls on us to be very cautious: Consigliere & Zavaroni 2020.

On the willingness to reveal the trick as the parting line between sorcerers and magicians, Tomatis 2016 and Baldacchino 2019.

#17. On the etymological nexus between dreaming, singing, and healing, Benozzo 2009. Magicians and illusionists belong to a very interesting professional category, caught between breathtaking fascination and the most

trivial disqualification. In Italy, Mariano Tomatis has for years interwoven the talent of the stage man, the accuracy of the researcher, and political passion: Tomatis 2016, 2020. Illusionist and street magician, David Abram is a refined philosopher expert on phenomenology and ecology: Abram 2009 is a magnificent text.

On divination see, for example, Curry 2010, and Holbraad 2012. On “becoming able to” within resistance movements, Starhawk 2002, 2011. A device known to me to access non-ordinary form of experience in a collective setting is Holotropic Breathwork: Grof & Grof 2010. For an idea of death no longer as annihilation, but as part of a relational process, Watts 1966; Grof 2006; Haraway 2016.

#18. Their mode of accessing the imaginary, together with its political consequences, is what revolted Benjamin in Bataille’s *Collège de Sociologie* and is also the reason for his precocious keeping his distance from surrealism which, in any case, had moved him profoundly. From Benjamin also begins a reflection on the aporetic relationship between violence and law: Benjamin 1921b, followed by Butler 2006.

With the abandonment of the imaginary to the right, for a long time utopian thought did not care to explore the possibility of other modes of consciousness. It was not until the psychedelic movement, between the 1950s and 1960s, that the question became relevant for a part of the revolutionary movement. The experience lasted long enough to mark the collective imagination and to trace a myriad of paths, but not long enough to weave the experimenters’ courage and generosity with a long lasting theoretical radicalism – or maybe that courage and that generosity are only biding their time: Fachinelli 1989; Grof & Grof 1989, 1990; Fontana 2020. On other ways of thinking the revolution, Landauer 2010, and then again *L’Altronovecento* edited by P.P. Poggio. The anxieties of libertarian parents conclude Graeber 2017b.

#19. David Graeber’s remark is found in Graeber 2017a, p. 487. Bastide comments, in a text that deserves to be reread with attention: “Man will always remain a machine for fabricating myths and that is not a problem if myth remains the expression of our struggle against incompleteness and our need to ‘be’ fully. The danger is if this machine is teleguided from the outside.” (Bastide 1975, p. 88). The quote on the fearsome status of angels comes from the first of the *Duino Elegies* by R.M. Rilke.

#20. On the link between mystical demands and revolutionary demands, again Bastide 1975 and now also Tronti & Tari 2020. The possibility of exiting not only from capitalist domination but from domination in general, is the object of the entire anarchist tradition: the reference is, therefore, to the work of David Graeber, already mentioned many times, as well as to Bookchin 1982 and Vaccaro 2020.

#21. Beyond those authors already mentioned in the previous paragraph, also Lapassade 1976.

#22. Haraway 2016 testifies to the necessity and urgency of telling different stories.

We can learn from movements that, in the last few decades, succeeded in their aims: that against GM foods, that against nuclear power, the struggle against the large pharmaceutical industries, the patients' organizations. In all these cases, activists – regardless of their initial technical competence on the issue – empowered themselves, collectively, to raise entirely reasonable objections to the official version of the facts: Stengers 2006; Graeber 2011b.

A beautiful account of an unexpected exiting, and of the loyalty it created, is found in Clerc 2011; for a more academic approach, Hulin 1993.

#23. Philology and the history of philosophy as combat sports find an illustration in Bloch 1952; Baracchi 2014; Ferrando 2018 and on the site of the Laboratorio di Archeologia Filosofica.

The fertility and inevitability of conflict in a world that welcomes multiplicity are treated in Benasayag & Del Rey 2007. The definition of cosmopolitics is taken from Stengers 2018, p. 95.

The long journey of anthropology is the object of Remotti 1990-2009. The political and strategic value of anthropology for the contemporary world is argued in Viveiros de Castro 2003; Ortner 2019; Whittle 2019. On the fact, still surprising to our ears, that other worlds have realized forms of democracy, of personal freedom and tolerance, at least Graeber 2007; Comaroff & Comaroff 2012; Vaccaro 2020. On the possibility of a differently articulated democracy from the State version, Clastres 1974; Abensour 2004. In general, for this paragraph, Graeber 2011b; La Porta 2018; Agamben 2019.

#24. The definition of realism is found in Bonnefoy 1980. On political ecology, Bennett 2010 and Corsin Jiménez 2018. On reasoning through the environment, Ingold 2000. On the complexity that comes with the multiplicity of worlds, De la Cadena & Blaser 2018.

#25. Some feasts continue to live a secret life, off the radar of the spectacle, in secluded lands. They have nothing to do with relief from work, finalized to re-start the *corvée*, nor with the sop commanded for those relationships that, normally, we must neglect. *Quaerendo invenietis*.

Gordon 2017 is a labyrinthian exploration of the utopian margins and of the possibility of living in them. Then we need to pass over to literature and to its power: *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, for example.

As a general caution: “A minimum of prudence forces us to limit every mysticism, both as attitude and as behavior, even if only as doctrine, at the moment of research not of an absolute, but, as we have said, of the ‘melting’ of a certain ‘world,’ and to consider the ways that are used to this end as offered precisely and only within that ‘world.’” (Sabbatucci 1965-1979, p. 38).

The quote is from the first of the *Duino Elegies* by R.M. Rilke.

FABLES OF THE RE-ENCHANTMENT

These are, in order of appearance, the singers of the fables of re-enchancement: René Char, from the collection *Les Matinaux*; Simone Weil from a letter to Joe Bousquet; the collective known as Le Parti Imaginaire, from *Appel*; Mario Pezzella, from *Il Volto di Marilyn*; Michel De Certeau, from *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Matteo Terzaghi, from *Ufficio Proiezioni Luminose*; Julien Coupat, from *Dialogo con i Morti*; Robert Hahn and Arthur Kleinmann, from *Belief as Pathogen, Belief as Medicine*; Claude Lévi-Strauss, from *Race and History*; Mariano Tomatis and Ferdinando Buscema, from *L'arte di Stupire*; Eduardo and Bonnie Duran, from *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*; Luigi Meneghello, from *I Piccoli Maestri*; Valerio Romitelli, from *La Felicità dei Partigiani e la Nostra. Organizzarsi per Bande*; Ernst Bloch, from *The Principle of Hope*; Ilaria Bussoni, from *Loro. Profezia su un Mondo Che Non C'è*; Roger Bastide, from *Il Sacro Selvaggio*; Marcello Tarì from *Non Esiste Rivoluzione Infelice*; Walter Benjamin, from *Surrealism*:

The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia; Max Maven, from the show “Thinking in Person”; Elvio Fachinelli, from *La Mente Estatica*; Antonio Gramsci, in a prison letter addressed to Giulia; Annalisa Metta, from her intervention for the exhibition “ilmondoinfine.”

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