

27 August 2021: what is theatre?

We don't at first know. Theatre is not like poetry, since poetry, being a poet, having written a poem, makes us think: Well, really, I have I written a poem? And how many do I need to write before I'm a poet? If that's what we aspire to be.

If that's what we aspire to be, poetry provides us with, has inherent in it, an aspirational quality. A quality of uplift, which theatre does not. Poetry asks us to come up to a standard, and it's up to us whether that's a standard of the past—taken from a canon of the greats, from whatever period—or a standard of the future, one by which, as Pound said, we Make it New.

To Make it New we may want to drop the standard. Into the unformed or the deformed, to achieve an art, as the Nazis said, that is *entartete*. Still, there's a standard from literary modernism and postmodernism for us. A precedent on which we call when we write doggerel and call it poetry. Poetry that is unschooled. Or that is in the language of everyday life, like Lou Reed's, or that is all quotes, all stolen, not in what in poetry is sometimes called our *voice* at all. Or that does not use recognisable words or sounds, like Dada poetry and concrete poetry. Or poetry written to achieve an effect of the language itself speaking, the written language, mind you, called Language Poetry.

Theatre too provides us with some canonical understandings but to ask *What is theatre?* doesn't seem to rely on them. The answers that are most immediate are most easily set aside, abandoned for not being satisfactory. Can we say the same thing about modern art? art that is modern?

Doesn't 'What is art?' confront us with the same problem? ...but we *want* to, that's the difference. We want to come up with as many definitions as possible and abandon them as soon we make them. Theatre—not so much.

With art, I want to say, art is for the animals! Not just the outcasts, outsiders, the outsiders cast out inside society, the artists whose art has been institutionalised as *Art Brut*. No. The actual animals. And other species

outside the human men, women and children. Art is to bring down the dream of human exceptionalism!

I mean, you can see this already with painting. Isn't, since every pigment is at base mineral, dealing at the level of pure pigment a *mineral-becoming*? Mineral Art, much as we might say Language Poetry.

When I define art to express the non-human, the process of abandonment does at first resemble that that gave us 'Theatre—not so much.' For art it's because of art's implication in ideology and the politics of gender, race and class. We point to the artistic canon as we do the poetic canon and notice the voices of the excluded. And to champion them, we can't be going around saying, these excluded voices are non-human, or express the nonhuman. Puncture the dream of human exceptionalism. For the reason it is their inclusion that we want. Diversity. Heterogeneity. Multiplicity. And so on, up to equality and radical democracy. In the arts first, at least.

We don't rush in with definitions of theatre because ... it is political from the start. And this impugns its status as an artform. So first we'd have to lift theatre up, like poetry, raise it to being an artform. Then, taking into account the politics, we'd have to drag it down from its elevated institutional cultural status. Burn down the operahouses, as Boulez said. Cancel culture, as it is now said.

Or like a commentator in New Zealand wrote, the breaking apart of the theatre institutions that occurred from when free-market economic reforms were introduced in New Zealand in 1984 brought about a renaissance of grass-roots activity in theatre. All those voices not previously represented in the big theatres were able to gain support on their own behalf—without the big theatres sucking up the resources—, take the stage, empowering the communities they come from. As the slogan went and has remained: *Our stories in our own words*.

Do we know that 'What is theatre?' is a political question from the first? No. I would say we don't, but that it is a political question leads us to abandon the

definitions we might bring to it, quickly, as Nonhuman leads us to abandon that definition, eventually, for art. Eventually, once we consider the political implications.

Although, I would add there is currently a politics at stake that is exactly nonhuman, a bigger political picture, taking in climate politics. And it is for this reason we might re-designate the *Humanities* to be the *Inhumanities*—taking into cognizance also the cultural politics—and art as the art of the nonhuman.

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I wrote that we don't at first know the answer. The immediate answers—like democracy, and philosophy, a Greek invention; a bunch of poofs in tights pretending they're kings and queens; a beast that will eat your heart (this was my father's description); a colonial artform, isn't it?; a place of terror, cruelty, poverty, boredom or entertainment... or the people who make it that... or these foisted on an unsuspecting public by whose presence or absence it is defined—seem to refer to the place and time they were given rather than to the thing they would describe. And this in turn would seem to point to a certain type of realism with regard to the question.

A certain type of temporality or temporalising would seem to apply to theatre that theatre is product of, and, producing which, it is the embodiment of, or space for. The answers given possess immediacy and are possessed of or subject to immediacy, much as if they were all talking at once on the stage. What is lacking, and why they must be abandoned, is that it all happens at once.

There is no rising up to be done. To accede to being the platform for a bunch of poofs in tights... Or to being a poetic or a psychoanalytic place of terror, and so on. But there remains the question asked us, asked us by the answer given, which is what it asks of us: it is the beast that would eat your heart. Surely only if you wore your heart on your sleeve?

And that we don't want to rush in with answers points to the certain type of realism of being a theatre of theatre. It is insofar (in so far only?) as it is where one wants to be. Where. One. Wants... If it is where one wants to be, we can choose where, but not when.

And then there, we give the answer at once, in the immediacy of the moment. Or withhold it, knowing that as soon as given it *is not good enough*, that it will be abandoned. It will be, same as we said it. Same as we never did.

One of David Byrne's lyrics for The Knee Plays, music intended for Robert Wilson's *The Civil Wars*, a work intended for an art festival, to coincide with the LA Olympics in 1984, that never took place, goes that the sound never leaves the theatre. It builds up. This is why being there is more important than knowing what is going on. Until, when everyone leaves, the accumulated sound leaves with them:

To become forever part of the landscape

In no particular order.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejnczVScmPw>)

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But why? Why this question? Deleuze and Guattari—the authorship has been contested in that Guattari is said not to have been so active in the writing of *What is Philosophy?* but from Dosse's double biography we know that Guattari, enduring the 'winter years' of the 1980s, read and gave his authorship to the book. And we know, as Deleuze said, it could not have been written without him, that it came out of their friendship. Perhaps Deleuze understood this friendship slightly differently, since he understood it in the sense that we will get to in the course of this writing: he understood his friend's *little bit of crazy*; he understood it to be the reason why he loved him, the crack... like a window cracked open a fraction, a window giving onto an outside altogether other than that within his own purview, outside his

compass, letting in air of a different type (much as we might say, a *certain type of realism*, so a different type)—Deleuze and Guattari answer the question ‘What is philosophy?’ by saying there comes a time in life when one asks oneself *what is it I’ve been doing all these years?* ... To what beast have I given my heart?

Although you might think, *Ah*, then, *this is why. Why he returns to this question!* And you might forgive me. Although you need not. As if I, a little bit crazy, *must*, through some accident of my psychological make-up, keep coming back to it.

Although you might think that it’s a time of life issue, a personal tick or a deep and unresolved, and therefore unresolvable, perhaps even masochistic, at least self-defeating and leading to self-sabotage—the self-sabotage of every project that might work it out—thing with me, let’s say a personal thing, this is not the reason (*O*, but can he say so with *certainty?*) for my writing. Neither is it, despite appearances, to *play it out*.

I am writing against the notion, even though I know I can’t help it, that I am performing. That writing is *of course* performative. Against the notion that this is all we can hope for, from writing or, in particular, from theory. That it is, as Blau writes somewhere, mirror-struck. And as Stravinsky denies being of his own mental processes.

I don’t believe *words are inadequate to express...* ever: but this does not mean we can get to the bottom of things; or that some privilege is entailed in getting to the bottom of things. That only the just, the true and good ever can. Or the bad, mad and mean. Dead white men, and so on.

No. Then it is a theoretical text? I love the theories of Herbert Blau and Samuel Weber, Blau also a practitioner, a director and a theorist, or simply writer on theatre, of theatre, but I don’t intend to present a theory here. That is, I have no wish to present a thesis, no matter how well grounded in the concrete, in either what can be or what has been called theatre. I’m more

interested in what must be called theatre—in despite of its practice or its theory.

Weber's is, helpfully, about displacement. Displacement and replacement. The mobility of the theatrical scene that renews itself in its referral. His example in *Theatricality as Medium* is Oedipus at Colonus. It is how Oedipus dies and the reason he dies. Or, how his death works on the world is a function of it *not being represented*. So Weber's theory goes against anyone who might say that art has no effect on the real world as well as anyone making the assumption that it is the *art of representation* par excellence.

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Theatre takes place. Whether under a bare tree, or at Colonus, the place divides along the line splitting representation between what is represented and that which it represents. And then there is the unrepresented death of Oedipus, off-stage, packed full of meaning.

If it is kept a secret, this place, Colonus, Oedipus promises it will better protect Athens than shields or armies. Because it is not Colonus. But wherever the show is put on.

This is the line dividing theatre from what happens, protecting what happens in truth from pretense. And it is here that what happens in truth is most vulnerable, at this threshold... What Sophocles' play stages, for Weber, is both theatricality and medium, of representation. Its theatricality is in crossing a threshold. Crossing it each time it is performed, from what is no more than representation to what it represents, it goes by way of what is outside of the theatre, off-stage and unrepresented, unable to be represented. For it to be would show the rule, all the more clearly: you can't cross the line.

So for Weber this is the case each time, a referral onto the real that the audience are sometimes said to represent because of a mobility of place. It also gives rise, in theatre, to the participatory—because the audience is the

real representation, as opposed to the fake one, it is asked to cross the line. Crossing it, for Alan Read, is the occasion for shame.

Shame to which the individual is prone, to which the individual is sacrifice. For the community, whose community the sacrifice was supposed to affirm, to bind in community, the sacrifice disaffirms and negates community. The opposite effect is achieved from that Herbert Blau find for in the sacrifice of the actor, on stage.

Under the stage the bodies are buried, according to Weber, and will not stay so for long. Something similar is happening in Blau, but it has to do with the proximity of bodies, the theatrical appearance being the threshold between life and death. And so ghosts passing this way and that, with real bodies on the line.

No. I would note how theory raises the stakes, its own as much as those that are theatre's own, stakes that are political, ethical, as well as epistemological, ontological, and although I would quote the opening of Herb's book, *The Impossible Theater*, this writing is not to put forward a theory. Neither is it to follow a practice, to hang a theory of theatre on a practice in theatre—or to follow more closely the problem that is a practice's. Neither exegesis nor thesis is intended here, but something more useful that I don't have a name for yet, out of which, the urgency not purely speculative, a time-contingent writing, a static genesis.

Here's the Blau quote from *The Impossible Theater: A Manifesto*, where for 'America' you may substitute wherever you happen to be:

The purpose of this book is to talk up a revolution. Where there are rumblings already, I want to cheer them on. I intend to be incendiary and subversive, maybe even un-American. I shall probably hurt some people unintentionally; there are some I want to hurt. I may as well confess right now the full extent of my animus: there are times when, confronted with the despicable behavior of people in the American theater, I feel like the lunatic Lear on the heath, wanting to "kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!"

1 September 2021: what is theatre?

I want to address two lines. The first we have seen. It is the line splitting representation into what is represented and that which it represents. Into what it is, and what's doing the work, we might say, of representation. In theatre this is the whole theatrical apparatus. Even the curtains we can suspect of meaning something, of referring to a veil, and unveiling, and yet staying visible.

This line was important for Weber, you remember, since by remaining visible, the curtain marks a kind of limit. Again, it has meaning. It limits represented action to that which occurs onstage, but in doing so remains accessible to trespass. So the action of Oedipus at Colonus, of his death, being offstage, trespasses the limit of representation to have effects on the world.

The world that is no longer beyond but included. The world the invisibility of which no longer guarantees its security, it not being placed in jeopardy. Or, for Oedipus—for Sophocles—guarantees that it is available—and, for Weber, means we can entertain the possibility that when Oedipus promises his death, the secret place of it, will protect Athens more than shields and armies, neither he nor the playwright are speaking in vain. So we can entertain the notion that his promise is, was, will be kept by the medium of a theatricality that is inclusive of this split, this line.

You no doubt recognise it as the *fourth wall*. I think this is to misrepresent it, if I can say so, because a wall in theatre is never just a wall. For example, the theatre productions that erect a mirror to the rear of the stage, so that the whole audience is reflected behind the action. Or the crude methods Alan Read talks about, where audience members are brought into the action, to do what is called participate, but who are never entirely there, can never entirely suffer the consequences, and are limited to personal reactions, like shame. (That is, they participate but in themselves.) Where the undoing of illusion backfires. And there are for Read political consequences of this, just as there were for Weber, with Oedipus, when theatre crosses the line from the inside.

The line here is that separating the stage from the world, one that is highly mobile. We find it cropping up in our personal lives when we accuse others or ourselves of being fake. Again, this is an oversimplification, the oversimplification of what has come to be known as performativity. An oversimplification because it does not come from the side of theatre but assumes a world outside it. And so re-inserts the line in order to make a stand on what is real, so reinforcing and fortifying it, claiming and then defending it. Making it the real of the real. Or Big Real. What is really going on I think is more subtle.

It goes to the answer to the question 'what is theatre?' The answer I might've made at different times of my life is that theatre is, as Weber, Read and Blau all maintain, about risk. It entails risk and the responsibility that comes with that risk or that it imposes, which we can either assume or not. And the despicable people of American theatre Blau describes I would say do not. Risk anything.

My answer is like Blau's then: it is a charge, a judgement on those who get on with playing the nice plays to the Cynthias, as one such person in New Zealand theatre described them: because these are the ones who will pay to ensure theatres stay open. Until they don't.

In a sense, then, the risk for being shirked, is all the more acutely felt, because it is of losing one's livelihood. ... Then, the talk goes, what are you going to do with your fancy ideas about theatre? if there is no audience!

My answer would have been that necessity comes before reality. That there is a principle worth, as Blau does, getting angry over. And being passionate about.

And writing about! Also. My answer would have been to take the risk is imposed by the necessity of theatre. Like a vow, certainly, to one who does not requite one's love. And if my answer now is different it does not come out of finding that this is the case.

We can look at Blau's life. Rather than get bitter and stay in theatre he went to academe. My father did not, didn't have this recourse from theatre to theory, and did not make it.

Then, what is the necessity *of* that implies this risk, that one imposes on oneself? The answer pure and simple is the choice between risking the world or the soul. And the soul of theatre is about necessity and the world of theatre is about that soul.

The other part of the answer has already been touched on—the answer I would have given at a different time of my life than now: it is time. The necessity placed on us by time, by this particular time. Now. As well as this instant: the instant we see the young, golden and invulnerable Rimbaud, or those beautiful young men ... as they should be seen ... under arc-lights, beautiful and golden and in that instant immortal. Says Chinchilla in Robert David MacDonald's play of the same name.

So: the necessity placed on us by the time, for which we risk everything. And I say we have touched on it because it is that certain type of realism we ascribed to theatre of a temporalising temporality. This necessity is also to *speak* to the time.

If the time cannot have the revolution it deserves say it, show it. Even if that means pissing off the sponsors. The donors. Or the funding body, with its functionaries in their sinecures. The latter has meant the destruction of many theatres in this country, a destruction that cannot be thought of in any other way than politically motivated.

Do I now disagree with my former answers? Have I made recourse to theory from theatre? No. Not really. And, no. But I would say now, still with this first line, that it is not between audience and theatre. It does not demarcate the stage. In theatre's relation to an audience is not found its definition. That is, in what defines the stage. Because a stage need not be in front of an audience.

So, it is of another necessity and risk that I write at this time, that this writing concerns, with an urgency not simply speculative. This line, the line of

theatricality as a distinct medium, for Weber, or as the defensive line of performativity for thinkers of performance, is not lost in any workshop, studio or rehearsal room I have encountered, where I have seen actors, non-actors, some musicians, dancers, graphic designers, the curious, risk it. This line confused when it's called the fourth wall takes place in any place theatre is done. As soon as any one enters the stage.

We come finally to the second line. Where the first lets us see the work of representation and what does the work, or who, the second is the line of the stage itself. Where it is stuck by gravity. Its necessity. Over the top of a void. Its risk.

The second line is a line drawn under events. That is, the stage *is* no more than a line drawn under events. The events that take place on it. But not actions.

Why not actions? Because of what the line does to actions. It depersonalises them, it makes them impersonal

This, then, is the risk posed: of making an action. The second line does not split what is fake from real, what is done for theatrical effect, made-up, from what is done for real, or in the real world. Does not split the real world from what goes on on stage. It divides the personal from the impersonal. And this is what the actor risks.

The moment any one steps out onto the void is a suspended moment. A movement that cannot move. With all the force of an event.

2 September 2021: what is theatre?

What is it necessary to do now? What is it necessary to say? Two suicides come to mind. Why?

Neil Roberts's and Mark Fisher's. Neil Roberts wrote "we have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity," drew a peace sign on the wall, and blew

himself up in the toilets outside the Wanganui Computer Centre on the 18th November 1982. He was 22.

Mark Fisher taught at Goldsmiths. He was ten weeks from the end of a seminar called "Postcapitalist Desire" when he died. 13 January 2017. 48.

Fisher's writings are voluminous. Of Roberts's we have that one line. Police said of his body that they'd be picking up bits for weeks.

Then the infamous statement of Stockhausen on 9/11, that it was "the greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos." Next to it, he wrote, composers are nothing. 17 September 2001.

Why do I submit these to my timeline here? Because these are not performances. And perhaps this is what, despite everything, I want to affirm in them.

I was going to begin with Beckett. After asking what is it necessary to do, what is it necessary to say, I was going to say, we can't go on. We go on.

Until of course we don't. And this is what, in his way, Beckett was affirming too. The three other figures each go in quite another direction.

I don't want to reduce the lamentable to the gestural. Make light, or exhort to action. Joshua Cohen, psychoanalyst and writer, says of a case of depressive inertia, the desire not to do anything, completely to stop, is not symptomatic.

Telling yourself to stop is not symptomatic of any other desire. The impasse to productivity has no other outcome, than, Beckett again, failing better. What is as impossible as imagining an alternative to capitalism is always that, not merely difficult.

From this point I was going to talk about the decision to step out onto the void that the line the stage draws under events is stuck to. You will recall Nietzsche's *Seiltänzer*, whom Zarathustra bears on his body and buries as a friend. The wire artist. The risk and the necessity.

3 September 2021: what is theatre?

It would seem that the two lines are opposed. The one on which what is represented, the object of representation, is severed from its representative—onstage. And the one that effects the apportioning of actions and events, personal actions, impersonal events. On this second line, the actor risks making an action.

Why making and not taking? Because the action is taken from her and put in play for other purposes than she intended? Or because in this context it is not true. The latter would imply true to *her*. Or him. And this lack of truth implies the presence of the first line. But is this really so serious?

It has the seriousness of the not serious. The seriousness of the game when we cannot figure out the rules. A ramifying seriousness, since the issue at stake for us gets tangled up in our efforts to untie it. To free it. An intense seriousness. And we are on our own with this mess, this entanglement, this, Augustine writes, bent and twisted knottiness. An entanglement in which we are entangled. Like the inert depressive. Whose every impulse to dig and relieve the pressure is thwarted by an equally intense aversion: *I don't want to!* ... yes, to the degree that *suicidal thoughts* take root.

Then, we've also addressed the possibility, the potential for the audience to be absent, for theatre to be without audience, by saying that whenever someone goes on, and makes a move onto the stage, wherever the stage is suggested, there it is—the second line. Onto it the highwire artist sets his foot. Or hers. I used this turn of phrase, however: I said in my *encounter*. Much as I might have said, of my acquaintance. And the silent question: *What is my eligibility so to assert?* The qualification in question is not my own. Rather it is in the presence of others that the risk is felt, the vulnerability, so that it takes courage to go on, doesn't it?

Yes, but what about the absence of others? Of all other observers? What about when I am not there? In the room. At the beach. ... And... Is it your sudden

sense of being watched that arrests you in your tracks? That leads you to feel ... you are going on stage? Performance anxiety, and so on.

Does anyone else need to be there for you to form this impression? And, yes, I would say that the anxiety of performance does come, but not as it is usually understood, as a *fear of failure*. It comes as a fear of... falling. And we can mention love here.

O god, I'm falling for him! Oh no, I'm falling for her! Every resistance seems further to entangle us in this mess. As we have said. Because falling in love, or falling into a black hole, we are overtaken. Even so far as to be overtaken *at first sight*. Or, *at the first step*. Then, the action made takes us. Is a wind blowing us into... And yes, we can refuse, but I'm saying we cannot deny. So that it is not the personal action we have taken overtaking us but the impersonal event the action makes, expressed in *sight* or *step*. ... How many times have I reached the edge of the stage and said, *I can't go on?*

The fear of artifice, isn't it secondary? the fear we are fooling ourselves. It would be the work of the first line, splitting the work we are doing to represent love from the fact of being in love. And I would say that it is in recognition of the second place taken by the fear of playing false that theatre people tend to be the most not serious. Even about the most serious things, sexuality, for example. Identity! My father on his deathbed said to me: *The problem with us is that we can never take anything seriously*. And of course he meant it, seriously.

A person risks falling into the thrall of what they do. Of the action they make... just getting onto the stage, that decision, but then in every subsequent action, in every event. The thrall they fall into is that of the impersonal, what Deleuze calls *affect*. Depersonalised love crashes down on me and I want to weep or run.

Deleuze and Guattari say this in their last book together: to science belong percepts; to philosophy belong concepts; to art belong affects. Belong in the sense of expressing and creating. So art expresses and creates impersonal

affects. These are not influences. They are aspects of what we might call inward life, inner experience, cut, sometimes painfully, by this second line we have been talking about. And who's to say whether in that case they are *true* or *false*?

Care. Who cares? Haven't we said that the things we put on stage are not themselves? That the walls, the curtains, hold meanings which in the everyday they did not when onstage, in a theatre?

It is therefore a strange work we do to insure the validity of the affect, which is the effect created onstage, is not simply *representative*, of the love we confess to, of the walking... The walking! How an actor walks says so much about that validity. Is she actually in her body? we might ask.

We might say, *You're doing something different with your feet... Just walk*. The actor can't. The significance of making each of the actions which together comprise walking is too clear. He stands out too clearly onstage for this appalling condition of *not being able to walk*.

So does that mean it's not artifice we want? This goes to the nature of what we have so far been calling either the actions that are made or the events in which they are overtaken. Is this because *as* events, *as* impersonal, they cannot but be true? No, it's not.

Don't forget the line of artifice, of theatricality, overturning any truth, even that of the event. We have said, however, that the force of the event is here, and that doesn't mean only of the event in its impersonal aspect.

What are the gestures we make on the stage? Are they ideas? No, no, no: they are affects freed, set free from personal entanglement, and as such must be true to themselves.

Is this so? Well... I would say that some paring down occurs: yes, some pruning, of the dense tangle of messy emotion. While preserving *intensity*. How?

We have just had taken from us that which we gave intensity for it being in the context of our interior lives. Isn't its mess its essence? That is the decision we must make, in where we put the line of artifice. And how we use the line of the stage to underline what is shown. Events? ...yes, but in a very subjective sense. In the sense that we say, it was only your impression that that truth led to that other one. Only your opinion. For me it didn't work at all: I couldn't believe in what happened because of ... to be honest I was distracted by the walking. It was dishonest.

It would seem that the two lines oppose one another: the line of artifice and that of ... let's say, necessity. One undercutting and undoing the work the other is doing. Artifice making it all seem so ... pointless. We already know what side theatre people are on, the one of saying, Don't take it all so seriously! And then with their care about the details, the technical details, that otherwise do seem so pointless: how do I walk? What steps to take so that the affect that was personal is freed from me-ness to have the effect of *any body walking*, at least subjectively.

Note here is a subject talking to a subject and the strange coincidence of the two, which breaks with the imposition of the second line: the subjects splitting, one from the other. Now there is the one onstage, and the other, who is an actor, who acts the part we are interested in, of the affect or the event. So that we would sooner call it a *subject* than either of the two.

We can see it to be the case, the two lines seeming to be opposed, most clearly when we look at the things, the objects, in a theatre, on an empty stage. What is it going to take to convince us that that is a real door? Leaving by it?

No. Wait. What is being staged is the subject itself. Himself. Herself. It no longer matters: an impersonal, depersonalised subject.

This is perhaps why I like dance. Because Douglas Wright understood it better than anyone: the stage is overtaken as much by the set elements as by the movements of the dancers. And there is a complex ensemble here. An agency.

Not a subject, or subjective state or viewpoint, being expressed, but an expressive subject.

And this is perhaps why, for all his brilliance, I don't like the work of Michael Parmenter as much. Always a sentimentality, a sentimental attachment to personality, whether it's the personality of the dancers or that of the choreographer. While Douglas sweeps all that away: yes, sometimes it is dark; but what you win is like Beckett's affirmation, impossible. Fail again. Fail better.

In *Slava's Snow Show*, in the interval, several clowns came down into the auditorium. Some went up, climbing up the boxes in the Civic Theatre, into the gallery. And they abducted audience members who weren't out getting a drink, or doing what Badiou in his book pins his entire argument for the significance of theatre on, perversely, its social aspect: talking about what they are watching; sharing interim observations, before returning to have them either confirmed, and now confirmed socially, or confounded. A potential for social confoundment.

Anyway, the clowns came down into the stalls, some went up, and abducted individual audience members. Carrying them away by force. From those they were either sitting with or, if on their own, from their places in the audience. Ah, we might have said, Breaking down the fourth wall!

A clown with a woman over his shoulder. Her legs kicking in the air. Possibly terrified.

At the end of the interval, they were returned. And were unharmed. But the abduction added something to the conclusion of the show, something horrifying, as if they had not been returned at all. The stage exploded.

Magnesium flare audience blinders extreme upstage. Wind machines blowing the scenery and curtains and clowns across the stage. The deafening roar. 'Snow' streaming forth...

...as if bodies, not paper streamer snow, but white ash back out of the blazing pit of the blown wide open stage.

4 September 2021: what is theatre?

Let's go back to the empty theatre. It's somewhere we didn't spend long enough and it's one of my favourite places. You recall, sounds never leave it, sang David Byrne. He was referring to the cinema, that used to be called the picture theatre. He also said, or sang, that knowing what's happening—in the film, is not so important as being there. In the theatre.

In a cinema the artifice by which sounds are reproduced is usually concealed. In old cinemas the screen is behind a curtain. With the advent of cinemascope, the revelation of the screen being exposed was followed by a another, though smaller, revelation: having opened to show the pre-film shorts or ads, the curtain then widened before the main feature. Sometimes, for a moment, it was blank.

Anecdotally, the first cinema audiences in Japan did not watch the screen. They looked at the light streaming above their heads out of the projection box, and were not aware that this was not intended to be the object of their attention. How to make sense of the movement swirling in shades and densities of black and white upon the screen? Never stillness, unless this too is projected, depicted, presented and represented. Not so with the ... what can we call it to distinguish it from the picture theatre?

The theatre-with-stage? The usual distinction invoked is between onscreen and onstage, but this refers to action. In the empty theatre there is none. Yet it is still a theatre.

With the idea of the stage being a line drawn under events I have effectively removed actions from the stage. This line, I've said, splits the personal from the impersonal, in a kind of inaction. The movement that does not move: this is the movement of love at first sight and of going on, on to the stage. Having to reconfigure all that was personal impersonally. Stage-struck or paralysed with stage-fright, that is immobilised in the moment of relinquishing... a pause is necessary: what does the one who walks out on to the stage relinquish?

I would suggest it's no different for the screen actor. Perhaps it's even clearer as to what acting removes from one: one's image. Some screen actors refuse to watch their own films as a result. Are the ones who can watch their films and separate themselves personally from the image onscreen egoists? Or is the personal ego that they have forfeited supplanted by the superego of the industry in a way that is precisely to do with compensation?

So much is in one's image. And don't forget that the screen actor still has to reconfigure, to make up that image, as one screen actor I know recently said, like a carpenter. This image-building, is it more or less solid than that of a personal ego? I think we can at least say, there are industry standards.

Can we say there is also displacement? Any more than there is in the builder putting her reputation on the line in the course of her professional life? Is it less a question of relinquishing something than of hazarding it? Again, no great difference between carpenter and actor.

And there must exist actors who've never experienced a twinge of anxiety before the camera or on the stage, mustn't there? Actor training is not about suppressing it, but about carpentry. Building up again, so that in many schools the process preceding it was called 'breaking down.' And it was conducted in some like a form of torture, where the intention is the same: breaking down. Overcoming and destroying the fortifications, the defensive structures erected around the self (once more, a building metaphor), in order to introduce another directive: to confess, for example; to rat and sell out. After which the building up again, that in cases where it is dispensed with or left incomplete is to meet industry standards, of whatever will do the job.

The problem of theatre would seem to be that it is where the subject is overtaken, but it need not be by artifice. And this would be to say that the use of artifice—the line of artifice we talked of earlier—is not to heighten effect, but that it is already supported in this by something that has occurred earlier. From this earlier point, everything is equally natural and artificial, which is to say, a supplement.

Is it not so that we can leave the theatre and that everything afterward can be equally fictive and factual? The opposite of moving in a crowd in fact. Or having a crowd move and flow around one. That is, we can leave the theatre, and remain answerable to the subjects that surround us.

6 September 2021: what is theatre?

This writing has been pursued as if there is something to be said. About theatre, certainly. But I have pursued it as if there is something to be said for it, this writing. When the for it I ought to be considering is the for it of theatre. Something to be said for it, theatre does not on its own say. At least, that it not quite, not yet or no longer says.

I have assumed this writing on its own speaks for itself. Although I don't know if it does. I don't know if I should entrust it to you when it is not the saying but what is said I would entrust. In the saying I am choosing not to speak on its behalf. Leave what is said to speak for itself, as if it spoke to a friend. As if that is it projected my voice, when I know this is not true. It's a question of artifice. ... Or, is it a question of this, the stage?

Theatre has a stage. To theatre belongs a stage. Here it expresses itself, speaks for itself. And the conditions are reversed of this writing: I would entrust to you not the said but the saying. So what theatre is saying is said onstage. And it will not be a question of theatre no longer, not yet or not quite having the means to say it. Because it is under-resourced, for example, or poorly understood.

Perhaps this goes to my poor understanding of it that I believe writing always to have the means of expression so that it never has to say, *Words cannot express...* And I understand writing to *be* this *having* of its means. As if it produced from its *not quite, not yet or no longer* having them, those resources of expression that it requires for what is said. This would not be *ex nihilo*, from nothing, but as I would say of the stage also, *on* nothing, that line of the void to which the line of the stage belongs. As its condition of expression, not

its limit: or as one might say, it takes its internal resource from outside itself. However the line is not the opening, that is more simply the stage door.

Theatre has a stage. The definition is incomplete because theatre is not a stage, just as the screen on which moving pictures are shown is not the cinema. Neither is it how the stage is displayed, its disposition or its conformation, that might assist in the identification of the theatre with the stage, its definition. Nor in the cinema is it these with regard to the screen, whether it is a dirty sheet or a patch of earth.

For the cinema, isn't it with the moving pictures themselves that we ought to identify it and by them define the cinema to be any place a film is shown? And so presuppose the technical resources enabling the showing of a film. Like this, the painting is separable from the support. Whatever technical requirements are made in stretching the canvas, and so on, their provision is presupposed. And questions of applying paint to canvas and projecting image are put to the side.

To painting belongs a support, to cinema belongs a screen, and to theatre belongs a stage in the same way: because of what it does. How it works is what it does, with the qualification, as Oscar Wilde said, that it is quite useless. We might say of them, the support for painting, the screen for cinema, the stage for theatre, that each is unemployed, does not work, or is *inoeuvable*.

The theatre is black is what is said when nothing is on. No shows. And the stage is clear, perhaps lit up by the workers, worker lights, luminaires having been derigged. We enter not through the stage-door, that would take us through the backstage, the dressing-rooms and green room, before we even reached the wings, in a traditionally appointed theatre, but through a side door, maybe a fire exit, into the auditorium.

For a short while we stare at the stage, as if we might be staring at the sea, looking out. Or our stage might just as well be on the beach. With our intention to do a little outdoor improv, we are recycing the scene. Having

picked where, we stare at the sand in the same way. There is never nothing there, nothing on the horizon. And like with the sea, there may at first be too much.

We might be overwhelmed with the sea-wrack, distracted by the plastic, by the constant movement of the waves, or the climatic conditions, outside the theatre. Inside, still, there may be too much, but since theatre is this machine to pare down, we can find the stage. There's something meditative about it. Zen: like the raked gravel that is still called a garden, so the empty stage that is still called a theatre.

Like the Zen garden the stage provides conditions essential to this meditative or contemplative state not for having removed whatever obstacles to achieving it had been there, not by cutting out or cutting down distractions, but by preserving *just enough*. A +1 dimension. Of the essential relations, the minimum. In the garden, the relations between rocks. Or the tree pruned not to resemble an *objet mort*, but to preserve the minimum dynamism necessary to growth, to life. Its essential condition.

This essential condition in fact resembles the mathematics of the fractal. The fractal relation is of one dimension to 1.3 or so, up to the next whole number, while at one end of the continua between dimensions there is the order, directly, of the manmade, of artifice, and at the other a chaos which goes further than any that occurs in nature. Neither our intention nor imagination are enough to create this effect. Neither is it by an action of will or by its suppression that we achieve it.

The workers off, we sit in the auditorium, in the dark. There is the vestigial sussurus of past audiences, in a theatre that has had them. Facing us, from the stage, there is something else. We look out into it and it looks back.

Learning to meditate, you are told to empty the mind. Yet the images come. So you are told to let them pass. You do so here.

You let them pass and you let them pass, and you attend to the essential dynamism of the stage, or canvas, or screen, which is itself a mind. Not a

chaos of minds, of subjectivities. And not an entirely built, ordered structure, a carpentry, as it were, of the human world, a symbolic structure of the social world. An undoing.

The subject is an undoing of the action, intent, projection, preserving the minimal object of the event, immobile, singular, with its force or life. A play is a thing that is undone on stage. A theatrical hero is usually undone.

7 September 2021: what is theatre?

To the line of artifice we can add the line of exaggeration which has been there from the start. The stage draws a line under events. The line of exaggeration is the height or thickness of that line.

It too calls into question what is represented. But not by being crossed to show that what is represented is produced, a product of art or artifice. The line of exaggeration calls into question what is represented not by showing the representation to be no more than show but by showing it to be show and nothing else, the nothing of the stage.

Some artifice surely exaggerates and exaggeration relies on artifice but the two are as different as cross-dressing and clowning. And so artifice is considered to be the more serious, having the theatricality of camp. While exaggeration is the badge or mark of the not serious: *You were out-rage-ous last night, darling*. And now you belong to me, it says. While the lies we let each other tell spell the truth, they show the truth to be all puff and blow.

Is then the stage nothing? the line of the stage we have been following. The line of exaggeration would seem to say that it adds nothing to nothing, with a wink to artifice, because it seems like nothing. But only to those who have no hearts. For those who have, we know it's all for nothing, which makes us care all the more.

You might say the line of exaggeration erases the work done by the line of artifice, but we know it's all in the undoing: that this is where life is, in the

continua between dimensions. And in the blacked out theatre before a thing is built we stare into the dark mouth of it... but what is it exactly? What is it between life and nothing?

Whatever is on its surface. The minimum for the line to be there. The minimum for the line to be there now assumes its status. Nothing under it, this the line of exaggeration shows.

Less than a physical framework and more fake than real: the appearance of the rear curtains now motivated by the absence of anything else. Or the scintilla of sand we cannot sweep away from the acting area. In the lines of the stage, on its line: an undoing that preserves its undoing inside itself, like a fold or a pattern repeated, then repeating inside itself. Yes, we can see how this could be thought, because it has the abstraction of thought. Because it abstracts from the physical what is no more than its support. Its screen.

And is it for this we see it as a subject? Is it for this reason we see as being the principal function of the stage to produce the subject? Not the image, no. The image, produced on the line of exaggeration, adds nothing. Not the person. And not (yet) the individual. Then if the stage is material support and so is the screen, what's the thinking bit?

Isn't it, rather than the line of the stage, and the thought which belongs to it, that encircles the stage and burrows into its depths, and covers the edges of the screen, isn't it the thought of the stage? or screen? Then isn't it the thought of this thought? And the thought of that thought? And beyond that thought the one that thinks it, and so on, an *en abîme* that only seems to go outwards to the material and physical but really goes inwards, inside and inside itself again. This I would say is what theatre is: a way in.

8 September 2021: a way in

Asking what is behind the Hard Problem of consciousness is like asking What is behind that curtain? What is behind the stage? The answer is too often disappointing.

The King. The Wizard. Is a little man pulling the levers. ... And behind him, we can assume, is another pulling the levers. Behind him... The en abîme of an infinite regression we spoke of earlier. The impossible. Or dimensions packed fractally one inside the other. The question asks us which it is to be.

The latter and we seem to be saved from disappointment. Or the disappointment is only a step we have to take *outwards* in order to find the answer *inwards*. Still, our disappointment is not allayed. Even to have found a brain, a heart, courage or home, we are recuperated to a world of black and white.

I didn't want to see the film again. Didn't want to show it to my daughter, for the moral reduction it enacts. And yet... In the *Wizard of Oz* the characters have the resources of subjectivity inside themselves. To show that is not magic is incorrect.

We can suspect every sign in the film of a latency preparing us for... growing up. And find here phallic imagery, there allusions to patriarchy, to capitalism, class struggle, gender inequality, sexuality, menstruation, dysmorphia, and be disenchanted. From the first, softening ourselves up, for when the curtain is pulled aside, for the revelation of the wizened pedo. At the controls of desire.

Perhaps this is what I intended to say from the beginning? To rail against the passage of disenchantment, that takes us, inevitably, by way of practice, seen to be outside, or theory, inside, to the endpoint, from that question What is theatre? We don't know at first. Bear with me and we will find... We're off to see the wizard.

Perhaps this is why I said I want to present something more useful, than either practice, its exegesis, or theory and thesis, than either analysis or

discussion, commentary or critique. Strategy. Strategy not as salve, prophylactic, pharmakon, compensation, for political disappointment. Not raising consciousness, or deflating it. Hope, neither false nor true.

I don't even want to speak against *political disappointment*, because it is at once the product of a line of artifice, like Humpty Dumpty, on a wall, exaggerated line, line of mobilisation. But more than this, because of a quality Joe Kelleher finds in theatre, a temporal quality. That it is *nonpunctual*.

9 September 2021: A way in

What we have been talking about is a power of selection. It is experienced as a political, ethical imperative. On the heart. On the womb or balls. On the brain. The necessity that Lear doesn't recognise being spoken by Cordelia: nothing?

The necessity we spoke of at the beginning. The Stoics, writes Deleuze, deny necessity and affirm destiny. There is after all no necessity prompting the question we began with, What is theatre? And unkind people are sooner to see it as a matter of personal history, that accident, that I ask it. *Ha, off again, on a tangent. Claiming for it some importance...* Unresolved? In no way is the question unresolved. It will be my issues that are unresolved, getting a workout here.

The Stoics affirm destiny and deny necessity. No to necessity. Yes to destiny. They introduce choice. And just as quickly seem to withdraw it again: because as we know the Stoics represent the highest form of *amor fati*, and so choose *for* what happens.

Aurelius calls the death of a child in the nature of things, part of the natural order. If it should happen, in reality as in potential. The ethic Deleuze draws out is *to be worthy of what happens*. To wish or even will it.

He even calls the actor exemplary in this. Not because of her passivity. Because, we have said, she plays the event. And although we have also said the event, which takes place on stage, frees affect, produces a subject, the

actor is not in subjection to what happens. And ... sort of is, too. But in what way?

The actor selects for that power of selection we have identified with the stage. Does he lose himself in the role? Again, sort of. Is disappointed if he *didn't get there*, didn't find the right pitch, that her words or her actions did not have the resonance she trained herself to produce.

Is the actor then exemplary for having taken that step out onto the void that is the stage? What is necessary for her is destiny for, let's say, Antigone. Deleuze does think the actor is exemplary for this will to death, but then he says it is a great humour and a great health: to play sickness against health, health against sickness; or to live for this death that I embody. Douglas Wright calls it his precious jewel. From it comes the dark power of his work. And is illuminated. Lit up like Chinchilla's beautiful young men. Like the theatre from which Joe Kelleher takes his title, Kierkegaard's illuminated theatre, Berlin's Königstäter Theater.

To live this necessity is to undo destiny with humour: insanity, Lear yelling at the storm. The actor playing Lear *going all the way there*. Why should she? Why risk it?

In the grip of psychosis, Tony McKeown did the best Fool from *Lear*. All the lines. He had taken off his clothes, neatly folded them on a hospital chair, and now was dancing on the backs of the chairs in the waiting room, where we were waiting for his assessment.

It came. It was, *He's an actor*. He's just acting.

He is dead. His own poor fool, yes? No. My friend, my brother.

My brother militant, for the theatre militant. You see, he thought the risk was not just worthwhile, but necessary. And we cannot say at risk was Tony. Noone else. At risk was the necessity itself. And he knew that. Would have known that. I say it to him now.

To risk to make an action. So the event takes place. Be overtaken by affect. Madness, but the risk differs from the necessity.

And worse would it be to say it was Tony's destiny, always written in the brain's chemical imbalance. Or the heart's, that becoming an actor threw off balance—a social liability, imbalance. And the balls? What about the unbalance of the desire?

Courage in adversity is not Stoicism, but looked at from inside theatre it seems we might want to affirm necessity and deny destiny. Inasmuch as an ethical and political risk is concerned, courage is necessary and is what the people of Blau's description lack, as despicable. But only to theatre people. I'm sure they're very nice people. Enjoying the intervals greatly. Because aren't we seeing an arch, a theatrically heightened, sense of necessity here? It's destiny again.

Aren't we exaggerating the risk? The risk is not madness. It's going not mad. Death and madness are our only destiny.

Imagine the dark light you carry shining over the stage. And such is the nature of the stage, to select for it: the theatre a machine for paring down to the essential *just enough*. Then we've said that it can do this very well without us. Then we must choose for that which surpasses us, by which we are overtaken.

And in saying what surpasses us, we are talking *in time*. Kelleher's nonpunctual. Weber's medium.

In speaking for the stage as what selects, for its selection of the necessary, for the courage and risk behind this as ethically, politically imperative— Behind this, again, that curtain. And behind that...

Then how composed, how deployed, is the stage? To show what we have selected? To show what we have elected to represent?

The composition of the stage is a straight line of time. If we have already elaborated it, made it a labyrinth, hunted it down into its burrow, adding, with

the lines of artifice or theatricality, and of exaggeration, a life it draws on for itself, these too speak to this time. From this time. For this time has for its baseline the void.

In speaking for the stage as what selects, for its selection of the necessary, for the courage and risk behind this as ethically, politically imperative, we assign to the void a positive quality. As that on which this subject stands. We understand it to be this.

To disappoint the times. This we choose for. To exalt that we choose. With its power of forgetting.

10 September 2021: A way in

I don't think we are the subject of the stage, that we make the actions on it become subjects. I think this is a quality of the void. And of the risk an actor is able to take.

An actor is able to fall apart, rather than to remember. This is not a simple play on words. Remembering being to bring the deconstituted back together. Having the constitution so to do. Like Dionysus—after the Maenads. Orpheus torn apart by the women of Thrace.

An actor is able to forget to recuperate, to recover, to return to her person, what she has, as they say, *left on the stage*. She might need a drink. And some silly talk afterwards. But an actor's investment, his personal investment, is in the impersonal, or for its sake. The event, we said, and the subject on stage.

Or in the case of cinema, the image. At the same time as there is the most investment there is a disinvestment equal to it. Or divestment. An undressing. An undoing.

An actor differs from the role onstage, but this separation is not that of the subject onstage and herself, or from the role an actor plays: it is both, both a separation from the role or part played and from the actor himself, what we might call the *performance*. This word occludes its best meaning, however,

when we de-identify it with an actor, when we say, well, very good, she was great, gave a great performance—as if it issued from the actor and now is no longer his, but has either been claimed by the stage or the screen, or is ours. When we make ourselves part of it, we take away from the actor what he has done, and done by undoing. We are left with the performance being *left on the stage* and not the actor. The fact of her being or having been the part is not so important as that it belongs to her. That she has it or bears it.

He is just a performer unless there is this wresting away. And we don't catch her in the throes of it! Birth is as playable as anything else. But to be played right it is a re-ingestion.

And from the worst meaning of the word we get the performativity of the everyday. It gives us a sense of unconscious action, of being and doing tied together, or doing and saying, and none of the conscious subject that appears at the undoing of the actor. His fall-apart. His crack, you might say.

The best meaning of performance goes as far from *risking displeasure* as possible: distancing itself from the fear of being disliked; or of not liking the character. So playing the unlikable character likably. Performing the distance, exaggerating it, and forming a caricature.

We have the famous egoism of actors connected to their exaggerated means, their childlike naivety, brought about by playing the theatrical hero who is usually undone, their narcissism of belonging to worlds that are in their sway and the product of what they do. Their caricature, in other words. Doesn't it come from reversing the order? of investing in the impersonal for the sake of the personal, or personalogical? And doesn't it come from a loving environment in which trust is fostered above all? Again, we see the difference between Douglas Wright and Michael Parmenter. And also why actors do not necessarily make the best directors.

An atmosphere of trust. From it the worst performativity. And from it we can see the risk is both impersonal and asocial.

11 September 2021: A way in

It's a funny idea that the resources we draw on are within. Psychic or subjective resources. We might want to draw on the theory of humours. Invoke all the shades of bile, call for a bloodletting when we find ourselves too sanguine. Seat the different sources in the organs, the spleen, our hysteria in the womb.

It's as funny to say it's from the womb as it is to say that nurture, with its atmosphere of trust, or that early self-disgust that was inculcated when banned from dealing, or handling, the bodily humours, brings about such narrowness or breadth of range—in what we are able to metabolise of social life, of social psychic life, psychically: as if on one side as a subject you were once *tabula rasa* and on the other the fix was in, the genes had it in for you or had it at all, and all that was necessary was the trigger, the trigger points. Or switch points, for latent or recessive capacities. And as funny is the idea of a social interpellation, a social dynamic, that we are filled with contents, subjectively, by the social institutions of our time and place. And so filled to a limit, but told the filling is infinitely divisible: we can be anything.

We can be, but on the understanding that it is not a thing. It is a *one*. And the division is a choice. We can make it. It is made for us. Which is it?

We are no doubt split between the two. And sometimes we have no choice about this. The one rears up and severs our social, psychic relations, and those of the will itself: taking away the ability of the will to will. Which it can, when it did, not because I let it, asked it or even was aware of it. And what can I add through the will that now I cannot? Because it seems to me we feel its free exercise not in the choice we make, not in the use we make of it, but in its uselessness. It comes to us and we let it take us like a wave.

Then I have contradicted myself. The will is able to will not because I let it. Then it comes and we let it.

It's almost as if in the first instance it comes as an opportunity, then it takes us with it, or bears us. As if it is a matter of compunction, or moral lesson of the

will, that I would be a fool to miss. That I, as we've said, will be disappointed, but only after the earlier disappointment, for having left it too long, for being afraid. But what has happened has been the division itself, that we, in our finitude, infinitely experience. We are either looking into the black hole, in the process of being swallowed, or are looking out to sea.

It's a funny idea, that the will bears us, that the other I am is borne of the self. The self one isn't. But where does this actually occur? What produces the subjective resources that might be infinite within our finitude? Within your finitude that is only the finitude of the one. To say, one was.

Isn't this talk the interval talk that the silly talk abjures? That dealing with the profundities in the comfort of the foyer, in respite from the play, film or show, putting to rights our understanding, hashing out whatever intention was to be communicated, whether there was one, and leaving, in company or on one's own. With the connotation that here society confronts its depths. A certain society does. Having come and paid, in the best possible scenario, for the *experience*.

What am I saying? In the best possible scenario society confronts its depths as a right, and not the privilege of a certain bourgeois or colonial type. And, in the best possible scenario, it's not even for its own good that it does. It demands edification as much as entertainment, finds one in the other, and these not to the preclusion of any one class, type or group but part of its belonging as a whole. Another *one* who come collectively to exercise free will to will themselves other than the one society they were.

The failure of the notion of inclusivity, in cultural participation as in political engagement, *for* these, is the same as that of diversity, for and in political and cultural representation: its exclusion of difference, its exclusion of actual division, internal and in depth, as separating the itself of society from what it may become. The oneself of the individual from what it may become. It is a staging not of a surface—surface differences, because aren't they all?—we are only superficially divided as a society—this inclusivity and diversity attest to,

because we've got to try!—without depth, but of a depth without surface. A profound superficiality, as Warhol once said.

The profundity of silly talk. The superficiality of interval talk. Where performance is useful to us is in its profound superficiality: it is, on the surface of the stage, in constituting an outside.

13 September 2021: A way in

Is there a consciousness that is unperformed? That is invisible to itself? Isn't this what we normally call *unconscious*?

Don't we look at ourselves and wonder, where's the rest of it? Try to arrest it in its tracks—and traces—in vain? Where is the rest of consciousness we can't see at this time?

We sometimes feel cheated of it. That it is too little, its bandwidth too narrow. I feel cheated in this writing, by the time it takes to catch up to where I was. Not that the insights were particularly profound or that they were merely superficial, but that they were enchained, entrained in a temporality, called a line or train of thought. And then I don't have enough time to get them all down... before the next performance, as it were.

Not only this, the traces have a life of their own. Run away, take over. As if writing, language, had its own intentions. Or sense did, but I hope not to limit this to what makes narrative, logical or discursive sense. So I cut the language off, and think what I require of it.

Bergson might say the limitations of consciousness, of inner life, or inner experience, are neither in space nor of time, except the latter considered to be time as it is inwardly experienced. Time inwardly experienced is the subject of conscious experience. I also don't have enough space to get what I think down. A time and space combo that Bergson might decry but that exists as a self-imposed limit on this writing.

Where is the rest of it? Consciousness, or writing? Outside the glimpses we get. You, in the traces, yes, the traces, left on the page, the page on the screen or the paper page; me, in this matter of experience that is no less material for being inward and no less inward for being material. That is, each is supported.

Look under the page, behind the screen, behind, as said earlier, the Hard Problem of consciousness. Is it there? Or, is the work there? For example, the work preparatory, to the representation we have of it. The, as we also said, performance.

Should we look in all of language for it? Or, as we might say, or ask, is consciousness not *language*? And what can we make of this *language*? That it is the symbolic marks, on the page, the paper, the screen? That it is the spoken of the actor and this is how the marks are made as well as where they go?

I mean, in speaking her lines, is an actress remembering, or forgetting? We incline perhaps more to saying an actor *remembers* her lines. Or does not. The actress who in later years would not go on stage because she was no longer able to remember her lines.

I write like I think, although I don't succeed in writing what I think, because the writing *does not suffice*. But I do write in this line. On this line. Enchain, entrain the words in phrases, sentences. The sense they have. Grammatical units.

If I go looking in language for what I think, will I find it? I won't even find it when I read a writer I *agree with*; and I will not find it spoken, in speech—as communication. I find it to be incommunicative. Expression split, into, Deleuze will say, *manifestation*, *denotation* and *signification*, but then he will go further, and talk about a cut that, as it were, bleeds words. As Hemingway said, *Writing is easy. You simply sit down at a typewriter and bleed*.

I don't bring in the actor by way of analogy, or to assert, insert, the difference between saying and doing, or thinking and doing. But the difference in living. Which is that between language in its symbolic aspect, as being, for humans,

the most appealing, and, in fact, enchanting, and in its auditory or performed sense, where it is shared by all the creatures of time.

The capacity to remember lines is creative, it is acting. Not all of it, but the part we have said happens on stage, when an actor or anyone risks making an action. And the action is impersonal through the working of the stage, so an event. And the event is that subject of performance who or that is cut off from the performer, a figure belonging to the outside. A figure of *minima*.

These *minima* comprise those minimal relations for life that the theatre when it's working well imposes. We compared it, you recall, to the Zen garden, which is really only a garden following the Japanese art of gardening. A sort of minimal elaboration, the letters on the page possess, on the paper page, on the screen not so much, when they *bleed*.

This is possibly why printed material is much easier to remember, to *visualise* on recollection, because of a dynamism lacking in letters on the screen, which, too manufactured, are too perfect. It is why we prefer the subjects of onstage action, and those of music, to be those *before one has cleaned off the edges*. A human voice, or the natural imperfect resonance of wood, against the stark and synthetic tonalities of electronically generated soundwaves. These imperfections are minima, around singularities, centres of key, as a kind of ... self-imposed limit, like the stage is too, its edge defined by convention. And this is an internal limit. It only gives the impression of being external. It exists as a surface against the depth of its minimal elaboration into subjects. We prefer the texture of paper and the timbre of voice. Qualities that are fibrous because in depth.

Isn't the rest of consciousness in depth? in the depths of bodies, for example. Or everything outside the human nervous system. So that we are led to a view of human exceptionalism when it comes to consciousness. And this below is that of which we say, *At some subconscious level I knew...* to retain the sense of identity, of an identity with others of our species, and maintain the possibility, of knowing, of being able to, or of recalling, as if we simply forgot, as a possibility, for ourselves and others, at some future date: that we can

know what we now in this manner of speaking concede we don't except subconsciously. Should the solution to the problem of consciousness come do we say, Yes, that's it. Finally! At some subconscious level I knew it was knowable. Then if we do, we say it as the actor does, as he speaks his lines. Forgetting what he was conscious of. Attending to the words as if they embody his consciousness and, expressing that embodiment, are remembering.

No. For consciousness the unconscious is no less impossible than it is real and no less impossible than it is possible. That is, real, possible and impossible.

When we say not only the stage, the limits of the stage, its limited line, and the performance, on the surface of the stage, are visible, can be visualised, on the condition we are conscious of them, but consciousness itself, and its limits, is only visible, and can be visualised, when it is staged, performed on that surface, we have to ask when that *when* means. Because it does not mean in the time we make for it, but in the time time makes for it. And this time we share with all of its creatures and everything that can be staged and everything can be staged. Communication is not subconscious, so at some level we know, but as it is for consciousness, real, possible and impossible.

15-16 September 2021: A way in

What is meant by subject? When we speak of the staging of the subject, are we saying nothing more than the subject takes the stage? That is, the actor? And then when we align that with consciousness, aren't we confusing it with the subject, with the human subject, specifically, as the subject of speech, the linguistic subject? Or is consciousness the cogito? the *I think* who fractalises, fracturing, as it descends the en abîme, into an *I think I think, I think I think I think, I think I think I think I think I think I think*: or is this the *it thinks*? The *it thinks* of the empty stage, not waiting, but already a subject of expression, and ... nonlinguistic expression. And ought this to anchor us in our anti-human-exceptionalism viewpoint? Because, as soon as language enters the picture, so does human exceptionalism.

And animals are notorious enemies of the stage. But then, so are children. Our nonlinguistic subjects par excellence. Or are they? the unpredictability of animals onstage, or that of children, such that we say, *Never act with them!* isn't this rather to do with a lack of training and the training not having taken? The kids not being educated in the way of, *Please don't stand in front of me when I am delivering my line?*

After all, we have animal trainers. And acting coaches for children. What really is the difference? Why coaches for one. Trainers for the other? Well, of course, the animals can't act, exactly can't *act*, because animals act out of instinct. So with animals we deploy various strategies to lead them to do what we want, on film, or stage. Whereas children, with children, above a certain age, we can *explain* it to them. They are capable of *understanding* what is expected.

Isn't it however nonsense that animals don't act, can't, that is, perform, except by instinct? The dog show, or show-jumping horses, would seem to go against this: the horses are certainly conscious of a rider's expectation, exert themselves to win races, often beyond the point that would serve instinct, or instinctive behaviour serve to explain.

Do dogs feel shame, having shat on the floor? Having ripped the head off a doll? And what about chimpanzees at the tea party? Cruel, so cruel. They were doing it for the peanuts.

Birds on stage, they seem not to take direction. Lay down some seed. And we'll scoop up the chickens directly after their scene with the nuns. Before they embarrass themselves. The chickens.

The children: if you keep out of my way next time I deliver that line, I'll buy you a drink after the show. You're too young to drink? How about icecream?

Isn't the word of praise to the kid the same as the icecream? its symbolic surrogate. You did great. Do it again, just like that. Well, this is the whole reason for rehearsals, isn't it? same for children as it is for adults: Yes, that

was better. Says the director. Or, no matter how many times we do it, I just can't get it. *Well, speak your lines and stay out of my way!*

Consciousness of performing: it's not enough to dispense entirely with a stage given over to trained monkeys who are trained humans. Sorry, highly trained. And the charming children who are coached. And the charming coaches who are well paid. That is, to rid us of the idea that we can only speak of linguistic subjects as being subjects, and open the stage up to animal consciousness.

How to proceed, then, if we want to move beyond what we may see as a political position on subjectivity, such that making the stage the line supporting the subject limits the subjectivity in question to the subject *as it is formed* by social and political systems *and* by the system of language?

Because language is never innocent. Always a matter of subject formation according to the discursive conditions of an embedded, as we might say it of journalists in the military, subject. No leverage exists in language, making possible a viewpoint outside of it, to shift the world from being as it is formed in and by language.

Sure, languages: each a different viewpoint on the language problem. Different differences providing points of articulation, so that different distinctions are made. Still, the problem remains, of the specificity of language to human being.

And when we consider political subjection, we are even worse off: it looks like we can undo subjection to systematicity, the systems of government, or governmentality, tout coup, by changing the system, doing away with the principles on which it is founded. But the fact of subjection persists, the fact of being a *political subject*. Even when an anarchist, and rejecting the principles of any system of government, on which it is founded, and outright refusing to be its obedient subject.

We might ask, of linguistic as of political representation, does the system of representation come before its systematisation? What works to separate off

governmentality or English so that it can be systematised, become a system, generating subjects? And insistently human subjects?

We can examine a grammar of governmentality, as did Foucault, as others have done of language all the way to Chomsky's *universal grammar* with a biological basis in a grammar organ, that humans have, but is missing in chimpanzees, for example. Preventing their acquisition of language. We can look to the great systems makers, like Hegel, or the encyclopaedists, and go back to the practices giving rise to systems, such as monastic rule.

As Saussure shows, the separation writ large reflects that at the smallest scale, between signifier and signified. In other words, the causalities and the genealogies are, as Deleuze says, *quasi*. Not that they are not real, because events of linguistic expression differ in nature from those of the bodies in which they are expressed, having then causes produced in language. Their reality is not quasi when it comes to language; their causes are. Still, when it comes to the speaking subject it seems we cannot make the leap from human to animal, or plant, or mycology (itself a quasi-logical entity). And we say of these they are subjects because in communication. Whereas we are always within language.

The problem of language has two parts: an overall systematisation, that is as it were external; and an internal slippage, of difference, the symbolic shifting of an individual difference. This individual difference is however the foundation. It grounds the system, and Derrida makes great anarchic play of this, as a system of differences. Destabilising sociopolitical and lingophilosophical certainties.

And we have to ask if we recognise ourselves in language as system of differences, in a particular grammar comprising, Chomsky says, universal elements. Do we recognise ourselves in this universal system of systems? of systematicity? Our obedience to its rules and principles has to be pointed out to us. We have to be trained, coached in subjection. To become subjects, willing or unwilling.

As for the idea that language and consciousness are coextensive, even before we give to either its biological basis in the brain, doesn't this extend subjection indefinitely? Enslaving humanity to... what? Man is of most use to man, writes Spinoza, man having a gender specificity difficult to eradicate; because, is woman of most use to man before man is? And of most use to woman is ... man? woman? child? sub- or super-man? ...or some representative of a nonequal minority, a minority that is by the same, shall we say, token, nonnumerical, not reflected in the actual numbers? Or those nonhuman species... who are superior in numbers... like the dinosaurs in *The Flintstones*?

When I look at you and speak to you, or is it when I command you that we see the primary function of language? beyond that of communication. When we are in communication we are like fungus, as we say now, networking.

Commanding you, I am extracting from you some use-value, that Spinoza never intended. I am extracting human capital. Like the data which so readily is flowing in the way financial capital did once. Value a function of magnitude as much as speed of flow. Yes, of course this has yet to be done, to free us, in the anarchic spirit, to become useless to the data miners. What such uselessness is is not to drop out of society but out of language, in a very technical sense: to eschew the symbolisation that makes the systematisation of language possible in technical networks through monetising communication. And makes the monetising of communication possible through its systematic embodiment in technical networks.

Give to the great apes data flows! To the trees of the Amazon, make them data rich! To the viruses of our new pandemics, data! ...Oh, in effect this has already happened.

What makes the technicity of data-capital possible, isn't it what makes the systematisation of language possible? And isn't it at the heart of human separateness? Isn't it symbolic representation? Doesn't symbolisation—and the subsequent displacement, condensation, projection onto the symbolic field that is entailed precisely in investment—make possible the systematisation of language? Isn't this and not language itself its humanity? as separate, as

exceptional, leading to the anthropocentrism Spinoza could not have imagined, of man being most useful to man through the monetisation of the data of communication, or communication-production, and the reification of the data network? Wherefrom everything that is not communication-production is excluded for having no value.

So we might ask of language, as we ask of data, does the system of representation come before its systematisation? And is not this systematisation made possible by symbolisation? We might ask, what language is before its systematisation. And this would be to ask what it is before or outside writing.

Or, otherwise, what if writing, as Blanchot seems to say, is the outside of language? Far from Derrida's *il n'y a pas d'hors texte*, there is no outside the text, we would find ourselves saying, there is no text outside. Before we can go back to the notion of the stage constituting an outside and take it further by saying, for nonhuman performance, we must stay with the symbol.

The symbol is of human construction, yes. And it is a tool, enabling new forms of exploitation, through the discourse of technology as through technical implementations of symbolisation, sure. But what we might call its first function, on which all further use, usage and usefulness is founded, is to separate the word, the utterance, from the air.

And, by so doing, make distinct a general quality of what we may call *meaning*, and a particular quality which we can call *difference*. The second is a positive phonetic difference, that between two phonemes, as much as a symbolic one, that represented by symbols, of which the phoneme already is representative, allowing the general quality of meaning to ... circulate, surely, and invaluablely, but on the condition of its separability, on the condition giving the difference its distinction. Making it this general quality for an economy of signs, an economy of differences, able to be read.

I am not intending to draw attention to the difference between the spoken word and the written word, but the difference that the latter makes possible,

in turn making possible its circulation in a system. That is, its systematisation. A rule-based function that extends over the whole system with which language as a system is coextensive.

Making it, language attest to its own separateness from things, bodies, subjects. And bringing it, language, in to bear witness for the separation of humans from those who are not subject to this system, which includes animals, because they can't read, and children, before they can. This separation of the word from the air I breathe and share with others gives onto human exceptionalism, leading to anthropocentrism.

The so-called anthropocentric worldview can be grounded in humanity in general because of the claims made for language. The claims made for language can only be made on the back of language as a system. Human consciousness is upheld to be a realm separate from others on the basis of these claims and the subjection of humanity to symbolic means, which means are newly embodied, or embrained, in the technical apparatus of data networks.

And from this is drawn our image of the brain. The human brain. A neural network. Or neuronal apparatus of information processing. We can say that the anthropocentric worldview reaches apotheosis in the ejection of humanity from its centrism, of the anthropos from the magic circle of its enchanted symbolic garden.

17 September 2021

A creature of language. *Homo logos*. Whose *sapiens* is only through language, because it is through language she comes to know the world. As it is in language he becomes a subject. A social creature. With all the problems attendant on social organisation. Such as her own status, that of being human, which does not automatically confer on her any status. Is not a recognised institution in society, such as being a subject is. Just as it does not automatically mean he speaks, let alone entail she is heard. So we ask, is an institution all a subject is?

We have claimed that human being becomes exception before being in general through language, a natural and exclusive right. And further proposed it is the system of language that founds this right. Exclusive to human being and natural.

Exclusive because systematised: having ascertainable rules and functions that are common to all languages if they are human. A grammar is the primary example. Then there are repertoires of sounds and the specificity of their production to the human anatomy, the laryngeal, lingual, palatal, dental and labial make-up. Which is unlike that of a cicada. And the further dependence of this exclusive proclivity natural to the human on upright bipedalism: having to feed against a vertical face, the frontal breast, and neither suffocate, though the conformation of the nostrils, now downwards, nor be held at a distance by a rigid snout or nose, and the out-turning of mucous surfaces, the lips as independently prehensile and able to latch on the nipple. A shortening of the jaw, and so on, all ideal as if retrofitted to allow for the production of sensible sounds, meaning sounds making sense through their separation from those that don't, like gurgling-feeding.

Or chirruping? Doesn't that make a sense separate from those of mastication, in an unnecessary expenditure of energy? Expenditure of no evolutionary use, not motivated by instinctive purpose, but pure display, as we see in birds, tropical fish, flowers. Yes, I know, finding a mate. Reproducing. Still, excessive in this regard. As it is in humans.

The chirruping of cicadas doesn't follow the rules or functions of human language, which functions for what? Communication. Then these rules and functions of linguistic systematicity *are* retrofitted since they are not communicated in communication, back-engineered to account for the system itself. They are presuppositions of systematicity, otherwise what else does it organise?

The distinctions between signifiers? Repetitive patterns of sound? Do we say of music it is rule-based because of twelve-tone equal temperament? that

seriality proves a latent serialism? We know these to be of human invention and to become matters of social convention, that is, musical institutions.

Codification is the necessary step in music as in language and it is provided for by symbolisation. Notation, separation, transposition of articulations of air into those manipulations of elements, minerals and chemicals, that give us paper and ink as they give us electronic means of registration. Encoding, a surface of registration and its recollection, as well as accepting the loss of the gestural and other physical signs and significations is compensated by the gains in, what? transmissability? These are necessary.

What is the transmission of? more language? differences that make a difference? Or more system and more of the same? The transmission of institutional understanding, like philosophy, and the reproduction of those institutions. In other words, pure display. And to restate or reinstate a purpose extends that which we may call *libidinal economy*. We are in fact left with transmissability for its own sake. So, data-communication. The autoproduktivity of the code that at its most exalted is Artificial Intelligence.

We should note that it's not AI decentring human being, neither the promise of it nor its actuality, of which we already see the effects. And we have for this reason no need to fear it. There are those that even encourage this decentring from his centrality of Man (sic) as being long overdue and want to hurry it up because they reckon on the intelligence of machines in surpassing human intelligence as heralding the coming of a Greater Wisdom. No doubt in an apocalypse. A messianic cybernetics: and Machine to pass Final Judgement on Man. Ending His destruction of ourselves and of our home on planet earth.

Anthropocentrism decentres itself in such wishes: the real danger, of which we are living both the actuality and the promise, is not the transfer and construction of the means of transference of instrumental reason to technical mechanism, like the singularity—systematicity in excelsis—but human abrogation of reason itself. The technical mechanism has and is undergoing development to be applied to human house-keeping. That is the problem it is

meant to solve: economic. The decision is being and already has been passed over to transmissibility itself, for itself.

This is why I want to return to the question of language, because *its* systematisation provides the rules of code-functions for the technical system. And I want to ask about the extra-being of language that exists without the system. Because that language is a system makes it a human system.

So, what is language before its invention as a system? And what is language both outside the human, to which its systematisation is subsequent, and during the anthropocene? Not to return, and not to make human language, after what happened, evil, so that the only answer to *What can we do?* is, obviously, physical theatre.

20 September 2021: A way in

The systematicity of language, on which its humanity depends, lies in the organisation of symbols. But other species produce symbols: again, they have a sexual function. Yes, I would even say some other species are symbols. And other species have languages that do not require the presence of another of their species to communicate, because of symbols.

Systematicity borne of symbolic representation relies on persevering in the illusion of human separation, through the separation of symbols, that we share with other species, from nature, material, from the elements, chief among which is the air; separating human symbols from breath, sound and means of physically producing them. Each symbol is complete. It doesn't, as David Abram writes, require the breath or the voice or the air in which to mean something. Each symbol gives the impression of its autonomy, of its independence from the physics of its transmission. So it makes what we may call a metaphysical impression. It can only be organised as a language in a system because of this.

We can add that the system of language is also only analyzed because of the illusion. The line, we have been saying, of artifice. Where symbolic status is, as we know, exaggerated, through the thickening of the line that frees it from the action of its making. The stage.

It can therefore, the system of language, as system of systematicity, be analyzed to be an external object. Because it is. And an invention. And it can manifest from its depths its propensity to deconstruction. Or historical genealogy, such as Abram enacts, showing, through a somewhat exaggerated claim, it is with the Greeks of the 5th century BCE that language achieves autonomy, is freed from the voice. And from the need to be animated by being spoken in order to make sense, and, equally, at the same time, showing the insufficiency, a kind of systemic insufficiency, giving rise to the *inexpressible*. The Greek invention is vowels, added to Ancient Hebrew they make all the difference.

They *carry* the voice. And are by some to be seen as the *flesh* of the word, its impersonal affect, the very sound of breath passing through the consonants. Said on stage, revocalised from the page, consonants, according to this tradition, carry the thought or reason, while vowels convey emotion. With certain stresses, certain modes of exaggeration, an actor speaking from a script, or, I suppose on her own behalf, I have never tested it, perhaps because it is presumed, that is, her emotional investment is presumed, as soon as she speaks on her own behalf, and because of it, an actor can foreground affective or noematic qualities, phenomenalise them, as it were. Choosing either reason or feeling to foreground.

In order to make the system of language, breaking bits off it was necessary. And claiming for them an internal structuration on which they were sustained. As much letters as the division of signifier from signified, or sign from the event it names. Names then proliferate because each word names one. And within each one is another which it names. So that we may ask, where else have we seen such broken bits, each stating itself individually autonomous and simultaneously being replicated in every part?

Simultaneously, and not in succession, note, because the system to be one, like the network to be one, requires simultaneity. The simultaneity of its auto-differentiation, where, in space, each difference is a part of the same. Where, in space, each part is enumerable. Each part is able to be enumerated up to the very big numbers that lead us to invoke the inexpressible.

And, haven't we, on the stage, which is a space, said that the subject drew on the *mise en abîme*, drawing from it subjective resources? These are, we recall, as much those of the *I think I think* as the *it thinks it thinks*. And we have said these are limitless as well.

Yes, I can see there is a kind of nonsense here, but how do we escape it? In other words, this writing takes part in the systematicity of language we have equated with being the basis for the human's claim to uniqueness, and not the fact of language itself. And I'm not envisaging, for this writing, any sort of escape, from its lack of systematicity. Or its bad grammar. (As if not playing by the rules or not acknowledging them were enough. Or, as if ceasing to function was enough!)

What allows us not to fall into the depths? The stage door. Exiting via the foyer would be the social function.

If Blanchot is able to claim for literature an outside it's because it has a stage door. The autistic remains in the doorway. And the depressive continues to stare into the black and empty stage.

Theatre teaches us—just enough. Take just enough of those internal resources. Take just enough subject with you.

22 September 2021: A way in

Making theatre, what are we looking for in what Declan Donnellan has called the *invisible work*? This is the work preparatory to the piece coming before an audience, where it is *visible*. The training of the animals. The coaching of the children. And, before each *performance*, the actors coming together, with

crosswords, or to run lines; to do their makeup, dress in costume, check props; have the stagemanager do the rounds and, after checking actors are in the house, costumed, made up, props in order, give the call, the half, quarter and five minutes. Beginners please. Because at this point the stagemanager runs the show, reports back to the director, and dramaturg. Who may come back after the curtain to give notes, the notes, also, part of the invisible work.

In fact, the actor who is visibly acting, before an audience, is at the same time invisibly working. Isn't this what we wait for, making theatre? So that we can't see the actor, even if it is a horse, working? but acting.

There was an abyssal moment in the theatre of equitation of Bartabas at Versailles. The theatre in the stables before the gates of Versailles a masterpiece of design, done in raw wood, the seats benches, the stage an indoor arena, lit with theatre lights, luminaires, its floor sawdust. And the stables, which doubled as dressingrooms for the horses, which aren't all stables, really? ornate as Paris Metro entrances of the old style, with, on each stable door, the name of the horse it was for, on an engraved brass plate. No *stars* anywhere, but you get the picture.

The horses were released from their human riders, who were ideal types: identically dressed, breeches or Japanese-influenced riding skirts, hair pulled back into ponytails. The horses began to play in the middle of the lit arena. The riders had withdrawn to the four corners. One horse rolled in the sawdust. Others nickered at each other and to-ed and fro-ed. Then they began to circle the arena. No signal was given. The improvisation spontaneously took on structure. And I recall *The Rite of Spring* had been playing. Its introduction over the playful jostling and rolling, the section given over to free play. As the rhythms intensified, the structure already latent took form: horses circling, gaining in speed, galloping. The riders expressionless and unmoving.

It was like the bottom came off the show, as *performance* gave way, and the artifice was swept away, with the thought that all this equine choreography, of which the show was full, at times incredibly complex as it unfolded in time, was a matter of the voluntary expression of the company of horses. The

training at the equestrian Academy of Versailles had all been to untrain. The untraining to train. That is, the invisible work was now at this moment visibly invisible.

The acting had undone itself, as any kind of *performance*. But does this give any inkling of what we are waiting for, watching for, making theatre, in the invisible work? For when the work ... vanishes. Then what does this say about this work? That the visible, the structure and form of a performance, somehow preexists? And we have to get back to it.

For this reason, it may be, that we identify what we are looking for, making theatre, with the depths: the actor must look deep inside. Dig deep. To come up with what is required, where, on the surface, it becomes visible. And we say, *Yes, that's it*.

Then, equally, it is confused with the heights, what we perceive, making theatre, as the *it* of it. As we do in poetry, we say it is a voice. The quality of Voice, that is its essence. The line suddenly *sings*. ... It, the line, loses any sense it had. It becomes a thing of absolutely no consequence. Which is the state of theatre itself, isn't it?

Isn't the question of theatre, making theatre, in the invisible work, to arrive at the perfection of its lack of consequence, at its perfect inconsequence? Then, when it does not touch us in the slightest, it most touches us. The beautifully meaningless line is a gesture of the kind of emptiness we are after. Isn't this, in turn, what we have already invoked as the *inexpressible*? Aren't we trying to touch, to broach, the ineffable? (the in-effing-able, as Beckett says). So that we have an idea of what this is and so that the inexpressible precedes what is able to be expressed.

We earlier invoked the inexpressible in view of the system of language. Where the system might rather have the inexpressible as its outside, at its limit, pushed beyond its limit, the inexpressible arises inside, as an internal limit. Because in actuality everything can be said, but we say it is *implicit* and

therefore hard to say and difficult to make explicit. A function of the system not of language: to assert the insufficiency of words to express.

If this insufficiency arises in the system it appears as that which the system suppresses, suppressing what is implicit in it. For the sake of its own explicitness. On the one side, the system is to make everything explicit.

On the other side, it projects what is in it implicit onto what it does not contain. It says, the system, I cannot say it. I cannot say it, without leaving language. Without *screaming*. Crying. Growling. Laughing. Making chewing sounds. Teeth grinding. Or spitting.

Twitching. Stammering. Stammering becomes, in view of system, expressive of resistance. Of repeated resistance, and so symptomatic of reluctance to commit ... to what? To language. To its organised system. Rather than giving away the implicit difficulty faced by the system, it gives one away, in one's personal failure of voice.

Rather than the hesitation bespoken by the stutterer being the moment through which a certain freedom might be gained. To say. To choose for what one says. To act. We bear witness to the unfitness for language in the individual. And we see what we can do about it, in the way of training and coaching.

Rather than being inside the system of language, the expressive deficit is linked to the gesture. The gesture being what is outside the system, along with all those inchoate gurglings, murmurings, unhinged utterances, unprompted and unsolicited expletives. Then, isn't this what, making theatre, we are waiting to ring through the delivery of the line? this natural language? This other language in continuity with the world?

Read this way, delivered that way, the line, say, in continuity with the gesture, does it presume the pre-existing entities, or the coming event, that it is? And among pre-existing entities we may include the presumption of organisation and system to complete occupation of linguistic forces that it pretends to

possess. Even as it cannot contain them, spits them out, and they are turned into an internal horizon of the possibility of language. The inexpressible.

Why would I speak of a subject before the subject of organised language, before insertion into a pre-existing state of (social, political, personal) affairs, otherwise? A subject before visible, before institution. And on the same grounds, speak for a language before language that cannot presume to possession, either through custom, convention, or organisation into system? On these grounds, where there is continuity of linguistic forces with what we may, stammeringly, call natural ones, what we wait for, what we look for, what we search for, making theatre, and what we work for, does not then belong to either sense or consequence. It is the event of the subject, whose ineffability becomes effing-able.

23 September 2021: A way in

What if language had no structure? either for consciousness or for the unconscious. What if the structure we observe in cognition were purely symbolic? We would be constantly borrowing and imposing something from language that is not natural to it—its structure. And this would occur in the break between signifier and signified as well as at the level of universal grammar.

What drives Saussure to insist on the break between element of sense and sensed element except that symbolisation which language presupposes? Symbolisation takes the first step towards organised language by organising symbols. What then happens to meaning? after all, signification has been the guarantor of meaning, its process.

Without that process arbitrating for meaning by differentiating the sonic and other symbolic materials meaning is lost. That is, working inside those materials. Externally, we have the language tree: a structure of derivations and declensions parsed from rather than parsing to an overall syntactic

structure. In other words, language is asked to perform its structure. From Indo-European roots to the approximately 7000 known human languages.

The problem is: a level of consistency perceived for all known human languages, such that a structure must be inferred. But that problem depends on the structuring element, naturally a sensed element—it can be sensed—and it can be separated from the element of sense—in order to structure.

Something performed on both sides of the equation, in social and linguistic organisation.

Or we might speak of them as intrinsically the same: as a human orientation, giving us the formula: symbol + structure (structure x language) = human.

And leading to all sorts of exclusions, because of the 7000 languages how many are exclusively human? and exclusively express human meanings? that is, meanings exclusively meaningful to humans. Are we not before we start excluding from these and all language everything not human?

In how many languages is the wind meaningful? I am suggesting everything not represented symbolically to be withdrawn from an understanding of what makes human language. This is in order that language become exclusive to humans. All others are withdrawn, as it were, from the symbolic stage. It is only language structured internally and externally for humans, by humans, for the social and linguistic organisation of humans, that is considered to be language. We will see that the naturalisation of language's symbolic structure does produce another level, but only by denaturalising the human from it, exiting not through the social foyer, but by the stage door.

We see in language entirely natural forces, as if linguistic forces applied only to symbolic structure. Which is *symbol* from the point of view of social and linguistic organisation containing no other symbols than humans produce. We have said the internal condition of language is this insufficiency, causing symbols and their use to be pushed out of language if these are not produced by humans.

This secures its structure, which is then identified with its function, its function identified with processes of making meaning. Meaning limited to meaningful in the terms of the human being's social and linguistic—and, we would add, psychic—organisation. From here we get the idea of use, meaning useful in those terms, and that of humans as themselves symbols, and therefore of a use limited by the symbol. This naturalised orientation to symbolic use has the internal limit imposed by the symbol so as to produce economy.

We might be able to speak of natural language pre-existing symbolisation and structure, such as in preliterate societies, but does the organisation of language pre-exist the subject developmentally? That is, in psychic development. Since both social and linguistic organisation are enabled by symbols is it not the case for the individual that developmental stages, stages of psychic development and individuation, are mapped onto and are forced to correspond to the symbolic? and not the other way around. Each physical zone is broken off by a symbol and the stage is set to be a temporal zone, given a structure and a drama.

24-26 September 2021: A way in

And leaving what do we find? That the actual theatre that goes on is unremarked. And it is remarkable to live at a time of the reciprocity of a kind of theatre with life itself, when the data form of the virus and its life form are in reciprocation. But before we go to the question what is *this* theatre—and, again, not in order to pull aside any curtains. There there is only disappointment in the get-up of disenchantment. An actor or a human agency, somebody or someone dressed up: a self-interested selfhood. Who sits at the levers. Who is just like us—before we go to this question, let's go back to the stage. Where there is only the choice of choosing pre-existing entities.

This is not the same as saying *What is there*. We know the stage to be teeming with, well, what they are, Bacon says, are clichés. You recall his gesture: in his

dressing gown, wheezing, surrounded by the detritus of his studio, his face like a beacon, a surface you might turn in your fingers, rotate slightly, to take a sideways look at the canvas, as he desired them, always the raw canvas outwards, and the primed to the back, to give better absorption to the paint, a flat and depthless field; seen as he says he saw it what looked back at the painter, what from every canvas looks back at the painter, was not emptiness. Whether the white emptiness of the unprimed surface, or the black. It's still dark out. A winter morning. Early. Or we are in the black theatre. Or, in the glare of a single high-wattage bulb, whether there already was a colour applied, flat and pink, violet or magenta, going to shades of crimson, vermilion, papal purple, or absinthe yellow-green, gamboge.

No. The canvas teeming with life. An orgy of life, like a pornography where every position is accounted for: and, if this was the result of his painting, he would burn it, rather destroy it. But, with brush in hand, he flicks his wrist. The paint splatters and it's not so much like cum as blood. And the party-goers are dispelled. And the one left chosen drags guts behind, leaving a trail of slime. This Bacon assays to paint. This meaty absence.

No, it's not like that at all with pre-existing entities. The symbolic function of language is the symbolisation of it having been staged. These are the pre-existing entities: parts of speech, words, letters.

The parts of speech, the words and letters are not yet clichés, the clichés of what is there, even if it is, in Bacon's view, there already. Having to be de- ... and this might be exactly the word... structured, through a gesture, the gesture not itself random but called for and essential. The structure of language does not pre-exist. It may be there, even there already, but it is nowhere complete.

Nowhere is language intact, any more than the world is. So that we may speak, with Jacob von Uexküll, of *life-worlds*, and of these being partial to the viewpoint in which they are expressed. Where a de-structuring goes on at the same time as a structuring, a re-structuring, we can call it, for this reason. Equally are there *life-languages*.

When we speak we are re-structuring language. When we write we are re-structuring language. We choose between this word or that, parts of speech and grammatical constructions. We choose between wave or particle, flow or segment, where the segment has as a characteristic its being like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle in a coupling with other segments.

In thinking there is an un-thinking, not through the choice to divide it from the actions of bodies. And not in the kind of context it has when thought. The thought, for example, the unthought of which is a continuation of the historical circumstance of where and when it arises, such as is the case with Heidegger.

In thinking there is an un-thinking that undoes thinking by separating it from itself, as thought. As, in Deleuze's terms, stupidity. Or—the dogmatic image of thought, which, like (a) language, is a question of a certain structure and systematicity.

Do we forget the structure, like the aging actress with her lines? I think this happens. And then we remember them in a way that has an enormous freedom for taking the smallest fraction of time. The hesitancy that is so slight it can seem like indecision, before we choose for the line as it was written. It is at this indeterminate moment we make our way out onto the stage. And it is as this moment that Bacon's gesture occurs. A flick of paint.

And in that gesture, as Esa Kirkkopelto has pointed out, is a whole world. A whole world, partial to the viewpoint in which it is expressed. A life-world. And a life-language for that world that includes the gestural. It includes, I want to say, the *guttural* also. Yelping. And falling apart with the mad and sudden and spontaneous hopping of a character in Chekhov. Or her chesty laughter, which quite undoes the impression we had formed of her.

Included in this language are not only the animal parts of human being but the animals themselves, in their performance. So, do they symbolise? Like Jungian archetypes, perhaps? Or, to put it another way, in the performance of animals

is there also an un-structuring, such that we may associate it with the un-structuring of instinct and instinctual behaviour?

The dog trained may not be trained to speak but can show a similar, similarly fractional, hesitancy before completing his action as the actor did before her line. This we may call the function of memory, which is the fact of a life-world itself, and of a life-language. ...but can we really honestly say that the cow chooses to moo? Well, it's a cliché of course but yes, she does.

And so can we say there are levels or degrees of freedom to act? No. I would say there are just the same across life-worlds, and life-languages. And that we must consider all acting as having a component of un-acting and this being performing. And the impossibility that we cannot and do not, but that we do.

How? The answer is: never quite spontaneously. Any improviser knows this.

Then, it is possible to call attention to the free part, the part that escapes structure and system. The artifice that is ever-present in any system can be exaggerated, but this does not undo it. The artifice happens in the moment on the stage, for *having been staged*.

This is not to call up the time-dependency of live performance, which, as Kelleher says, is anyway *nonpunctual*. Neither is it to invoke the *unlocalisability* of what happens on the stage because, in Weber's formulation of theatricality as medium, it *takes place*. It is not, because we are able to attend to it across all artforms. Or—it is art that shows us, when we attend to its world- and language-making, how both can strategically be undone.

In the de-framing of the framing device, whether the framing device is the literal frame, around the painting, whether the canvas is painted or not, or even materially there, or whether it is the gallery the art is taken out of, or the performance is on the street, or nobody is present, what is exacerbated or exaggerated is only its unexpectedness. And with de-framing there is always a re-framing, but what is re-framed is not the art, or artifice. Rather, it is the act of selection from which everything may have been de-selected.

That is, it is the stage, the line of the stage that cuts the word off. An exercise of the void. So that in that gesture, in that moment of stepping out onto it, there is a world, in that word a life-language.

Over the void, why? why else but through the possibility of a thought or selection that can have de-selected everything. More important is the work of a surface, become, for the fact of a void, pure surface. Here the stuttering of being has no further consequence but to show itself.

27 September 2021: the subject

A conventional theatre has its ambulatories, foyer and public areas, where the audience might mingle, entrance through which the public comes into and exits the building, and entrance doors into the auditorium, often soundproofed, where ushers and front of house staff stand, doors which are shut during the performance and only opened should an audience member have a dire need or to extract a noisy child, or in the case of an emergency. Front of house, when they are able, attend on all three occasions, and, sometimes, will lurk outside the door, or prowl the ambulatory, that with the show under way is darkened, having only sufficient light should one of the three things occur, for the audience member to find the loo, let the child out, for whom some theatres provide a separate room, like a soundbooth, at the back of the auditorium, the sound piped in, and the stage seen through the glass, where those disturbing others may be calmed. Babies are put on the tit or bottle. Old or young ones who are scared or overcome can turn their faces while their companions can keep up with the action.

Ambulatories are darkened so that the light does not spill in to the darkened auditorium when its doors are opened by the one who has to leave or the ones who want to; and yet not entirely dark so that front of house can respond should events demand, throwing wide the doors for gas attacks or fire. Their torches at their belts they are often trained for medical emergency, like a friend of mine who had a petit mal seizure, went rigid and slid onto the floor.

The FOH manager, Greg Ball, was indispensable in his aid and unflappable, except when the then prime minister threatened to visit and we wanted to push him down the stairs.

To leave by the stage-door, in a conventional theatre, you go through a door that leads onto the public areas, or through places we have suggested are defined by the sort of work we have called *invisible*. These are the wings adjacent to the stage—to reiterate, they are according to tradition; although even in open plan style performance spaces it is unusual for there not to be some some delineation between being on the stage and waiting to come on or being or coming off it. Although cases are common in which the audience is not privy to the exchange of public space for ... and we want to say *private*, but this is the last thing that the stage is, and it as well as anything marks the peculiarity of theatre. Actors are already on, for example, and the audience wanders in or wanders through, say in the case of a gallery, that recent invention of the white box, against the black box theatre, and regards the pictures as if they were actors, or the bare strips of canvas or the empty walls as if they were pictures. They weren't before being transmogrified by the space: they had to cross that line we have been talking about to undergo this metamorphosis from a pile of rubbish to a religious ritual, icon or experience. Which, in addition, we can say are neither matters of symbolisation nor of representation. An actor, across the line between offstage and on, does not represent Christ neither is she a symbol even for herself any more. An actor, like any artwork, is cut off from this recourse. ... Whereas we, we go through the wings, in our conventional theatre, past the stagemanager's station, where the props table is, down by the flies, where the wires and counterweights are for flying scenery, out an aperture often covered by a heavy black drape, to stop sound and light spill, turning left along a corridor.

Depending on the size of the theatre, there may be multiple levels of such corridors arranged in an hierarchy: the most important players, actors, singers, dancers have their dressing rooms nearest to the aperture that gives onto the wings, their doors opening onto the corridor closest to the stage.

Those of lesser rank are stationed further away. Until we reach the chorus, who is lowest, and shares. Then there is the greenroom, or rooms, which is a social style of waiting room and used to be equipped with ashtrays, tat and memorabilia on the walls, old theatre posters, photos, but note, no or very rarely any drinks. Private intoxication barely tolerated. Social intoxication reserved for after the show.

We reach and descend the stairs, coming finally to a double-door, that is, a door that doubles as the fire-exit for the backstage area through which we have passed. One side is slightly ajar, an old sandbag serving as doorstop, keeping it from clanging shut. Or a pedal-operated ashtray. Or a tin of sand. And out the stage door there is an alley that you cannot reach from the side of the theatre that faces the street, meaning, its public face, its classical, baroque or modern facade. Still, it is a facade, even if glass, allowing, through the glass, the inner workings of the public areas to be seen from the street, the promenaders, the interval audience, ostentatiously enjoying its own company.

Outside the stage-door is brick. Or bare concrete. And some rubbish skips, both for bottles and for rubbish from the workshop, its loading-dock behind a metal rollerdoor a little further down the alley. How many of an admiring audience can be expected to meet us here I don't know. So we have passed from invisibility to its other form.

And we have to ask about this distinction, that Donnellan makes, because haven't we throughout our transit been more concerned with the auditory than the visible? I know the audience come to see a show, and, having surveyed the ravages of the opening's debauchery in mirrors ringed with incandescent lightbulbs, and having put in eyedrops and done our makeups, and having removed them at the end of the night, and having left early after notes, yet we leave hoping to be seen or that there's someone there to see us. But isn't the stage less a line than a place to be heard? And isn't it only part of a theatre when the stage is in an auditorium? Isn't the sense of sound what unites the theatre? Isn't it the reason we extract the howling kid?

So that the stage is not an image and the line we crossed when crossing the stage out into the wings is that between one kind of surface and another and there is no line. From the stage we hear of what happens offstage and all of the world is offstage (but still nowhere near entire). All of the world and its consequence is off: news of Oedipus's death comes to us and is reported onstage. It is heard. Comes to us by report. The stage is the centre for this kind of reception, a kind which is in the hearing of the audience.

The stage, before being perceived, is heard. Or rather, it hears. And by the audience is overheard. The audience receives what is reported onstage. But the stage is at the centre of those reports. It is a receptive centre, a subject.

28 September 2021: the subject

It seems human beings create two worlds, when we know there is one. To one, humans are alien. Are alien or see themselves (ourselves) to be alien. This is the one world we know of through detailed empirical observation and description going back to the Natural Philosophers.

To the other, human beings have done something like *naturalise* themselves. It is the world borne of imagination, ingenuity and reason, seen to be the natural consequence of having a human brain. In it we see reflected ourselves, our, as it were, workings, the workings of distinctly human faculties, and find that it expresses most clearly our inner experience. (Ourselves, reflecting on ourselves, reflecting on ourselves.) It expresses our deepest truth as humans (seen currently to be the brain and functionings of the neurons). Built around interests that are human, this is also the world that is spitting us out: either we or it have gone bad.

So the world to which we have naturalised ourselves contrasts with the natural world, the world which from a philosophical perspective is natural. Of course, that we *know* it to be so is a function of science, the sciences. But this is something like a tautology. While the *human* sciences inform us of the human nature of the built world and remind us that it is humans who are

responsible for making it as it is, the *natural* sciences (including both physics and biology) measure our distance from the natural world as well as take their distance from it, or keep distant from it, in order to measure that distance. That is, they rely on what is natural to the human, most true, our deepest truth: that we are different from the rest of nature.

Now, the human sciences, sociology, economics (debate may still be open as to whether it is a science, however to us, considering the actual influence and participation of economics, as an epistemological formation, in producing what we know, the question seems to have been settled, say, in the post-imperial age, before and between the first and second world war), political science (ditto) and to an extent biology, or these drawing on biological (and recently neurobiological) insights, may insist on a continuity between human being and animal being, on the human brain as being a natural fact, and on evolutionary factors—at base, because even social factors are said to have evolved—, which lie behind all of nature, all of life, in fact; while sciences focused on the human as an object of knowledge situate us in the natural world, they do so for the sake of public morality. Privately, it's ok to go on thinking, indeed knowing, you differ from your dog and your garden. Publicly we must insist on a natural continuum, giving rise to notions of ethical use and sustainable practice. As much as Aesop, from the critical interpretation of human nature, from analyzing human development, in the species and individual, are extracted moral lessons, on pride, humility, arrogance, hypocrisy, and so on.

The *hard* sciences weigh in with studies on what we think and on how much of what we think, and on how much of what we think we know, is to our detriment—as a species—inasmuch as we experience the deleterious effects of what we do. Of course, at the individual level are harmful effects. But there is no current epistemic reversal going on in view of the fight between worlds: public morality remains convinced of human exceptionalism as it does of human culpability, or, as these are currently termed, anthropogenetic global threat and anthropocene.

The subject remains a moral one, and so does, in answer, our subject of the stage as centre of reception and receptive surface. The claims, we have said, for human exceptionalism rest on language. We have qualified this by saying that human exceptionalism can depend on language to support its claims only inasmuch as what is claimed for language belongs to the system and systematicity of language—of all human languages; and of all languages insofar as they are human. Human exceptionalism relies on the structure of language. In this structure is where human culpability is found. Its foundation. Or moral core.

The subject of the stage is a moral one, but is a dreaming subject: *the* dreaming subject is what we have in mind. So our strategy is not (only) in the unmaking or undoing that occurs in the interval, in the hesitation between stutters, in the selecting from perception of what will be acted on, that we have addressed as its freedom. Our strategy is to show that in theatre we find, we make, unmake, produce, undo, lose sight of, then strike, the hallucination of what it is not to be human. As if we had been dreaming...

29 September – 2 October 2021: the subject

We perceive ourselves to be subjects in view of symbolic structure and in view of something else, that concerns how we perceive. It's hard to get away from the idea that we are not the subjects of symbolic structure. Subjected to the system: but this has become a vague term, as if we have to blow off the historical dust that's settled there. Either that, or remove the dustsheets covering it. To discover, what?

It's Eisenhower's military-industrial complex. It's the mechanical universe and Euclidean space. And humanism. And post-humanism.

It's the system of knowledge meted out and divvyed up by the levels of education, where it's inculcated. It's capitalism, of course. And where we might have found a sharp blade in this term, we encounter the field of its diffusion. With which the very air is redolent... Then it's postwar capitalism,

liberalism, neoliberalism and postcapitalism. This we have alluded to in the field of data.

So, isn't the air thick now with dust and the gaseous apparatus to which we are subjected? Well, yes. Abram, enacting an archeology of preliterate conceptions of space and time and their interpenetration, finds the future to be beyond the horizon of every thing, the past to be in the depths (as in Robert MacFarlane's wonderful—wunderkammerlich—book, *Underland*, whence it is, like anthrax and the dead, each day the ice recedes, vomited up; the anthropocene as emetic?), and the present, sheer presence, to be here, in the air. The great Air Spirit that the system of our present dystopia is for whatever reason despoiling. Bringing about a present crisis which is also a crisis of time.

The system for poststructuralist and postmodern (think death of Master Narratives, critique, deconstruction of Transcendental Signifier) thinkers is both in us and all around. The concept of power Foucault develops at the beginning of his *History of Sexuality* project is its immanence. Power is productive, inciting to production, of what else but subjects?

The system is the system of subjection, producing subjects. The structure is their structure. Ours: it is how we stage psychic or mental development, finding in each place a symbolic occurrence, and build up a case study, from Klein's *theatre of terror* where the symbols are still being eaten and spewed in a terrifying and liquid exchange between infant and mother, all the way to the surface that seems stable but every so often breaks open, swallowing us, or, as we said before, spitting what we are out of the structure. And notice here the verbal and regurgitative functions: just like God who spits out of his mouth—the same the Word came from—the lukewarm, presumably conserving the hot and the cold like a ball of tobacco in His mouth, to chew over on the Sabbath, or like cud, the cud of the cow who naturally moos.

Ours: it is how in each place is found a symbolic occurrence and these are codified into, what else, but codes. Codes of public morality; or, just public

codes. Performing the social functions of language as discourse: all the way from the founding of institutions to institutionalisation. Again, ours.

Ours, the system means that in each place a symbolic value is put in for what is there; how what is there is extracted and enters into the system of symbolic exchange. The system is that of this triple ecology (of Guattari), psychic, social, environmental, determining how each plays its part: from the machining, the tooling out, the impress of the individual, all the way to the machinic governance of its ultimate instantiation in the System of the World. But the world is now the cosmos, and human nature is destiny, even if it be conducted by high-order machines.

So it's bad then is it? We know it to be, but we also know it to break apart. And where does it break apart?

Better ask who are the individuals because it is their (our) separation from the system, that distance, that the system relies on, distances that are structural. Enabling both the putting together of the machine-like system and its falling to pieces, tears, and so on. Between each one of us stage doors swing open, that double as fire-escapes. But the same can be sad for the vertiginous individuality of flowers in the field, stones on the path, letters on the page, words in the air and clouds. Consider the inseparability of schizophrenia: the schizophrenic (which was the initial, after the first nonmedical one, diagnosis of my friend Tony) is out of his head, but not free—because the world is burning down. Or, rather, the world is burning up, in each flame another sign of it.

Here, yes, the whole world is a stage (and Tony is pretending); but also notice the absence of any offstage: this is not the same as nowhere private and the great debate between our private rights and public powers, and their incursion of public powers into our private lives. It concerns that other line, that is the same line. The one underlining, with an exaggeration that also belongs to artifice. It separates by cutting and we gave the image of pruning—which makes it sound like another castration, after the ones psychically, socially and environmentally inflicted, and, we must specify, inflicted *without*

regard for gender. So it is neutral... then, castration does nothing but remind me of the Wizard who has now a blade, behind the curtain, or at the tabernacle. This is its symbolic function.

We come to the surface: it's hard to escape the feeling of our intrinsic and terrible depths. Should we begin to act, we are reminded we are already, were already acting. It's hard to shake off the feeling: and for actors to be trained used to require no less than what we can properly name a *kenosis*. Empty. Come to nothing.

My father used to do an exercise with young actors (bear in mind that dramatic exercises are never explained) almost parodying the *breaking down* the *emptying out* of becoming tabula rasa which acting was supposed to require. In it, the director would ask an actor, who had been told to shut her eyes and stand still, *What do you see?* The answer, prescribed, and true: *Nothing*. Perhaps, *Reach out. Touch*. Then: *What do you feel?* The answer, scripted but true, again: *Nothing*.

Pause. Pauses after each answer. A Beckett play.

Where are you? This time: *Nowhere*. The actor, blind, suspended in space: the answer true. The pauses like a relief or a reward, to be savoured, for telling the truth.

What do you feel?

[pause]

Nothing.

[pause]

What ... are ... you?

[pause]

...

We have our complexes, our private histories, our genetic predispositions, our phylogenetic and inherited characteristics, our chemistries always threatening

to show imbalance. Waiting for imbalances to show. The young actor reassured. Knowing if they do, if he dissolves, a heap on the floor, in tears; if she resists then cracks all the more severely, radically, knowing if they do there is the comfort of those pauses, that silence, that *nothing*. This is sometimes called trust.

Yes, we may betray ourselves today, thinking we are acting, then not be. Then, as Elric Hooper used to say, *escaping into humour*. Laughing. The fear, the terror, in fact, was supposed to be salutary.

We have come back to the earlier theme of risk. It's very personal, the structure of the subject, the system producing that structure. And despite its denegation, it is entirely positive.

Is the fear for or of nothing? We know the fear not to be nothing. But it's a strange experience, standing onstage, knowing there's nothing holding you up.

4 October 2021: the subject

We've all known selfish actors, who've felt the depth below the stage to be theirs, when it is nothing. In fact, this type is more common than those who feel they've brought to the stage something precious of which they are about to be dispossessed. It makes one think of Wright's *precious jewel*, his death, as he perceived it in his life. Or, as he said he did, and performed it on the stage.

After all, death, our knowledge of our own, is like a secret we carry, perhaps our most primitive. At the same time, it's like the contents of our bowel. Which is present when we *spill our guts*.

More primitive than sexuality? And aren't these used to undermine the *selfish actors*, who believe there's something special about their own shit, so that we have to remind them, in Gargantua and Pantagruel, or Kafka, whose use of sex, Kundera calls, his greatest innovation in the novel? Look at the comedy of

the public institution brought to its knees and having its face rubbed in it! The Princes, and the Schadenfreude!

Private tragedy is wrested from us by the public stage. And we become a laughing stock. A stock that is held in security, reassuring *everybody else* they are safe. It is not them. But is this the essence of the stage? Is the essence to be that it undermines those it holds up, when, haven't we said, there's nothing underneath?

To forget for a moment that *we are ugly, crass, guilty, foolish and dying*. Chinchilla's words, written by MacDonald. This world of artifice we attribute too cheaply to libido.

Too cheaply, because we are not asked to pay the price, like those with their precious depths, who see it all bubble to the surface, who see it all come out: and how ugly it all is! And how shameful. So it is strange we ask our actors to find their motivation, or a correlate for what they perform in the depths of their experience, when we know from the worst instances of psychodrama, whether that of public life or in another venue, how pointless that is.

The body on the stage is expressive how? So that its slightest gesture creates a world. This insight is Esa Kirkkopelto's, but he uses it as a lead onto the argument that an actor by composing from such gestures, of which the slightest creates a world, engages in dramaturgical composition; and to ask the question whether we need directors: well, shouldn't theatre be democratised?

Again, in each of these cases, we have the exercise of public morality. But it is public by proxy: however brilliant Kirkkopelto's insight is, he is not being separated from all that he is by the merest gesture. All of that private stuff, as soon as it bubbles up, is shit for consumption: keep producing it!

Yet, an actor makes the merest gesture, and creates a world of which she is not a part. Ought an actor then disavow it? Or choose for it, knowing herself to be excluded from it as from a stone? as the world were the gesture of a stone, and the stone her gesture. For this is what we are saying: to look at the

vertiginous individuality of a stone; and for the actor, word or gesture being stone not to undermine it, but for it to act, perform this double-act of doing and undoing. Thinking. Unthinking. Composing. Decomposing.

Decomposing: not for being broken down into elementary particles, to be recirculated, reticulated or recycled, and so serve the composition and creation of life (life world, life language)—not for the sake of the communicative network, but directly de-structured of its organising component or principle. As if the *whole thing*, as if what makes the *interconnectivity* of the whole, were another part beside it: and could be split off, by the slightest possible gesture, word or sign. As if by the merest word or sign, symbol or gesture-index, the system's being whole might be set apart, so that it fell apart. Lost its organisation in structure and in depth. And in height, as we have seen, in the undercutting of our public figures, and, indeed, in the whole structure of symbolic representation.

Yet we insist on the word, sign, gestural index that does this having meaning without the system of meaning, or of signification. So also do we insist on the integrity of the world, or the actor, having suffered this disintegration. This is the subject, who is at once a nonhuman subject, the 'smallest possible gesture' being an artistic material. The material with which we think, doing theatre.

So that when we ask after the symbolic structure in view of how it concerns our perception, our perception as subjects (of subjects of perception, and so on) we feel it right to point to the smallest possible gesture. Since it is all that is necessary. And, since it has been separated by the stage from the rest, and disconnected, yet is not unexpressive but creative and entirely positive.

The world in its entirety might have been the last thing to be created. And to lie, just there, on the surface. This is what our perception seems to say. The last thing is the first it sets before itself, in choosing as its final representative of it its own interest, and in claiming this to represent the whole. By this reduction to the only human world, our perception is like the selfish actor. The meaning of the stage is that there is nothing to support this view.

5 October 2021: the subject

The selfish actor: it was remiss of me to introduce him and give no other description than the abstract—she identifies the depth below the stage as her own—and the advice that everybody knows the type. The selfish actor is the most common, even the dominant of the figures we see on the stage, but not for dominating. You might call it a professional hazard. Either that or a privilege of position.

Firstly, let us say a selfish actor is not a bad actor. The problem is she has become the model of the good actor. The selfish actor is often very good precisely at acting.

What affords us this precision? Let's move past the abstract and look at what he does. A selfish actor takes the stage without any discomfort. What does she see? What, as Donnellan might say, is her *target*?

Donnellan's admirable move is to de-psychologise acting. The actor does not act from what is inside him; he acts from what is outside. And the character is like a shell. In a way that is almost Deleuzian, he also invokes the crack.

An actor projects what the character she plays, which is no more than a shell or mask, sees, without it needing to have any reality whatsoever. The character is in the world only inasmuch as the actor can evoke it for herself. That is, this world belongs to the actor. The target is its point of interest, the bit it is reduced to by perception. The target therefore moves and changes with the changing, moving interest of the character.

Donnellan therefore maintains a distance, a psychological distance we might say, between actor and character. An actor's technique is operational. It operates the character through projecting what this character perceives. The impression aimed for is liveliness, the life of the rigidity of the mask. And here it is worth noting that mask-work does exactly what Donnellan describes: it pares down the world the *mask* inhabits, who is a subject of it, its life world or life language, say, to singular points of interest.

The mask is an instrument to focus in on what exactly the character, of the mask, and generally, perceives, which will always be a portion or point in that world: the target he is trained on, and by which entrained, since the actor follows it, keeps it in sight. Like a good hunter, she does not chase it, but *as it were* sits inside it. Ideally, it becomes a point of contemplation, a moving, changing point, subject to all the vicissitudes an actual living world would visit on it.

The danger is not the identification of the actor with his character, or mask, but that of taking the target to be representative of the world. To believe it is real; when this is exactly what an actor is called on to do: which is why a selfish actor is a good actor. The selfish actor acts as if these phantasmatic projections, which her character, the part played, the mask worn needs to be life-like, were real. Were actual living targets.

A selfish actor then has an excellent understanding of what acting is. He understands it to be what it asks of him. And acting becomes a *self*-less act. But he is a selfish actor!

Consider what is asked of the slave. She has been volunteered for the games. An island has been fabricated in the middle of the colosseum, and it has been populated with wild animals. Trees provide some cover, and rocks, and other low plants, but not so much she will not be seen by the onlookers when she is attacked.

She smooths down the fur on the pelts that are her costume. She plays the savage inhabitant of an island about to be eaten by lions imported from the Barbary coast. But she is about to beat her fate because when she runs, when she screams, when the lions' claws tear her flesh, when she sees her 'children' eaten in front of her, her 'husband' running away, and when she is herself picked up in the lion's jaws and shaken like a toy, when her arms are flailing out and her legs treading air, and some vital organ is punctured or her spinal cord is broken, she will be acting. She will be acting when she dies.

The problem is not not knowing the difference between reality and the projected reality of a role's interests, which give life to the role, and of which its (life) world (life language) are comprised. The problem is not confusing reality with art, the actual with the artificial. The problem is not not knowing the limits of the stage or of forming too strong an identification with the role. The problem is with thinking that it is you giving everything you've got: the problem is identification with the self.

It is too easy to call this 'ego' and the selfish actor an egotist. No, no. The selfish actor is self-less in doing what he is tasked with, but this fulfillment of his tasks is seen to be the selfish actor's and not the character's or role's. A selfish actor is even self-less when it comes to acknowledging others, both in their roles and in their performances, inasmuch as they help her in the construction of the world.

We see this clearly in the case of our politicians. A selfish actor can, however, be damning of those who are not helpful. She is first to call out those actors who undermine her in the performance of her role, who don't play their parts—who are not as good as she is. And who undermine the world she is painstakingly engaged in constructing. Target by target. Interest by interest. Point by point.

To say this of our political representatives is no mere analogy, because they, if they are any good are selfish actors. And we judge them by the same *being good* at what they do. And we pick at the masks and attempt to pry them away from their faces. So, this is a problem too: the selfish actor has become the model of the good politician.

What a selfish actor is is still an actor. And is so not for *belief in the world* but for belief that this world exists entirely without consequence. A selfish actor knows he has no power actually to do anything in the world. That is, too well because this too is that with which she has been tasked, she knows the limits of the stage.

6 October 2021: the subject

A selfish actor surveys his gesture. In it she sees a world. One in which she is she. Or he is. She pats the pelt of it. And this reference to self, in it are recalled all of his lines, in her mouth, his in hers, and so on. All of the blocking. The *mise en scène*, which we learn from Anthony Bourdain we can shorten to *mise*, in a crucial distinction from the *en abîme* of what we might call 'life.' That is, Bourdain speaks of the kitchens where he spent most of his working life, and of the chefs he worked with, from whom he learnt both his craft and his style.

He is speaking of the setup particular to each chef, why she comes in first thing, sets up, puts on her apron, unrolls her bag of knives, puts each in place (the sous was entrusted with sharpening them the night before), and prepares the working space. And abuses anyone who shifts a thing a centimetre before service. An altogether different approach from self-reference.

The selfish actor comes on stage and remembers her lines. The unselfish type, for which we don't yet have a name (the opposite of the selfish actor is not the selfless), comes on stage and forgets them. He, or it, no matter, loses track of the *mise*, is unaware of the blocking. And yet, and yet, hits the mark, speaks the part, or, better, acts the part, whereas a selfish actor just *performs*.

We might ask, in view of a strategic approach to theatre, if not to writing on theatre, since this is our purpose, what are the different conditions of subjectivity? And why should we attach a pejorative sense to *performance*? Are we dividing it in half as we have *language*, not into speech versus writing, but preexisting, structured system and having *forgotten* structure? Same with acting, thinking, doing: each has another inside it, which for the sake of that inside, it forgets.

So is a selfish actor forgetful of performing? Or is it the other type, that seems the better, forgetful of *it all* being *no more* than a performance? Isn't the very type of the selfish actor, its epitome, the one who believes her own hype?

something like a competitive performer, a high-performance athlete of the stage.

After all, he needs self-belief to survive in a sometimes harsh world. This is the commercial reality. But it is not a commercial reality we need embrace in the theatre, is it? become the bitches of, give it airtime. It's said: that depends on how many theatres you want to see close.

I think the question here is exactly of a language, and of losing the power of speech, losing that power to speak for itself and on its own terms, of theatre, but of any kind—even the kitchen where Bourdain has his mise. Being the bitch of the commercial institution, of commercial institutionalisation (the institution being the level at which power speaks, to power), means theatre stopping performing. Performing means losing self-reference. It's a language thing, so, Bourdain has his mise.

What then is the reference of the subject, if not itself? We can directly say it is its undoing. Because in the subject, theatre, itself, herself (himself, the accommodation is to the pronominal not to the commercial reality), is a stage. It underlines the action, or the performance. This the selfish actor knows, but she does not feel the cut, or is inured to it, scar-tissue, and so on. The cut dividing, we might say, poverty from riches, or just cause from poor excuse, that plays out across its surface, because as a surface it is an opening. Each time an opening, an outside. So things, the most profound things, riches, the justice of good causes, are undone at the most superficial level of the surface.

7 - 8 October 2021: the subject

Is symbolisation necessary for metaphysics? What is the difference between words in the air and on the page? That words are available to us on screen, in contexts composed of other symbolic data, helps create a metaphysical impression; but this impression is given even greater cause by the availability of words to the mind. So great is the impression made, it is almost as if

consciousness itself were of linguistic construction. It's as if thinking required words.

We have, however, to ask what kind of words. The words we have available to our minds... Laurie Anderson says in *Heart of a Dog* (I am thinking of her right now because in 28 minutes I hope to be attending the Norton lecture she is delivering via Zoom) that she took her dog, Laurabelle, around whom the film revolves, out into the desert. She had been told fox terriers, like Laurabelle, were capable of learning 500 words, and she wanted to find out which ones.

Which ones, which words we have in our minds, is a question but, like that of asking given the dog brain being a container that can hold 500 which ones, it is not *the* question. At least, not the question we are asking here. The words we have available to our minds are not seen as any special category of words. They are regarded to be the same words, as words, floating around in the air, or on the page or screen. They are regarded to belong to a language, or, in the case of machine languages and other specialist languages, to a code. This language or code is, in addition, considered to be the condition of their coming to mind, the condition presupposed by their coming to mind, and a condition preexisting either the one who uses the words or the one into whose head they pop.

Which words we have available to us as speaking subjects is a question for scoring competencies and marking differences, dividing populations up into categories. It is a question of language management, or the management of life languages. I am thinking of the social cohesion assured by universal education, driven by literacy, as it was for the missionaries and people *of the book*. There is here a want to have the same or restrict the variables of language—accelerated, intensified and augmented by digital literacy—across populations.

The systematic imposition of structure goes all the way to the letters, and is reciprocated by minor languages, those dominated, in their demands that differences be marked. Speakers of te reo, the language of New Zealand Māori, demand macrons, like that over the 'ā,' not so much to show that

vowels so marked are lengthened when spoken as signs of respect, in what remains a moral mission, in this case imposing the Latin alphabet. It is then a moral system of language that is said to *generate* meaning, explaining the case made for the preexistence of symbolic structure by the claim that without it, and such markers as the macron, there is no meaning.

Our question opposes this one. No, not which words, but words made of air or letters? What sort of words have meaning? And which in the context of their mental image? as they come to mind. Because, to repeat, as they come to mind the dominant view has it that they are pre-symbolised. Giving cause for the metaphysical impression words make, since they belong to a certain sort.

The question then is one of focus: focused within, it's difficult to detach our thoughts from the words embodying them. And so it's difficult to separate that embodiment from symbols, because we don't seem to have any air in our brains for them to sound out and be heard, or overheard. Focusing without, their sonorous qualities are obvious, but not their silences. These are hidden. As Anderson said about technology, in the lecture, which I did attend, it is not very good at doing. This.

[silence]

In fact, it can't. The digital world is structured by the constancy of communication, of information, and interconnectivity. Structured insofar as we can call this its moral *code*. Her silence, on the Zoom screen, playing *live* although the lecture was clearly pre-recorded, seemed to be that of thought. Although we couldn't overhear it. So she had to read it—the meaning of *lecture*.

The air in our brains cannot be heard. It is not like the wind. Or the still air carrying birdsong... traffic-noise... but if we look to our brains, inward, we see a kind of receptive surface. Meanings come from it unprompted, sometimes preceding words. Sometimes preceding either words or sounds. They are not cloaked in the sonorous symbols of their sounds. Neither are they, as far as I

can tell, symbols floating in space; if I imagine symbols, these seem without meaning.

They seem to be images. And words will come to me unprompted, in full symbolic dress: but these are often shapeshifters. They are the subjects of dreams.

I think in the dream they mean one thing. When I wake up they mean another. Or they are nonsensical. Or a name that a person has in my dream on waking I find is quite wrong: this person is not called that. *Tobyguppy*, and so on.

The meanings words have in dreams are different. Then, they differ from themselves. Behind the surface meaning is a latent one, as Freud says. But if we consider how they differ from themselves, we find a different structure of meaning.

In Saussure's terms, aren't these the *signifieds*? The signifiers, like the dresses they wear, being quite arbitrary, not expressed in their sonorous symbolic or the symbolic qualities they have to other senses, slip. Behind them we know there to be other masks. Under the dresses, pants. Under the pants, flesh that is not too solid. And below? Nothing.

Isn't it the signifiers then who lie? Who claim to point to signifieds, betraying the existence of further signifiers? And like the selfish actor, they come to curtain call, without a smile, with palms open and empty, as if to say *This is all I am*. Meaning, more than you can possibly imagine.

9 October 2021: the subject

The surface receives the gesture. On which side sits the subject? With gesture, or with reception? And...

Is it definite, this action? Is it possible to slow down the selfish actor, to find this moment that breaks every habit? I want to say it is more violent than definite, but this is contradicted by the physical evidence, of which there is none. And this is what's wrong with asking for it to be marked, with asking the

selfish actor to go back to the beginning. She will forget entirely the stage, and make the most natural movement: and there will be no difference between gestures. Mark it? How?

It seems already to be marked. Not physically. That's obvious. Not symbolically: the addition of any symbol, sign, would signal the gesture, would be it. So it would not take place. All we have is the index.

The selfish actor says as much. He says, What? This? ... you want me to believe *in the smallest...* one of these... *is a world?* Huh?

...but it is what happens when an actor reaches the line, takes a step, makes a sound... And it is not taken away when the stage is empty. Can we compare it to the brain? to internal experience?

What index do we have to thought? To think there is one gives a vertiginous feeling. We are like the selfish actor, unable, for some reason, to find the beginning; but for what reason?

Now, we have the endocrinal revolution. Can talk to the facts of emissions of signal chemicals, but to talk this way places these outside, outside the subjective nonfacts of internal experience? The physical causation cannot account for the metaphysical impression.

Then there's the barely scientific analysis of psychology that wants to find footing using behaviour as index, or using the social activity of neurons as index, their communication, their inner gestures and almost spontaneous formations, worlds. The dramas of psychoanalysis passing from favour. In these dramas however we do find violence and narratives of metamorphosis, but they too are contradicted by the physical evidence, of which there is none. None for castration. None for Oedipus. None for the phallus, as a signifier occluding its presence, by a process of signification. Removing *from the beginning* the evidence. *Some of the lies told about me are untrue*, as Geoffrey Palmer said, some time in the 90s.

The opposite of the selfish actor is the beginning actor. A beginning actor is frightened by the seemingly symbolic function of the stage. It would be great

if the beginning writer were too, afraid that in the first word lay coiled up all of his, all of her, future failure. While we are inured to thought.

The selfish thinker being the precise double of the selfish actor. So that what if thought does not actually occur? And can we throw that back at the surface that receives the gesture?

Can we say, sometimes neither the stage nor acting occur? The surface does not appear. The line does not divide. And... it's not that the gesture is impotent, or sterile, or say in some other way *non-virile*. These are the conditions precisely for the surface to receive the gesture.

In the gesture is already marked the lack of consequence. The stage's triple oath is like the monastic: poverty, chastity and obedience. Might we unpack that last, and say obedience to the beginning?

No physical trace is left, neither by thought, nor by the stage or acting. Poverty has its correlate in the *smallest gesture*, the pruning of the subject to its bare fractal life. Chastity is the cleaving of the stage to itself, its complete powerlessness, and its failure even to be a surface of registration for the gesture it receives, which summons it. Obedience has its correlate in the necessity we can observe, since it is this observance, for the actor every time and at each instant to be beginning. So the gesture with the subject its centre of reception is always new.

11 October 2021: the subject

Inclusion, like diversity, has acquired a self-righteous and humanistic inflection. It is not for the inclusion of the hitherto excluded that we advocate for the *inhumanities*. Neither is our advocacy, in saying the inhumanities, in the sense of disciplines, practices of art, theatre, writing, reading, language, history, political science, sociology and economics, ought to replace the *humanities* even for the sake of the animals and plant species humans are intent on killing off, that is, in offering their summary execution by

corporations (of humans). Nor is it in acknowledgement, either to commend or celebrate, of the cruelty, the, for some, *sacred* cruelty, we visit on our own species. Neither is it to extend the *tolerance* of intolerance, in human societies for all other forms of life; nor to extol a *primitivism* of acceptance and respect to these. We don't believe in that anyhow, not as they are currently read, where the terms of respect and acceptance for nonhuman forms of life and nonlife are forced into alignment with a spirituality, of the earth-mother, say, from which we all come, to which we owe... Nothing like what we owe each other! (That debt, since Nietzsche, is infinite.)

We advocate that the inhumanities replace humanities because they are badly called. They have always been concerned with non- and in-human becomings. Whether of, since we have mentioned Nietzsche, the sub-men(sch) or the super.

For these becomings—the mineral becoming that finds in paint transmissions and connections between pigments which are at base mineral; or the algorithm becoming, where we are subsumed, or *sublimed*, into digital society; and the becoming algorithm of the statistical data harvested for that purpose by economics and sociology, and, to an extent, history; the marmoreal, metallic and material becomings of sculpture; the temporal becomings that are the achievement of cinema; the ex-temporal becomings of theatre which retains in the subject of the human its sacrificial element; animal becomings, or becoming vegetative, which are, as well as those of different art forms, the concerns of human sciences in a cover-all evolutionary becoming ... for these becomings—and these are not matters of inclusion, for the inclusion of diversity, because they exit *generation*, race, or, in German, *Geschlecht*. For these becomings some-where is needed.

Is matter (it makes me ask this very strange question) another word for *outside*? What matters being both outside the metaphysical impression of the symbolic and (because) outside the purview of the (human) spirit, spirituality. The materialism of Marx, for instance, which offered a distinctive outside.

We asked after words in the air and their vibratory meanings. Meanings they ought to lack, ought to in the moral structure common to humans. Meanings possessed by *all* and every instance of what vibrates in the air. That would be a becoming-material that gets at, materialises, reifies, the evolutionary spirit. Spirit in its evolutionary origin being exactly those meanings. And still, thereas, inspiring poets. It would also entail the word becoming inhuman.

We found life in the stone unfolding on the stage in fractals. So underscored. Even in a black theatre the darkness of an empty stage we said had this vertigo-inducing en abîme. The en abîme of the mimima of mise. An auto-individualising ...

I want to say *automaton*. For that it would be a spiritual automaton of the material belonging to the stage that is fractally expressed. So from the smallest gesture—a world. The smallest *inhuman* gesture. Haven't all the human beings exited? Aren't we there—in a black theatre, in the darkness of an empty stage—contemplating ourselves? But for this abyssal substance some-where is needed that does not precede it, that it makes, so that as a substance it is badly called, because it is not, except in the sense of *understanding*. The self-supporting origins of life-non-life, its material sustenance: with nothing going on 'outside' it.

The necessary fifth element is void for it to grow. And with void we have identified the stage, as both line underscoring and surface. Note that it is a surface that does not support.

For this source of life that does not surface but begins at the surface and with the surface another kind of *where* is needed. This where is where fractals grow. It is what they make not what they need (like void). And we can see immediately it is the surface, but *what is happening* at the surface? An opening out and a putting in: for each new petal put in, new branch, fold or frond, space opens, ... and there is always space. It's not a matter of the new bit halving or dividing and making room for itself on the inside.

In this it is like memory. And memory shows us there is matter in us. Matter being (another word for) outside.

The appearance of what's new already is as larger than what was before. It doesn't go outside and doesn't press out from inside to make space for itself—as is held in evolutionary terms—because the space it takes up was not there before it was. It exits rather than emanates, or expresses itself, from what was included. And it does not produce diversity. And it does not repeat or differ.

Deleuze calls this static genesis. It's our feeling that this happens *outside*. Not in a *some-where* that is a place. Yes, in a direction of time but not for being itself a form or type of time. So it's better to say static genesis—or the fractal growth—or the opening up of the putting in—happens *from* outside. It also *goes* to outside.

Outside is a direction rather than a place or a form or type of time. Strictly speaking, it is the space time makes. The creation of space from time makes it sound as if it is already full when it is in the gaps, and goes to the creation of what does not exist. Yet. What exists because it exits. So this perhaps gives a better understanding of what is meant by *inhumanity*.

12 October 2021: the subject

That a beginning actor brings to the stage something of which she feels she is about to be dispossessed is why the notion of sacrifice, that runs through Blau's reports, manifestos and theoretical writing on theatre, still holds true. Where a selfish actor remains intact, identifying the depths of her personal formation, the formative years, coaching, training, and so on, with the void beneath the stage, identifying it as being what supports her, instead of the real nothing, a beginning actor is able to experience the sensation of these being cut from him. As if all that training was for nothing.

It was all for nothing and means nothing: this is the truth of the matter. This is your first day on the job. And what they didn't teach you at school is what you need to know around here. Otherwise, you won't survive.

What's the good of this castration—this obedience to beginning that means going through each time, risking each time, out of necessity, one's identity? ...but haven't we said it goes further than risk? That there is sacrifice?

What else is about to happen? What else is the audience here for? If there was no sacrifice to the audience would be returned their capacity for judgement. If there were none, as the selfish actor seems to deny there being, or the necessity for there being sacrifice, to her would be returned the self-congratulation. For him would be the applause: and she stands without the smile that is anyway ungracious and holds out her palms, open, in acknowledgement that this is all I am. Like you. Human.

If the guts left on stage at the end of the performance aren't mine, then why do I feel this emptiness? I want to be among people again. Among my own. In company, engaged in pointless chat, which to the outside looks like the most pointed bitchery.

At the bar, after the show, well it's like a very personal slanging match. Like the Colony Room. What a relief to be called a cunt! One knows that the vicious, the really vicious attacks will be those couched in the most childish terms.

One understands that if one is really truly upset or truly upsets another there will be silence, then, *Pooh*. If the most awful thing has happened, the Arts Council has withdrawn its funding, for the last time, a pause, then: *That's a pooh*.

Deflation at the most significant events; inflation of the most trivial. And we should note among the trivialities are counted the most personal of issues, her dose of clap, his impotence. Or the age of a new girlfriend: *For Christ's sake, she's three!* ... Yes, I know. But she has the body of a four year-old.

Why is it that personal identity, those things we had hitherto considered our most precious memories and shameful secrets, our depths, when the show's over are subjects for hilarity? Because it is restorative. Not to be laughed at for them, but to be thought to have them still. For it to be acknowledged one is still in possession of those organs of which one had been relieved by the knife of the stage.

We repeat, but what's the good of it? Isn't it exactly for there to have been a hearing, to have been given a hearing by an audience? For the accolades, well of course: but these are due the corpses too left for the stagehands to pick up and drag off after the show. And note the theatrical meaning of *corpse* is to be overtaken onstage by unsuppressable hysteria. The deflationary language for this, one of the worst things that can happen, is *getting the giggles*.

Isn't it exactly for the good of the audience, that good which comes from its exercise of judgement? that good Badiou talks about as going on and as necessary in the interval, pointing to a contemporary trend in France to do away with the interval. Making the interval, for him, into a necessity. A necessity for there to be theatre, as if without the interval's permission to pass judgement there would be little point to it.

Then there's the good in itself: it is good to have public sacrifice. In however sublimated a form. But in a form so sublimated as the modern stage, is it *really* sacrifice? For the selfish actor it is not. To think not, and to agree, we are like selfish actors.

13 October 2021: subjective powers

We have identified three subjective powers, of poverty, chastity and obedience. They correspond to the three figures given for the dramas of analysis: to poverty corresponds castration; to chastity corresponds the phallus; to obedience corresponds Oedipus. Recall these dramas were narratives of violence and metamorphosis. They left no physical evidence. They tell the tale of the violent metamorphosis resulting in the subject.

It was to a monastic rule that subjects were submitted. That rule is no less productive of subjects. Subjects who don't, who did not, pre-exist it. The rule was beside the point. Just as we might say the figures of psychoanalysis are. What mattered were the actual practices of which the rule gives only the negative image. Working, as it were, by omission.

The powers are equally practices of which either the psychoanalytical figures or the items in the monastic oath provide an image that is negative. They are positive. In this they are like the depths of inner turmoil with which we commonly associate the subject, who is wrong about most things; whose depths and repressions and involutions, inversions, perversions, condensations and displacements, projections and introjections, give rise to what are no more than phantasms. Phantasmatic representations it is the job of the structures and systems of social organisation further to suppress. But they keep bursting out!

And not only that they reproduce, as if injunctions on their existence were the most conducive environment, producing the conditions making them possible; as if the sociopolitical obstacle to their existence were the horizon of that existence. And the politically constituted socius gets the phantasms it deserves. In its institutions. In depth.

Everywhere politically instituted social arrangements are productive of forces that undo these institutions. This is the meaning of *deconstruction*. Institutions like texts are about the forces always already working to pick them apart from the inside.

Institutions are complexes of freedoms and repressions, which is not the same as saying you can't keep a good symptom down. Institutions, having the depths we also associate with subjects, like them, are wrong about most things. They are fraught enterprises, facing irreconcilable difficulties, to which they bring ever more defensive strategies: they incorporate failure. Not by inoculation but by synthesis, where recognition, of their internal contradictions, is never sufficient that they change. Self-recognition is another fail, because there remains in them what is irreconcilable and contradictory.

Where does change come from? The change that is repressed, that sublimates violence, suppressing metamorphosis. It comes from the surface.

It comes at and on the surface where change had poor excuse for being, since it did not come from the deep, from the inside of analysis and what came down the genealogical tree was only its negative image. And how did it get there? It stepped out onto the void.

14 October 2021: subjective powers

The three subjective powers rely on a surfacing constituting their positivity: only at the surface can they be constituted in their positivity. That is, mobilised. Whether they come from the depths or from the heights, as obedience seems to, on the surface, or at the surface, new passages can form. And this is necessary because working in an institution is sometimes like walking in sticky mud and sometimes like quicksand. You get stuck or you get sucked down, by negation.

The nature of negation is that we hope we can reconcile our differences. So we do something like bringing to the surface our mutual resentments, our contradictory views, even admitting childhood trauma or matters of deep identification, identity politics, into the mix. The problem is these too are institutions: they belong to the subject; then they belong to subjectivity; and then they belong to processes of subjectivation, those producing the subjects through the masks, their masks, of desire and belonging. They never free themselves from either preexisting subjects, a presupposed subjectivity, or a fetishised subject to come.

It is this freeing, that is also a cut, crack or cutting, that is a subjective power. Does it turn the subjective and usually negative contents positive? No. It frees from etiology. From the paths set by habit and recognition (for example, institutionally recognised) as well as from the ganglionic root system, because this trailing apparatus is useless at the surface. It does not make for

movement but stasis. It does not permit of extrication without trailing mud everywhere.

Not that the surface is clean! But a beginning actor does not know this. It fears betrayal by signification, of the signifiers said everywhere to be emitted. Leading to the great chains of predetermination and negation.

A beginning actor fears the slightest move might give rise to a meaning. The meaning to a world. The world one to which she is condemned. (Yes, I said 'it.' The 'she' that followed was not a correction. The 'slightest move' which the subject is at this stage is an 'it' before being submitted, or condemned, to sexualisation.)

A beginning actor does not know yet that to be on the surface is to have a nonhuman becoming. The selfish actor gets used to it, linking it back to his humanity. And note that the nonhuman becoming is principally a loss of the rest of language, to be left with only this monkey paw that does not link up in any human way. It is the destructuring of a sound made in the air, a word, a gesture or movement.

Such a sound, a word, gesture or movement can just as easily belong to a plant, a scenic device, a sign, an animal or a stone. And still be meaningful. Still? For the stone there is no movement. There is the other kind of movement belonging to the image, its fractalling involution.

And meaning-*ful* is wrong. In that fractalling involution is a meaning-emptying. In other words, it's not going to wait around for you or I to interpret it. Is there in all its positivity. Its position. Its attitude and style. ...but first get the surface working. How?

It should be clear we are talking of the stage. Static genesis had it being a line underscoring any action, even the smallest, a throat-clearing (or the tube inserted into Marco Antonio's throat after his laryngectomy in Societas Raffaello Sanzio's *Julius Caesar* for his funeral oration), so that the action became an impersonal one. And then impersonal affect. And, we said, subject;

a subject of this strange sort: its activity now is dynamic. It has dynamic subjective powers. It possesses the dynamism of subjective powers.

15 October 2021: subjective powers

What begins at the surface, leaving no physical trace it was there, begins the surface, and ends there. We have to rely on reports that it was. And, in a way, we have to rely on reports it is, reports that do not differ in kind from those the surface receives.

If the surface does not change, is not changed, by scene changes, by quantitative measures, by subjects, how do we know it is working? Do we rely on reports for this as well? the accepted reports of convention and those that report on the conventions being broken.

Is there, we are asking, a principle for the constitution of the surface? Is it, for example, the Fourth Wall? the reality of which is phantasmatic, so that its chastity is reinstated as often as it is broken, or broken down. The sexual imagery of its penetration seems to exaggerate as much as diminish what is happening.

This diminution is in the advertised ease with which the convention is broken, it does not explain how it is reinstated. Because, there it is: the stage cleaving to itself and the action going on without consequence reaching any further than its limits. And the audience pulled in, asked to consider itself a part of the action, does the surface survive this? Does it break into surfaces, because of this threat to, Andrea Dworkin once wrote, its corporeal integrity? an integrity she considered to go as far as the ontological.

We know the time to have been prepared for when the audience is invited in, up onto, out across the surface of the stage. And it's not as if its members do not recognise what's going on, whether they feel it with sorrow, or reciprocate the excitement of the performers, or feel shame, as in Read's example. We know whatever the intention behind breaking down the Fourth Wall that it

comes before what actually happens and what actually happens will regardless, that it will happen with complete disregard for any preexisting intention.

The case is the same for the intention of the performer: what comes to the surface comes out and the surface receives it. Mimesis must be the odd mirror-play of recognition at seeing that it has. Yet, the performer can't see herself. Even when playing into a mirror. And her sight is hindered by the selection that has been made beforehand, of the mask, or character, in Donnellan's terms. Or else, if what is put out there is so in improvisation extemporised, the performer's recognition remains mimetic, and comes with a feeling of resonance, which we might call in this instance, *surface* resonance.

Or the action, gesture, sound, presence, does not cause a surface to resonate. However deeply he has looked, like in the song, he feels nothing. Is there nothing there?

There is always something there. The position of the stage, its positivity, is always (of) something, a subject. And it does not need any *as*: the subject on the stage has no representational status. It is simply a point of view, a positive affect.

That it is a positive affect may confirm the constitution of the surface more than anything else, since it is the affect that will or will not resonate across the surface. Not, is the gesture made, the action done, the sound articulated *correctly*; but does it confer on itself the status of a decision? And then, does it stand up?

Stand up, neither in the sense of the human adult's bipedal uprightness, nor in the sense of standing up to scrutiny, but rather in the sense of having been chosen for, in the further sense Spinoza gives to happy or sad: either one increasing affect and therefore affirmative or decreasing it and therefore negative. We might also note here the decision is a selection, and, for the increase of affect, one of subtraction, pruning down to the bare life, or liveliness of an internal relation. The internal relation is of mimesis, therefore

it resonates with the subject and is, affirms, confirms by report, a point of view, beginning at the surface, beginning the surface.

16 October 2021: subjective powers

We don't know a surface is working until there is movement, but we don't know there is a surface until something surfaces. We only *know*, as such, on the surface. Perceiving movement, as it entrains us, as we follow it, is not movement, but neither does surfacing nor surface resonance constitute movement.

We know when, to enter into hyperbole, there is a successful sacrifice. So does the actor. He feels something rise to the surface, or, she feels something descend to the surface.

There must be a type between a beginning actor, in whom the sense of risk is strongest, and a selfish actor, in whom it is weakest. We should remind ourselves that what is being risked is what had been perceived as personal, even as most personal, taking on a life of its own, becoming impersonal. We should also say from the start that this danger, and concomitant sense of risk, does not belong to organised humanity.

Trust, initially, is important, but the danger here is that a beginning actor can think of this as an opportunity to spill her guts. A selfish actor takes it for granted, places trust in technique. Still, a need for it remains, in rehearsal, in the workshop or studio, in the invisible work.

For a beginning actor, she is feeling her way out onto the stage. It seems like a void she is scared of filling too much at the same time as she is scared of entirely disappearing into it. The first step out onto the void is the decision we have focused on so far. Do we withdraw trust if it is betrayed, there? when everything he does becomes so heavy, so necessary, so meaningful and deep? Significant of the depths? No, then we make recourse to nonjudgement.

She is not to be judged for the mess she has made... yet, somehow, we have to maintain the risk and not let it slide into, ... slide up, we might say, attaining the heights of established technique. We know what happens: a selfish actor, or a selfish director who was once a selfish actor, mansplains. Or, of course, womansplains: she is supportive; his tendency is to condescend. Both have the same effect, and when she demonstrates as when he does we see it, we know it, we know that without anything surfacing there is no surface. The risk is either from the heights or depths. ...of course, when the skilled actor demonstrates we may not even see her technique.

Neither surface nor stage rest on convention. Neither are institutions. They are not, until we get stuck.

This is what happens with a beginning actor, he sees the institution, he sees the acting surface, the space itself, studio, workshop, rehearsal room, or the stage, as an institution. His participation is already weighted. At that first step, stuck in the mud.

A selfish actor treats it as a convention, is sucked down with the conventional, that, despite it being quicksand, she sinks into, like a warm bath. She is at home on the stage, as some people are said to be at home with the conventions of social media. And does not feel she is stifled. She is a star, a little one perhaps, but guarding her little light the more fiercely for that, for that investment, from the trolls.

From the heights, like the Word, or from the depths, we see 'it' when it moves. The surface enabling it to move, putting it on the move, at the surface. Movement that is not resonance or involution but of gestures, of symbols...

Such symbols are not yet human. They are not yet organised into structures, systems, when they are thought to be so. Again, all is subrepresentational; all meaning, no structure, no system.

A process is invented. It is by a series of cuts we move from one thing to another and, at the same time, from one meaning to another. We can see this process in reading from the printed page or screen.

Across the surface of the page, we watch the characters take something from the depths, our interest, as they are contrived to do, and something from the heights, as they contrive to do, often with the noisome feeling we are being talked down to. The surface of reading tends to be successful, until it sinks into conventional meanings, or gets stuck in institutional ones. And the process, invented, improvised at the time, working often against structure and system, deconstructing into a *style* of comprehension, perhaps, mobilising the characters into meanings is as little projected as the saccading movement of our eyes.

18 October 2021: subjective powers

We see more clearly what is at stake in a beginning actor. Everything for some. That's why it can be a good exercise to raise the stakes. And we might leap immediately to the conclusion that this means the stakes for you, or me, personally; the guts we sometimes say it takes guts to show: when we know the visceral does not come from the viscera.

Out on the stage, on the surface, even when they are real, like in the case of Hermann Nitsch, there's something pitiful about this loose jumble of organs. And something shameful in the sacrifice. Nudity, sexual acts, faked are pathetic, performed have a flattening effect, unless the point of these is this alone: to be what they are, and, being what they are, the effect of the surface. That is, the stakes are rather flattened than raised. Pornography tends to being a pure surface on which nothing moves, and it is often, if not always, the artifice or its exaggeration that we find moving: shame or titillation, it can go either way.

With artifice and exaggeration, we are back home in the theatre. The 'being what they are' which looked to be an action, wanted to be an event, ends up being a subject who makes no more claims on us than any other. On a raised board, underlined, so we can see it as it is, or as it ought to be.

In other words, at the extremes there are no breaks. Open your legs, open your fly, your mac, and what are you asking for, really? Sympathy? Same with the spill of our innermost organs, those structuring identity. Those upon which it is said we can make a politics.

The stakes it can be a good exercise to raise are indeed the ones we place in what is personal. And here they can have the value of our identities, of our selves. Of the jumble of things which go to make us up: they have the inflated value our investment has given to them, that inflated is real; and it is not for the sake of a disenchantment, for their deflation to 'being what they are,' or for the spectacle of humiliation or a moral lesson, however twisted, like the one parodied, when I am *nothing*. When he was, as Mervyn Thompson wrote about 1984, an *empty husk*. But it is to raise the stakes when these are sacrificed.

We raise the stakes in order to show we are mistaken if we think there is on the stage no sacrifice. Because it is the stage itself which comes along and renders what is most personal into subjective effects, impersonal. It renders them as having no consequence: for this is one of the subjective powers we are talking about. That is, the personal is the starting point, not the destination of the exercise. You don't get your guts back after the show. These are thereafter stage properties.

The type between a beginning actor and a selfish actor might be named the actor who takes risks. A risking actor is one who can raise the stakes, by taking what is personal and turning it to impersonal effect. Thereby losing his possession of it; spontaneously letting go of her investment: because it happens suddenly, in a single movement.

We can start from a story that has personal intensity for you, for example, your life. Play it. Take your time.

Use all the resources you have around you, most of all time. Use the language of theatre, which involves placing yourself imaginatively in the situations that had maximum intensity for you, and, if it involves speech, involves speaking

from there, to the people you imagine around you. In the words you would use, and they understand.

... but look: when you place the noose around your neck like that using that imaginary rope it is like you are giving yourself airs... You are on the Western Frontier, not at home at all, and playing at once the hangman who places the noose around your neck and the man who shot Liberty Valance. ... and when you tease up your hair like that, as if you would pull it out by the roots, it's like you're at the hairdresser, very upset with what you've got or with the results.

I don't need to make these suggestions to you verbally, anyone can see it! ...another actor might like to shoot through the rope on which you were so recently hanging. And together ride away, Calamity Jane.

Or, hold the mirror to you. So you can see in fact your pain, your soul sickness, is not being poked fun at. It is being moved somewhere else entirely from where you'd stuck it. Where it had stayed so long mired in your person that you came to suspect it was not only yours but you.

Movement on the surface distinguishes itself from action by giving itself what may be the slimmest excuse to move to something else. To invent something new. Some new outcome. The movement is not then *caused* by the action. Neither is it causative, in having agency. The movement is from its point of fixity, away from it. An abruption. A subjective event.

19 October 2021: subjective powers

Selection is a subjective power. As we have framed it, selection prunes and decides from the possible, choosing on the basis of eminence, of what is eminently or even preeminently given, for that which is to happen. The degree of eminence, in preeminence, is not the issue. We might say what is chosen for is that which evokes the most life, the eminently or preeminently lively, yet this should not mean that it is alive in the usual sense.

That which we bring to the surface is chosen on the basis of movement. We can say so from the ordinary sense of what is moving, however we know that being selected for entails that it is no longer moving *for* us but that it *moves* us, that it is impersonal, and that the selection too is impersonal. This is the meaning of preeminence, not only that the selected moves in the direction of an involution, by way of relations pruned down to because they possess a fraction more dimension, like fractals, but also that we can do something with the selected. And that we have elected it for this purpose. Both the seemingly inward direction of the fractal characteristic acquired by pruning and the reaching outward for that which may be grafted on, like the hairdresser to the hair puller, amount to the same thing: which is ... I want to say, gardening, and sound like Peter Sellers in *Being There*. Then, it is the kind of garden we have invoked before, the Zen kind.

Both the movement of internal relations and those leading to external ones originate in cutting, the ordinary cut of the surface line, or line of the stage, where everything is inside. Why inside? because we are talking of subjective powers; then what is this power? It is that of freedom.

The next freedom is that granted by what we have ironically called obedience and, by connecting it with the figure of Oedipus, unironically given it an active role. While the previous *selection* was and was of the passive, and despite moving, for static genesis (thought of as abyssal, the internal outwardly cracked). On this condition is it active: that the action has no further consequence but that of movement in any possible direction on the surface or stage, even to filling it with possibility.

Of course, we can see that the surface is capable of infinite extension, this was the power gained by Oedipus at Colonus. But unlike Weber we would not put this over onto displacement, the stage's being any place whatsoever, and so giving that which happens the power of *taking place*. The surface is that which is mobilised, and is not any place whatsoever, but here continues out to the bird cleaning itself on the lawn who is giving its report on the day. Or

there permits the movement from a prisoncell with its inmates to a library with its books.

Oedipus as a figure of the surface can be anywhere but for any harm he intends us he cannot get to us from the surface which is his condition of action, or acting. And he is impotent by the same token that his power is unlimited; he is heroic on the same condition he is a puppet: the report of his death fills the stage with the presence of his power, which acts like a presentiment, to the defense of Athens. And a presentiment of life, since from this surface comes the possibility of mobilising all the other surfaces and other subjects on them.

This, then, is acting without consequence. Or what is commonly called *acting*. Or, he's just acting.

The third power of the surface or stage is more difficult to get a handle on but may be the condition of the surface and that on which the other two powers are conditional. It is the power of completion. And the other two powers presume it.

The time in front of an audience can be endless—of indeterminate duration—but it is always complete. It forms what Bergson calls a block of duration. Note, it is not a blocked duration.

It is complete—a block—or bloc—just as a report is complete, since it is called on to be completed in a single hearing. Otherwise it's a story ...? Or is this the original meaning of story? Story, like language itself, might originate in the report, in reported or indirect speech, in reporting on what is not present, so closing the circle, for its eternal return.

20 October 2021: subjective powers

That the stage removes consequence from our actions looks to be anything but a subjective power. It suggests a restriction on our powers to act, freely to act, since on its surface we lose agency and can cause nothing to happen. Throw in

the knowledge the audience have of the story and the fact our lines are scripted and our actions circumscribed by the necessities of a given narrative, why should an actor risk anything? least of all what is most personal to her, intensities which are singular to her. Shouldn't an actor do it for the money? or, failing that, ego-gratification? And so, whether good or bad, resemble the selfish actor, who *takes the stage*, taking the stage by the force of his personal charisma, technical accomplishment and enormous charm?

Yet, this *limitation* engages a power that is limitless, if it is chosen for, entailing the power to resist fate and to exceed it. The lesson of the surface is that actions do not lead to outcomes: there is no necessity for dying to result in death, for murder to lead to punishment, penance, or there being any victim. Without this necessity fate loses meaning. And, yet, surely Oedipus, of anyone, had no choice?

The mistake is to confuse acting freely with choice, freedom with the ability to choose. This is made clearer by the scripted work, where there is no doubt, even in Hamlet, of what will come to pass. The range of expression an actor has to choose from in speaking those lines, What a piece of work is a man..., doesn't even approach what she can do with the character. He can resist, and call up the famous indecision, To be or not..., or decide, having already made his decision and, by the decisiveness of the decision already taken, having outstripped fate. In the moment where it thinks it can catch up with him, he is already miles ahead, has exceeded the girding round-about of this little life.

In the unscripted work, say, in the one improvised, there is no less a script, a familiar story, often a *family* story, if we are to invoke Oedipus. And this is particularly the case when we take seriously the claims to depth made by the one who deeply feels the trauma inflicted on him, even when she only does in the moment that these feelings arise. It *has to have happened*.

Better if she held a script, with the words, ...*or not*, and read out the question. The lesson of the surface is the power of our woundedness to lead us can be outstripped by another, stronger. We might there *empower* our wound, let it bleed out the words. And then ask, is that all?

The lesson is both that no outcome is a necessary one and none is more ignoble than the one that has to happen. So, yes, we say a *subjective* power. And look to be free of an eternity—that is a determinate duration—of subjection by taking the more noble course of making an indifferent necessity our own: power of the subject.

Suzanne Guerlac, in her excellent book on him, writes that for Bergson perception is for action. Perception therefore selects inputs for the sake of outputs. The brain's role in this is to coordinate sensory inputs with energetic outputs. Perception selects from the sensory field on this basis, limiting the inputs of what passes directly on to the nervous system, which, according to its complexity, either engages a hesitation, a delay, for example in cases of ambiguous sensory data, or reacts, for example, in fight or flight, at once.

The contrast here is not between two different sorts of information, information representing a situation where it is appropriate to sing a song on the one hand and to throw a punch on the other, or between knowledge and instinct, such that fight or flight is somehow the latter, and the knowledge gained through adequate training and coaching is supposed to provide the former. For Bergson, says Guerlac, the brain is not a centre of representations or a catchment for images experience and education have inculcated. Perception serves action. Still, along with the seeming autonomous selection by perception and production by the brain and nervous system of energetic outputs there is the option of suspending the action. This contains, for Bergson, the kernel of freedom.

What is happening in the time of being reported on? This is the time given hearing, in a single sitting, albeit one of indeterminate duration, in a block of duration. What is happening in the time of being reported on? Everything. And nothing.

All our worst fears, all our dreams, transpire in this time. Because the time of being reported on is our time with others. Our worst fear is that they are thinking or speaking badly of us. And Eleanor Roosevelt's quip does not work: that if we are worried about what other people are thinking of us, we should

realise how seldom they do. Or Oscar Wilde's, There is only one thing worse than being talked about behind one's back. That's not being. Our dreams are of being loved; and our fears are of being destroyed by the opinions of others, in the time of being reported on, in others' reports. Also the dream of social media.

And yet, in the selection of perception we have affirmed a subjective power linked to freedom. And yet, the suspension of consequence in following on from action has been a lesson of the surface. And yet, the suspension of perception is that which an action no longer follows by necessity. Yet is in the time of being reported on, then comes about as a time of pure contemplation. So that—and this is what all the stories are talking about, why we should change them and the lesson of the surface how we can—from selection, to the suspension of action, to contemplation, knowledge is created. The block of duration, that the time of being reported on is, is the subjective power of knowledge.

21 October 2021: subjective powers

We have trespassed on the divide between static genesis and dynamic, but what is dynamic here is not action. In choosing for an action we are choosing for something cut off from consequence. In choosing to step out onto the void, a beginning actor, fearing the institution, steps right into a place where he has no agency. He is divested of it... and we have to ask what plays in the theatres of bureaucracy and in government institutions? Is it really capital that dehumanises? or the impersonal operations of the law?

And by dehumanisation we mean that it is directed to human being as a stage or surface bereft of humans. What other creatures are welcome there? because it is *there* that we form political and legal subjects. We might look again at the question that seemed to crop up out of nowhere: What is happening in the time of being reported on?

Subjection *there*, in the Castle or the Trial, as these are appropriated to the understanding of the Kafkaesque, consists of having to make a report. And in current symbolic regimes, having to produce the data of which one is the datum. To report for oneself on oneself: the subject, however, as it is understood, is already spoken for in these apparati of power.

What is truly Kafkaesque is the impotence before the infliction of the law, the nonsensical nature of the task of the confession. Or of giving any account in these circumstances, and claiming it for oneself, as one's right to speak. One's right to being (fairly) represented.

Then, isn't the demand the subjection, of having to produce the goods? knowing that the only story to be told is the one that plays. That will play before the judge or in the council chambers. It has been known for some time that the right of the individual is stitched on like a star or triangle, for which she has, for her sins, to join with in submitting her identity. Winning it no less! Celebrating the win.

The individual is *there* like the selfish actor, claiming her victory over the stage, while underneath, a void. What happens in the time of being reported on can be like this. Or like that other movement, that, having trespassed on the divide between static and dynamic genesis, by which a subject outstrips its fate. Does not cheat it. But in her decisiveness, having already taken her decision, is all *reason*. And with what is reasonable we are not butting up against those negative qualities associated with the Kafkaesque, our submission to the law of the father and the Law, in our impotence, our anorexic feebleness, our erotic failure, but grow closer to Kafka.

We choose for the movement that is reason, that for us is reasonable because it shifts the ground. Mobilises the surface. And possesses the nobility of claiming the irrationality of that choice for our own reason. Claiming this time is giving our report, like the ape in Kafka, to the academy, representative of both science and reason: that is, knowledge and history.

And yet, we recently spoke of knowledge from Bergson's perspective. Here, perception serves action; it does not serve knowledge. Perception selects for that which serves action, in pursuing our interests, needs and the demands of our bodies.

Perception is in the world and in the matters of the world from which we make our selection. The selection does not grant us knowledge, but singles out that which we pursue. And should we pause in our pursuit, constructing from it the gateway where we must choose, we don't have the freedom of our choice. As in Kafka, there is only one door meant for us. We have this block of duration. A freedom of contemplation, from which, knowledge, as being what plays before us.

22-23 October 2021: subjective powers

We have a tendency to view election, selection, as of the heights or to the heights, to look to the heights and raise up to them the good, the worthy, the right, electing-selecting for what rightfully belongs, and working to pull down what does not. But isn't there a counter-tendency, from the depths? Isn't there, while that belonging to the heights is democratically or communally distributed, as strong an impulse, an impulse we usually assign individually, to look, with Nietzsche, into the abyss, into the depths? Into the body, the guts and bowels? that we might call a cloacal tendency?

Once we recognise that our tendency is to look for leadership, at times even accepting our enslavement, and that the other, coming from my body, is one of survival because it sees death and for health because it sees sickness and against enslavement because it sees liberty, isn't the struggle for a balance between the two, which has its end in justice? Doesn't the impulse to be ruled and to ... well, we can easily see what the counter impulse is: it's to have extended to me a hand, to be in reach of the ruler's eyes, and to be recognised by her. Once the impulse and its counter are recognised, don't we want to

work to balance them? don't we work and work for their balance, for the justice to come that is their balance and balances them?

Or it is the staging of a bodily insurrection we struggle for, which is the meaning commonly attributed to political activity, activism and political action: the political demand for the low to be recognised; whether it's the lower or working classes or those cut out of the system of the distribution of wealth. The workers have their bodily association to labour, the lower classes to dirt and squalor; the deprived and those of reduced means, the poor, relate to a swarm, a herd, a statistic, like you would apply to animals, either counting them in farms, or making a count to calculate the days of their extinction. There is the closest relation to death here down below. Not because it is an experiential reality but because it is a bodily one.

A state of bodily subjection; death a state to which the body is subject: and dying, when taken to be the condition of life, the condition imposed by its generation, because what fucks dies, that is, death when it is raised up, as we might do on a stage, is defanged. All that remains is the body. It does not go through a minimisation on stage. Neither is it the artificiality of what dies onstage not actually dying that effects this new condition we could call death's *embodiment*; nor is it by being exaggerated, in the famous death-throes, the one last spasm and death-rattle given all you've got: it is not all that dancing leading us from death to the body. And this is not a return trip: we don't cop out by going back to the body from death. We don't cheat death from the onstage death. The termination of life when it is enacted in what we have already claimed to be the indeterminate duration of the time of being reported on is undone. Complete, it is opened out to the operations of the surface.

So if we do a show about the poor, is it like showing poor animals onstage, good enough to undo either the states of animals or of, let's say, minorities? Does representation alter their condition? the condition of their embodiment? No. Whence the staging of a bodily insurrection.

If we look to the erotic minorities of the LGBTIQ+ we see clear bodily connection and with it the link to the profound, the base, even, on which all

experience is contingent. So, yes, political recognition is necessary. Yet, then the counter-impulse gives up to the first impulse all that is in it base and low, and, bodily based, basic. It looks to the heights for, if not redemption, recognition, the flash of recognition as the carriage passes by we catch in the leader's eye: she has seen us. And by standing on this platform of our queerness, the good thing, the truth, the proper and the right, has seen us as we really are. Because that is how we are so staged.

The spread of Covid-19 has become a similar political principle so that it has entirely left the dying and sickening bodies behind. Both dying and sickening bodies alike. Neither can appear on this platform except through what represents them because what occupies this platform is the good, the proper, the truth and the right. And there has been no inversion of levels, of the sub- for the super-structure. The issue being made one of infrastructure is simple obfuscation: a question of management, managing the numbers, governing the nations, ruling the populations, while economies roll on...

How can I possibly say that? Isn't it exactly political recognition of the sickening and dying that has led to an unprecedented roll-out of politically waged methods to stop more getting sick and decrease the numbers dying? Isn't this exactly the expression of political will? And can't this be seen by the sacrifices economies have made, by political imposition? And can't it in the massive debts governments have taken on to pay for that exercise of political will to stop the sickening and the dying?

Then the struggle goes on to hear from the sick, from the dying. And it too stages a bodily insurrection, is a struggle from the depths. Is a true counter-tendency to the truth. Because it must not be thought it is the truth that is fighting to be heard, true stories and individual testimonies. No it is another sort of intimacy being fought for, beyond that human intimacy of communication: it is always animal, its pain is yelps. Or the screams said to be heard from trees through a certain specialised technical apparatus of listening, and hearing.

25 October 2021: subjective powers

The funny thing is, we know what the stakes are, yet we do nothing. A sort of collective catatonia has descended. The funnier thing is with the restrictions on freedom of movement imposed globally, in the time of pandemic, that it is given mandate, for the sake of health. The higher principle comes from the depths of sickening, dying bodies.

We elect, select, for this higher principle and it governs our decisions. That is, in the strongest way possible it determines the perception of reality on which we act. And that is in the nature of power, to create reality. In staying home and keeping safe, in taking measures to protect others, maintaining distance, blocking the transmission of aerosols, in suppressing the emission of Covid-Delta particles and of bodily particulates, we are not repressed, we are expressing the reality.

It is in reality that the risk lies that keeps us from doing anything. And in ourselves what is happening? There is a distinct reduction of subjective powers.

And what are these again, as we have enumerated them? Well, the first is impotence exactly, as it applies to a surface which does not effect action. The second is reduction such that a choice is made, a living choice, since it implies an internal relation which has its own life: at its simplest, it is the choice to step out onto the void, void because that is the only support the surface, or stage, has. And we are immediately mistaken to think of ourselves as being upheld by anything else, either of our own resources, like, for example, self-determination, identity, and so on, or of an institutional... perhaps architecture is the best word, meaning to identify the surface with a pre-existing structure, a symbolic one or a discursive one, like, for instance, a stage in the institutional architecture of a theatre.

The third we named as the condition for the other two: that we are always on a complete surface insofar as time is concerned and insofar as it is of indeterminate duration. The report made on it, since it is a centre of

reception, will always be complete. In a beautiful phrase of Bergson's, "the past presses up against the present and draws from it a new form, incommensurable with its antecedents."

The time, this indeterminate duration we are talking about, is complete not when the action is complete. The subjective power of not effecting action restricts action to movement; movement mobilises the surface: movement confers on the surface the mobility that time has in going past, in passing. It is the mobility we do it for: and now the best word for this is *change*.

A fourth dimension was added when we said that perception cut off from action, and the impotence of the surface to act on what is outside itself, in the shape of change or pure mobility was in contemplation of itself—and this led to knowledge as a subjective power. Knowledge such as we have described it cannot lead to its institutional enactment, or re-enactment, to its being represented by or in an institution. Out of it cannot follow self-knowledge, because it is always moving that self-knowledge forward *to a new form, incommensurable with its antecedents*. So that from the *shape of change or pure mobility*, mobility without consequences, in action, and so on, in contemplation of itself, it follows that the self-contemplation is of that form. A new form. And so, a new form of knowledge.

Can we make then of this a higher principle? No, it can never ascend to the heights, and descends from them only to find itself in immanence, on an immanent and mobile and durational surface. Can we say then that this concerns embodied knowledge and involves actual experience, including the experience of the sickening and dying body? No, because it undoes them. In fact, it is a politics without principle.

26 October 2021: subjective powers

If we examine the impulse to dig deep, we find we are always looking for the truth down there, hoping it is a unique truth, not, at least, expecting it is not. And if we search the heights it is for the reasons of finding common

understanding, the good thing we expect others to recognise, at least, hoping they will. God is dead, for example: we shout it at the marketplace.

On the stage, the situation is reversed. The hubbub over personal truth is laughable: it is because it's not unique to us that we play it. As for a good thing that anybody is able to recognise in common with the others, well, there are only personal truths. There are in fact *persona*, the subjects we have been talking about.

A further reversal occurs: the one who holds her truth to belong to her alone, or who holds his values to be unique and defends them; or, she who attacks because she alone knows what it is inside her; is tragic. This comedy is what we all have in common. A chaos of impulses: each one reassigning its polarity to its opposite: there is no principle guiding it.

Yet, there is something guiding it, maintaining its narrative disorder in the case of comedy, and the order of its narrative in the case of tragedy. It has been thought that it is narrative alone, the stories that we tell ourselves. First there's the story that I tell myself that I believe; then the story in which we all recognise ourselves, the story of the Fool (the fool who fools herself, the thief who steals from her own pocket, the trickster who is tricked himself by her own disguise, the one whose identity's indeterminate). The stories, it is said, are necessary. Is it that? or is it the telling that is necessary?

Stories are how we make sense of the world, but this is exactly the reversal we have seen: the story that I tell myself is nonsense; yet it is that nonsense we all have in common. How do we progress in our collective insanity? tragically, but heroically, on our own? comically, but communally, democratically? In other words, what are the general orders given in our stories? This was the necessity we earlier talked of, to tell the stories necessary for the time, the necessity theatre was about. To give it, in Werner Herzog's words, adequate images. Because in the current sense we have

made of the world we recognise a tragic order, an order of necessity and of irreversibility, to which changing the narrative will make not the slightest difference.

27 October 2021: subjective powers

What is he afraid of, the beginning actor? We have attributed to him and to her a fear akin to losing control of your own stuff. That, once it's out there, on the surface, for all to see, even if there's no one there to see it, it is no longer his and hers. Beyond his and hers, that action is more or less raised by the lines of exaggeration and artifice.

In the state of exaggeration, that action, it stands in relief from the surface, in a queasy way. The state of artifice... a beginning actor might rightly fear he will be found out for showing himself in a good light. Producing the standardised pout or stance, which on him is vaguely ridiculous. And we've said about this that what is happening is the action being cut from the body, which acts, by the blade, the line, of the surface, or stage, on which it features, which receives it, on which its report is made, as any body's. What is personal, now impersonal; action to event: and this, because of its little bit of outside, itself subject, subjectivated, or having its own life, apart from the erstwhile host, donor or sacrifice.

Another sort of fear perhaps is more realistic: of putting the inside outside. Now there's no retreat. Another sort of exaggeration: commit thyself, we say to the beginning actor; and she puts it all out there, tits and all. Or he is the striding cock strutting across the play area. Another sort of artifice, then, of the most realistic kind: the body as its own prosthetic. ...but it is exactly by the body a beginning actor, having committed an action to the stage, is not protected. What's inside is now outside. And we've suggested it now like a birth, an afterbirth, or an excrement, has to make its way on its own.

In Minus Theatre, the group I led for some years, we praised commitment. But we had a saying about that first decision, which the whole practice focused on,

perhaps unduly: There are no bad decisions that you can make. But you can get better at making them.

In exaggeration and artifice some comfort lies, a comfortable zone of the indiscernability of one's artifice to others, or one's (exaggerated) forthrightness. Yet a beginning actor finds herself out. Or fools himself. And so commences the process of becoming a selfish actor.

What does the surface have that there's no retreat from it? That whatever I have decided to 'commit' to it is unretractable. Is a commitment. Yes, we can see here the fear of the institution of the stage, the theatre, performance, to which a beginning actor feels himself having to make a commitment. But beyond that, it's more obvious: fear of not being praised; fear one is no good. One is bad. It hasn't quite sunk in that one is not what one does, that the gesture, the noise, motion one elicited from oneself, being out there, is no longer one's own. And should a beginning actor be so informed?

Should we say to her, that glance you made to me full of the hope of being recognised, was it part of the action? Cut it. The line is not yours, it's the character's. Those guts you left out on the stage, leave them for the stagemanager to pick up; yes. I recognise they're still attached. Cut it.

What's out is out. There's no going back now. That arm you waved with, that heart that beat, yes, I know that if I prick it it will bleed, with your blood. And yet, no, no. I am not in judgement. This is how we console ourselves standing on the outside, standing, as it is said, off.

Fear of being judged precedes the fear whatever we do will produce that judgement. And don't these two things go together? Fear of losing what one had inside, one's precious life, one's precious death; fear that comes when it is outside. Fear that comes too early and fear that comes too late.

Committing to the surface of psychoanalysis used to be the fear of many creative people, lest the engines of creativity are disassembled on the surface, and, when brought back together never work the same way again. Not so much the fear of having one's dirty little secret outed as of seeing it for

oneself, for itself: that this is all I am, because it is all I ever was: my work is the working out of the most trivial complex! and common!

It is strange given the ubiquity of the digital surface it does not occasion a similar fear. ... And there, on it we are productive of our performances, showing through our engagement our will to humanity, our good will. And what wonderful sense we can make when we try! How witty! ... and how good we can look when we are properly made up.

Attachment anxiety is given new meaning by an inability to separate ourselves from those actions on the surface. Separation anxiety is given new meaning by our capacity for attachment to the slightest gestures of our digital personae. Commitment anxiety has the meaning it has from attachment to those personae. Like an analyst, it interrogates us, the surface; like an analyst whose analysis goes all the way to the psychic source: an engine we proudly display in the exploded view.

Do we inform ourselves of so being analyzed? When it is in the company of friends we are swapping parts? As if it was entailed by our interconnectivity that it resemble a giant psychic swap-meet.

29 October 2021: subjective powers

The digital surface is socially invested, given the power to produce subjects. The subjects we ought to want to be: that is, according to the narrative. It is a narrative of progress, yet it precedes the subjects of, shall we say, speculation, in a speculative data economy.

Those subjects who we ought to want to be and become are the trading pieces. And therefore, trade in pieces, pieces of a psycho-graphology or psycho-grammatology, like parts of speech, the swapmeet we earlier mentioned, where we don't feel a thing, feel nothing like the insertion of the psyche, or the psychic body, the human one, into the social story, because these parts, and here the paranoia, are inserted into us. Or, better said, into

the psyche. So there has been a previous paring down of it, the body-psyche, or body's mind, if you like, a breaking down and a building up again, from borrowed parts. This is why changing the narrative is the same business: because it is in the same business.

The paranoia breaks out when we feel a part of us take over the role we had hitherto supposed to be ours. As in drunk-texting, the words escape; and with certain drugs, we notice, senses deranged, that they are serial, the senses, from their being put out of order, out of, that is, the social order. We might just as well say, the narrative order. The essence of tragedy: personally to feel so ordered, by, what we can further call, social destiny or narrative necessity. Of course, it's a comedy to everybody.

In classic tragedy, madness ensues. And we see this fairly regularly, the patch-up jobs, the motley of the general social roles, see, it is comical! Called in by friends, we assist in changing the narrative, so that you or I can get back up again, face the void.

Why void? Well, isn't that the feeling? The feeling of starting again, and the fear. Like having nothing inside.

We return to a beginning actor, but in taking back possession of ourselves, normally proceed like the selfish one. We fall back on, often disingenuously, sometimes with real terror, what we know. The strangest thing can occur when we are the donors of our own body-parts. They become the opposite of ghost limbs. We become the ghosts.

It is said to be perfectly normal for our psychic well-being to view the space below the stage, the surface, as already full of the lives we are in fact living. But that is the past. We have reversed the order. It is not as full bodies we step out on to the void; it is as voids we step out on to the fullness of who we were.

What help is it to be considering subjective powers in the nightmare or mania we are living of living as introjected subject matter, part-consumables, grammatical egos? For a start, of the latter we can say we see the attraction, since to be part of digital discourse is reassuring, gratifying even, to think we

have symbolic entity; this is what analysis does: as symbols of ourselves we can carry on... but it is only by granting such symbols as being outside us that we can do this.

That is, enter the void: the stage direction given not by the void but to the void. Here it comes now, extending its surface under us, at a point we can choose. It is a point in the now.

What is happening is the choice of the minima we go on with: What does a risking actor do? Joaquin Phoenix for some reason comes to mind, perhaps as an example because we can see the results on the plane of their registration, as compositional elements of the screen. He twitches. Or his grimace is nonsensical, out of place, and that's how we can tell it's part of the character. From the smallest gesture, we have said, with Kirkkopelto, a world.

Or it is in an angle of his body we see it flash blade-like. A light comes out of his eyes and illuminates the planes of his face. And it is a compulsion, from an inner compulsion, that he acts so in small bits and pieces, the minima of subjectivities; yet we cannot go so far as to call it *inner* or *inward* because pure expression, outside, a part of speech that makes absolutely no sense, but here is the pain in the yelp of a dog, a cur, that signifies a world, a world where such a yelp, scream, can be made. Such a world is not produced, not the product of the scream, but suffuses the surface: is the event we have noted, then the impersonal affect, then... the whole subject in its subjective duration, in its subjective duration so whole: a subjective power we have reserved for the indeterminate duration of the reported on, on, not a surface of registration, but receptive centre, the centre of a hearing of indeterminate duration.

The pruning off of perception, selection, all the way to active election, choosing what happens as it does; undoing it, giving it a power that is internal to a receptive centre, is not the expression that reaches out, of a metaphysical impression, but the expression of a psychic minimum in which the subject subsists, comes about or revolves; the revolution itself, of a past pressing up against the present, producing affects without antecedents: all the surface's

roles. The stage's. This revolution is the saying, the telling, we need to be hearing, is not the story, the warning, the moral lesson, the past, but pushes, has the means to, against the future. Opens it, a crack.

30 October 2021: subject matter

An actor who stakes her life on the squeak she makes with her gumboots, playing Rosalind in *As You Like It*, rubbing one rubber gumboot against the other: a very human privilege, and a privilege amongst humans. *Squeak, squeak*. It has even more weight than the sound of her voice, but when her voice comes it's like it has been infected with the sound, making something else sound in her speech than the well-formed words. Giving another sense, and, de-structuring the existing or pre-existing one.

The resonance is first on another surface than the stage, an ideational surface, perhaps, ideal surface of the actor's finding something out, which she is reporting on, all speech onstage having something of the nature of indirect speech. The words consist in a participation, participate in the script, and counter-actualise it, in Deleuze's terms, without contradicting it. The deformation enacted is not of purpose, necessarily, of what one purposes to say. Rather it removes something which it does not replace. This removal is not to the heights, a withdrawal, or retraction; neither is it to the depths, a regression or subduction.

The removal may be said to be of the whole, for the sake of consistency. Not that saying so would be in order to be consistent, but that what is left is the play of parts which form a consistency. The sense of a whole withdraws durationally, is reserved for the subjective power of an indeterminate duration. Then again, it's not as if we hold off from telling you the whole story until an end is reached, with which the story was, had been, was always going to be self-identical, in a sort of retroaction devised to make, or give the impression of, everything falling into place.

In *each playing his part*, it's more the case of an internal cohesion of conflicting elements. The conflicts are great but effortless; and the conflicts are diminutive, at the vanishing point: because the withdrawal or removal of the whole, reserving it to a subjective duration that is indeterminate, is for the sake of indeterminacy *and* consistency. The body, for Bergson, is a centre of indeterminacy. It too has a centre of reception, where what is being reported on is given time for an action which is as yet not fully determined; we can say, when it is, it will be actualised. And, for Bergson, such an action that is as yet indeterminate is also a sensation, the *act* of sensation.

Sensation acts or interacts in and with the world at large, does not provide representation of it, or give information to us, in the way of what it is like. No likeness, action: and we have set up the surface of the stage to be a field for the grossly indeterminate. We have deemed it to have the consistency of indivisible movement, going from one thing to another without regard for the different frames or structures of reference being trespassed on: structure has been left behind. Is left behind at the first step. That is, the thing structuring the world is removed for the play of parts, where there is great division, clashes of what we may call conscience; and yet the movement is indivisible: so we go from world to world as easily as going from part to part (the reason for taking out the whole, *or*, and, taking it for being simply one more part: now one part less). In fact, we go from subject to object and back again.

The play of movements is reflected at smaller and smaller scales, degrees of difference, all the way down to the most minute. At the level of the vibratory squeak, a particle is emitted. If we imagine it in wave form and blow it up enormously, we can see the peaks as well as the great troughs, which at this level are of worlds colliding. The overall, duration, is what enables the one and the other, by consenting to the formation of a single surface, having the singular consistency to comprehend, so hold in contemplation, the great play of the world with the fraction of a vestigial sound or gesture, glance, grimace. Structures clanging against and destroying

each other. Then, no more than gumboots rubbing, as small as a mouse, singing.

1 November 2021: subject matter

I think the stakes are highest in consciousness. And in what is mobilised in consciousness. In what consciousness gathers, composes.

I don't think it's a matter of choice *because* of the high stakes. In the election of subject matter there is a selection process that can only ever be affirmative. That is, it can only ever be decisive, and fateful, fatal and inconsequential.

Nobody died of a thought: the opposite is true. It is the way in which it matters I hope to be drawing attention to, that, with each extinction, there is one less thought, at the level of species, at the level of an individual.

Comically, we choose to disorder the senses; tragically, we choose to order inner experience: our powerlessness to is a reminder, since it is in this association that it is gathered and arises, of sexuality, the greatest source of humour, and so a power.

2 November 2021: subject matter

It's not just a matter of the whole, the whole body or subject and psyche, being taken from its privileged spot; not just a matter of the height being brought down, or the depth excavated, uncovered, and brought to the surface, the most deeply buried and hidden; of the most precious being revealed to be ... a phase, a date, an era when they thought and did differently, another country: it's also a matter of scale. Recall that the whole became a part. Our precious death, our perverse secret, our sore or delicate point, that we hid as well from ourselves, was either given away or volunteered, sacrificed, in fact. And it happened for the sake of movement that it was reserved to an indeterminate duration by the surface. It was reserved to the play of the surface, where it participated in a surface consistency.

The consistency of the surface gathers into a subject. And we lately asked if it mattered when what matters seems to belong to the sacrifice which is earlier. Then is the sacrifice for the sake of movement? This is like asking if sexuality is for the sake of humour. Or humour for the sake of sexuality.

What we were trying to point out is what is in the nature of powerlessness: what does being inconsequential mean? We can see the connection with humour. Those who seem to be most consequential, to hold offices of consequence, constantly invoke theatrical means, in artifice, symbols of office, and in exaggerated forms of address, which we know to be so, to uphold a sense of consequence. This is the case with or without the common touch. The common touch, popular appeal, depends on these means, the self-debasement of a popular public figure consents to them.

No, this is not where the humour is found, in the game-playing, fakery and hypocrisy, that leave themselves open to and even court being punctured. Neither is the humour in our consent, to letting them get away with it or encouraging it. The humour is in showing the big cock to be a micropenis. Not the sexual imagery because it is base but because it is the go-to for assigning to what is powerful its powerlessness. Its impotence and inconsequentiality.

In Māori culture, the biggest insult is to be flashed by a woman. This was said to mean, You think you're a man, big, strong, proud and important, but look where you came from. Just like everybody else. But it could be the case that the meaning is more direct than this. Being shown a vagina could mean you're actually a pussy.

Both sexuality and humour bring together dispartes. Without annulling them and without subjecting them to violence. Yet it is the violence of the cut, the break, crack that we have most invoked, to characterise the surface as intercessor, as rupture. We have also said, in the sexualised terms of psychoanalysis, terms which are strangely desexualised, or, maybe, simply humourless, the impotence of the stage to have consequence corresponds to Oedipus, while the *economy* of the cut corresponds to castration.

We have asked too whether we can retain any sense of sacrifice in view of the sublimation of the modern stage, whereon sacrifice is performed and represented without being enacted. We have, however, given another significance to sacrifice. We've said it's the depths as my own, source of my identity, and the heights as the abiding place of its valency, that are sacrifice. The actor loses both the person she holds above and the organs he holds within, so it comes as some relief to be greeted with obscenities when one is off the scene and treated as if one were more or less intact, that is, with humour. The humour that is the undercut.

Humour that is the undercut because, like sexuality, it doesn't just bring opposites together on its surface while maintaining their opposition, but gathers all the senses of the obscenities as of the insults and upholds, *understands* them. And does so without that comprehension either diminishing their import or producing any slippage in their signification. Still, you might say, the ruptures are upheld, but there is no action of rupture.

The violence is not withheld. And it is not merely figurative. We might say it is sublime.

We would also say it belongs to our subject matter here, adding that the infliction of violence and its often sexual imagery fixes the subject against his movement. Depriving him of movement, he is the perpetrator, she the victim, and similarly fixed, placed or fixated. Isn't she the subject? since she is subjected to violence? Isn't he the subject, since he is to sacrifice? Neither then are the subject of movement, the subject that moves, the subject that is the movement itself, but have reached a terminus, at which duration halts.

3-4 November 2021: subject matter

What constitutes the surface, stage, the theatre as a political field—its strategic importance for us—is not its representative nature, is the same as what constituted first its suppression and now its redundancy, its gathering of differences without loss of identity or difference. This conduces to conflict, but

not the conflict of opposites, the conflict of disparities, the conflict of decisions; and, as we have said, decisions without consequence apart from on the surface, where they surface, concerning how they move. The same movements can be seen in both humour and in sexuality, the same political stage in its various phases.

Now this conflict, these conflicts, only resolve in the story, which, as we know, is a poor excuse for staging them. The narrative, along with the desires to either stick to it or to change it, gives the weakest excuse for the violence of the conflicts, which never reach the violence of their potentiality. The violence is not necessary; this is what qualifies the surface, the stage, theatre as a political field, as opposed to what we might call blood sports: it does not require violence.

We might consider here what rape as an example of sexual violence does, or plucking out, popping one's eyes, or having a redhot poker shoved up one's arse, they promote the plot. In other words, they mediate. So in relation to theatre, we are also talking of unmediated conflicts.

At one end, conflicts have, take from the story, their excuse. We can immediately see what this means in terms of changing the narrative. It means to focus on contingency and may feed into the desire but does not issue in change. At the other end, they have their terminus in a violence that never actually arrives.

In the story, the violence may not be put off until the end. It may arrive in the middle. The one who desires change more than anything, the young revolutionary, runs out and presses her point: she wants to puncture, to rupture and burst like a melon, the asinine complacencies of those who want to stick to the story. Yes, it's usually a young man.

And he is histrionic in his masculinity. It is the necessary thing! This toxin. But it could just as easily be played by an actress, say the one who lost her lines, and turn to comedy.

Yes, so the plot jumps forward. It has been given a kickstart. But, whether the violence was ill or well conceived, it is one without the freedom in the act.

The freedom is to perform the action, but the action is now bound to a subject. The rape decides on who is the rapist and who is raped. And the issue is resolved in the name of the rape, or the punch, the stab, or the rupture some insist on, to shake things up, so the action, as they say, solves nothing. It simply mediates, is the mediate point, for a whole new series of conflicts.

Judgement may come, may not: it too is a violence. And what it does is suture the ragged edges of the wound. It is, as they also say, the continuation of war with other means. The paradox would seem to be that in the effort to render a discontinuity a continuity is produced.

The paradox of politics, of the state, is that the peaceful state of society is enforced by its hegemony over the means of violence, of violent force. So that it was not so peaceful after all. Or it was peaceful only for as long as there was no violence.

The logic here has the pretension of being ironic; or of participating in the gutter humour of, I told you so: fascist pigs! When in fact the logic is exactly that of humour. Or of sexuality. Or, we are saying, of theatre: it holds the contradictory ideas at once. We see both the violence and its potentiality in peace together.

And note von Clausewitz's use of the word *means*, *Mitteln*. Violence is nothing but the continuation of the state because of a mediation that is always in potentiality. The theatre, as the surface of the state, is this political phase space for having, gathering discontinuities, without requiring either their resolution into identities or violence in the mediation of their differences. That is, it is so, when it is so. And so we will have to return to the suppression of theatre and the depression of its resources.

5 November 2021: subject matter

What was suppressed in theatre was levity. What caused the suppression was the fluid and mobile nature of the surface: it might spread, like a contagion, bringing with it fluid identities, sexualities, cross-dressers and all manner of erotic, aesthetic, and political perversion. Worst of all, it would inject humour into the proceedings, upsetting them with a disorder related to comedy and the unexpected.

If it did so *with*, with what it brought and brought out, this was because it was a medium for change, for the dosing out of change. In other words, its power to invoke this power, indulge those tastes, entertain these notions, demanded that it be suppressed. For the sake of order, an order not yet one said to belong to the public, but for the sake of an order related to tragedy, theatre called down on itself a suppression of the surface. This had the result of lifting it up, the surface, to command, command and withdraw, issue orders, hide behind a *deus ex machina*, or in a cloud. A stormcloud.

A stormcloud voices its displeasure. And, as Anouilh writes in his rewrite of *Antigone*, the spring is wound up tight. It unleashes a mechanism that punishes exactly what has been suppressed: all the comic actors, as we know, are tragic ones.

They are not yet depressed. Instead they follow the order of tragic necessity. They are not yet just doing their jobs: instead, their jobs are the most important in the world; a tragic knowledge of the threat theatre posed. So, you see, it is the efficacy of the stage that was condemned, what we may call its *comic potential*.

The reversal, going around the turn of mediation, of what it might bring *with*, should theatre not be *directed* in this fashion, made it seem as if the danger, threat, the risk of it, lay in what it represented, making it all the more necessary to represent it, in what we now call a feedback loop, but is really just recursion. The threat of the tragic end of one of our dictators was thought to represent not a subjective power but an objective one, and a political one.

This feeds, as we can see, into a politics of representation: better for the dictator to be herself a comic actor.

6 November 2021: subject matter

On one side, the suppression of movement on a then contagious surface, relating to the disordering by comedy, public shaming and so on; on the other side, the self-appointment of theatrical means to be those representing order, with a relation to a tragic representation: both worked together. The one was by political expediency, since it meant to show self-identity in the political subject. He is the one good at playing the tragedy, believes in himself, takes it for necessity. The other was an internal suppression of subjective powers in theatre, those appertaining to the surface. Against these the state defined itself, while, naturally, making use of them, in fact, needing expert advice to do so, derived from a *psychological* theatre, psychological theatre representative of structural, legally constituted necessity, and subjection, with, as we know, the necessary redundancies that come with representing self to self. Mirror of the soul; mirror of the state.

Between one and the other, or we might as well say, between political suppression and repression, a reversal, a swapping of masks took place. The tragedian's for the comic actor's. But this is only half the story. The reversal occurred to the political surface, itself. Representatives of the state arrived at the theatre wearing masks. And looking out from the stage across the audience, our actors recognised the task that had befallen them: they were to speak the truth. To power.

And what did the audience do? It listened with reverence. Because its members knew too that this was their role. And, so all speaking to power goes.

At interval it saw itself in diminishing numbers, took on the (surface) size and scale of the calamity. And the tears that came with that acknowledgement acted like glue on the underside of the masks. While our actors, at the end,

empty as usual, came out to the bar and congratulated each other mildly but the director profusely and seriously, who bore the weight of responsibility for all.

9 November 2021: subject matter

Suppression, repression: theatre suffered these for politics. It led to a reversal of roles, but we can only speak of a role reversal in view of theatre, and of the surface with limitlessness in its potentiality, because this is where it occurs. However, there also looks to be a restriction in powers: the potential limitlessness of reach is paired with impotence when it comes to consequence. Added to this, we have asserted of such powers that what lies in reach, which is movement, is both indivisible and of indeterminate duration: there's no going back. What happens comes to us by report of the actions, events, subjects on the stage, who are not altogether human, and when they are mobilise forces which are not. So there is also a notional completion, a closure of the circle, where the circle is but another figure of performance, and, as Deleuze might say, a repetition of difference.

Was there political recognition of what had occurred, of what had been reported on? Was this of such a nature that political forces rallied to suppress theatre—as if it had the slightest importance? No, I would say the politicisation of theatre closed it off from itself: now that is the further reversal we are getting to, the role reversal whereby political recognition reciprocated, and, like theatre, closed itself off from being a politics.

Then, should we ask what is politics? A matter of social organisation. Like theatre, it need not have at its centre a principle, about which it revolves: anarchy is politics. Like theatre, it needs no morality to guide it (quite the contrary), to police its edges, directing policy, as we have said about being *directed in that fashion*: it too is amoral.

More than this, politics represents to itself its mechanism, it demonstrates to itself, in a way that we could also say that it reports on it, what it is doing, or,

as some are fond of saying, what is to be done. How think of the social organism? It doesn't matter but that this thought has to be tied to actions, events and subjects. Politics concerns the movements of subjects, that is, their conflict; but, again, these are only political subjects to the extent there is political recognition, to the extent that they share the stage. So its subjects, and its subject matter, are those of self-representation and recognition, political subjects.

10 November 2021: subject matter

The combination of repression, suppression is followed by a further suppression. But this time it is a suppression of the political in the political. The political is now what does not play.

The reversal we talked about is this: where comic levity was suppressed, today it is tragic necessity which comprises a content or substance that is suppressed. Now, we might suppose content or substance to be bodies, to be the embodiment of what bodies collectively embody. The bleeding bits, not the edges. Animals, and so on.

We might suppose content or substance to be the *bios*. Or, at least, to refer to it. It would then refer to the ground and foundation of forms, since it would be that from which these are made. In-formed, as it were, or ex-formed. Licked like bear whelps into cubs. Or programmed by genes in the living cells to form tissue, flesh, the flesh of plants, the flesh of animals.

And in a way it is the case that the living-being of the planet is suppressed, but it's more accurate to call it *depressed*. Its resources are depressed. The content or substance which is suppressed is so by ... the surface. The surface here is the whole playing field. This politics occupies without itself being in play.

What plays on the surface is exactly the *play of the surface*: a kind of limitless mobility of a smooth surface which does not admit of bumps—or of cracks.

That craze below the ice is at another level, a lower one, a compression layer, and an archeological one, a temporal one.

Time, now, time in all the massy heft of it, the unrolling gigantism of its inflated sense of urgency, the urgency of tragic necessity is packed deep down, lower than the void over which the surface slides: we might say it is in the *invisible work*. That work that now feels so weighty, so urgent, so intractable. That work, for example, of lowering carbon emissions, of assaying the cessation of unceasing destruction, of ... *bios*.

Politics has no power to undertake the invisible work. That part of it that could is the rendering of all content and substance into air—of a particular kind: the burnt. Comedy today subsumes the bios and its tragedy. All that is light and air is the burning of content and substance, making light, the burning of the air.

11 November 2021: subject matter

At some level, somewhere, everything is moving too fast. Where this is so, what grants us immunity from it? Movement.

Roberto Esposito has developed the political theme of immunity. He finds a relation by contrasting the *immunitas* and the *communitas* that unites the two. It is physically there in the words to see.

Esposito does not follow the route of pitting one against the other, of making *communitas* in the community an exclusionary principle. The exclusion of what is external to that principle does not make it an internal principle forming the community, the political community. The pushing out of foreign matter, foreign subjects, does not form the community in its ontological integrity.

Instead, Esposito has it that the *immunitas* is in the community. And it is this which makes it one. It is always a little bit of the outside raised to play on the surface of political certainty.

Immunity is then a matter of what Althusser calls interpellation, whereby the individual is interpellated within the ideological state apparatus. This is perhaps a funny way to put it, but isn't it the case that ideology is made to work by including what is foreign to it? And isn't this especially true at the level of the state? It would, in fact, be to construct it as apparatus, or what we have also called mechanism, that it does.

As soon as we say everything is moving too fast, we are struck by its inadequacy. More than its inadequacy to actual experience, what strikes us is either that the opposite is true, instead, or that it can be. And this makes for uncertainty: we are uneasy at comparing the surface of the world to the weather. Beautiful day. Ever get the feeling everything's *moving too fast*? Well, it's not!

We are in a stasis comparable to the last stages of a depression, a state of catatonia, where movement has become impossible. Ideology no longer covers over the truth while initiating us into it, as if it were a conspiracy. We are no longer covered by false beliefs of a false, imposed consciousness against the climate. The two directions, extreme as they are, coexist. The reason for this is that as a result of its suppression by the mobility of the surface, political movement has become impossible.

13 November 2021: subject matter

The role of political management over the last two years of pandemic, or, to be histrionic, plague, has looked to be a direct use of biopolitics. Control of populations has been control of bodies, control of movement. And there looks to have been something sacrificed.

Biopolitical policing of populations, infected populations, has seemed to bring about a concession of the kind, since it is on a global scale, not seen since the mass mobilisations at the time of the globalisation of warfare, in the first and second world wars. Apparently it turns on matters of economy, this concession, where it is both disincentive to 'growth' and incentive to a type of

specialised 'wartime' economy, to which the first makes its concession. Or sacrifice. But the sacrifice the political apparatus makes to biopolitics is of itself.

I think we can see this in a small change made in the vocabulary of New Zealand government representatives. As if by policy, for political reasons, the change has been from speaking of the vaccination metric in terms of the 'protection' of populations to speaking of it as *immunisation*. From a medical, scientific standpoint, this change seems unmotivated.

In consideration of climate change could or would we similarly replace environmental *protection* with environmental *immunisation* at stake might be human affairs in their entirety. The environment would need to be immunised against every human action. Can we imagine what this immunity might look like?

It has been said that it is capitalism, the capitalist plunder of resources, from which we must protect the environment. OK, why not immunise it? The thought is also there that we might do so by introjecting the problem—of capitalist plunder of resources—into the economic form of capitalism. The carbon market to trade in pollutant emissions seems exemplary in this respect. And the thought is there too, and to the contrary, that pandemics are natural forms of defenses: that is, the nonhuman environment's immunity system.

We can, however, lay human affairs in their entirety at the door of politics. Or should that be *at its feet*? Then, I would have thought, since the forms of social organisation of politics are sacrifice, it is at its feet that they already lie. And herein the concession: biopolitics in fact looks like an abrogation of politics and a reduction in its political means such that it *has no power*. Or, it is immune to the charge making it responsible. Is immune to being asked to take responsibility: for what? human affairs in their entirety; every human action.

Politics no longer answerable, the forms of social organisation of politics sacrifice, the immunisation of populations as a political project: well, what meaning does this have other than the auto-immunity of political systems? That is, it's no longer about the suppression of symptoms symptomatic to power but of political immunisation against those powers. They slide off, like the skins of images. So that the most obviously biopolitical plays into the freedom of politics from tragic necessity, from the tragic necessity of responsibility, plays as, slipping up on its own skin, comedy.

15 November 2021: subject matter

It appears that two principles are necessary: comedy and tragedy. Mobility and transcendence. Two types of drives: one conservative, the other expensive, or expansive. Two states of matter, or material subject: one bearing value; one exercising value; one bouncing off the other's steady offer. Yet we have seen this not to be the case since each is at war with itself, the comedian with her tragic nature and the tragedian who removes his mask at the end of that scene where he says, This is going to hurt you more than it hurts me.

We create from the war we wage with ourselves, don't we? It is a creative tension, and one we carry from birth, since it produced us and we are its issue. And, possibly, we will reproduce it in others, or in works. Pieces of work, in which others find resolved tension from the forces set in motion or from which they take relief.

The comedian refuses analysis because she doesn't want to look into her desperation, to find its source is *only that*, as we said earlier: it is the engine of the little peace of mind she gains upon a successful performance ... of pain. Without it, she's just not that funny. Then, like Hannah Gadsby, she finds a way to bring her pain into the performance and dares the audience to laugh. And notes their discomfort, and, with that recognition, they do.

All things head to entropy, heat loss. Entropy seems to have been a lot on people's minds recently, since physicists seem to have found its opposite

principle, in the *time crystal*. It is a system of, for, perpetual motion, and loses none of the energy it expends. The quantum parts of the time crystal simply bounce, in a state of movement which is also static, a stasis built on the quantum law of complementarity, of there being no love lost between us.

What time then does it occupy? since it would seem that a time crystal takes up no time. Or, rather, we have to do away with the spatial metaphors, and ask, Of what time is it the creation? The simple answer would be that it is the creation of a time of entropy, of heat loss.

Then is it no more complex than a reflection? than an image? since it allows us to see another universe, one to which we are opposed. A world of possibility: imagine this perpetual motion machine being the engine of a quantum computer. Its endless thought internal to its endless love of calculation. At no point does it say, I don't have the energy to fight anymore. I'm tired.

Isn't entropy exactly its infinite exhaustion? coupled with limitless creativity? On display: the most wonderful waste of time. No, stasis is not as we have thought, the lowest point of depression. A state approaching death. And it's not as if one type of drive has won, over another. Neither is it the bearer of value winning out over the exerciser, in symbolic exchange, say; nor is it the complementarity of legal principles. It is, as Agamben writes, civil war.

16 November 2021: subject matter

We've said that movement gives us immunity from the mobility of the surface, that movement immunises the community from a situation that seems a certain slide. But how are we to move? How, when the political will is absent, do we change course from this direction that is every direction at once? How, in a state of powerlessness, can we decide anything? We might recall here that impotence of having no consequence, a fact of the surface, stage, and also a subjective power, or, power of the subject.

Then, everything moving at once, as the Angel of History says, progress, how do we know true movement from this? How find, found, make, an authentic politics from the fakery of a politics without power? One that, by its own admission, can see heat death coming. And does nothing. Of which we say, it *can* not.

We don't know how to move but we can see it done. This has been part of our strategy: theatre can show us. The at-war-with-herself of the comic actor, what is she to do? The at-war-with-himself of the actor behind the tragedian's mask, what is he to do, ask himself, What have I done?! As Pound does, in the final Canto, in its most moving lines, where he writes, *Forgive what I have made*.

Examine thyself, and change, we are told. Not worth living otherwise. Yet shouldn't the one who tortures torture better? The one who fails, as Beckett says, fail? And the one who loves.

Change thyself, or choose the earth. This one. There is no other. Yet shouldn't the revolutionary conduct the revolution? And what will happen the day after? And the day after that? We are on this stage a short time. Seems a shame to slip on out without a struggle.

Yes, we have seen it done: the risking actor chooses for the tic and follows it to revolution. This is how movement happens. It doesn't happen, as you might think it might, by massing together the details that are our lives: it's not a snowball effect of achieving critical mass, pulling together the ingredients, the intellectual with the labourer, the charmer with the tactician.

The movement itself is a detail. And this is the question of scale. Because, in a dynamic system, or chaos, the possibility exists for any factor, for even the most minor, the smallest, for the minima we have said, to produce throughout the system change. The movement is a detail. It's not an accrete, the statistical aggregate of all the personal details which are our lives, which, we might say, is some of the reason we're stuck on the plane of this mobility: we're mobilised to ends, well, to *the* end, in this stasis. Civil war.

The detail is the movement of the principle, 'first mover,' that is, subject. Yet we imagine their aggregation, the accrete, of all of us, through a kind of social mediation, will produce the revolutionary subject. When the accrete is the swarm, Big Data, of all the details we provide, symbolic subjects, giving the metaphysical impression of a constantly mobile surface: that *comedy*! A swarm of ... no longer of pixels ... but forming a liquid crystal surface. Not the digital display screen: the playing-field of personal data. All true. Every single authenticity.

The risking actor is a false pretender who, with theatre with its depressed resources, finds it difficult to find employment ... I forgot to say why theatre's resources are depressed. There is a circle here formed by what a risking actor does, because it's not comedy. She's no comedian. He's just not funny, but quirky, dangerous, possibly mad.

Like the Zen master, he holds up his finger. Like the Zen master, his finger is no longer there. He has lopped it off, had it lopped off, found enlightenment.

She raises her finger. Repeats. It is as if the finger takes up the whole space. There she is, just staring at her finger. Her finger no longer there. Finger no longer there. Supported by the void. A movement. In this detail, this tic, whatever it is, everything is mobilised. From the war does not come peace, or more war, but a single movement. Subject. Singularity.

18 November 2021: subject matter

In tragedy: the violence of the resolute. In comedy, switchbacks galore: He is She, and I am You, and They are the Eggman. In tragedy also, the humour of the resolute, like a higher form of comedy.

The violence of resolution comes as a castration. But it is to Oedipus that it belongs: it has no consequence. It is to Oedipus that it corresponds should that violence choose for what selects itself, should it choose for what surfaces,

this selection being the narrowing down that the decision opens up. What presents itself is the necessary which must be risked.

The type of the selfish actor has her ova in one hand and his testicles in the other. And, casting them at the sky, curses the plague. As happens in a rather wonderful children's book called *Master Snick-up's Cloak*, which begins: *Once upon a time, it was the middle ages...*

A selfish actor believes it happens to her alone. Note how Oedipus pops his eyes, that might correspond to his balls. As if to say, we are always dealing with correspondences.

With the suppression by comedy it's not conflict that is suppressed. It is its resolution. Not the resolution of conflict, where all things shall be well, and you were just dreaming, but the violence of resolution is suppressed.

You might think this is difference. But difference is suppressed, in favour of the irresolvable: the involuntary identity that must resolve itself and must not resolve its differences with any other. Leading to the diverse and diversity.

No wonder theatre is depressed: it cannot agree if all that it agrees to is its castration, without the resolution of Oedipus. Without the resolute affirmation of Oedipus it will be said whatever risk, necessity, danger or sacrifice it may have held is in the past. Here comes the future. Where we must accept that whatever our actions they are without consequence. But they are ours. So we don't dare give them away for anything, let alone for nothing.

And it is for nothing that the stage stands. It is for nothing, when it is most effective, that a risking actor inoculates himself with the smallest gesture. By a detail just then surfacing, she takes the decision it is the minimum that will support her. And not burst.

19 November 2021: subject matter

Here the matter is the subject. The subject forms an inside. This is why we place it on a surface, why the surface is not fixed. Even into a theatre, it is not

fixed. It's not that theatre is the best way to produce subjects, or the best subject, the better subject being the one in whom movement can be induced. It's the best way, we think currently, to address the inside.

If the best subject is the one in whom movement can be induced this is because the subject is matter, a material fact, an atom. Although having said that we seem to be encouraging an atomic subjectivity that is potentially explosive. Our subject is the expression of that explosive potentiality, not its cause. That is, the explosion is on the outside and belongs to the outside. Then, expression does too: it goes to the outside, as if the subject exploded out of itself at the moment of creation.

The fact is, there is no itself from *before* which a subject could presuppose in order to be its expression. A subject therefore *wears* its explosion. And we can also say it is at this unbearable point the subject keeps itself. As if desiring to keep itself going, it follows the gesture it is, which we saw in the risking actor: she notices an involuntary movement in her body. It makes a difference to how she feels inside. It makes a difference to how she wants to walk, talk or resist.

For the beginning actor what came to bear on his gesture, the step out onto the void of the stage, or the silly expression he wore on his face, was the full weight of the institution. It was crushing, something crushing he knew he had to get past but that in doing so he would leave himself behind in some way. Knowing it vaguely, he pushed himself to try and perhaps perceived that ice cold moment of alienation from himself, where he became impersonal, an object or thing.

Now, he could at the point of self-alienation have clung on, or he could have let himself go. The danger of letting himself go was that at the very next moment, in the next movement, he might once more, at once, experience the sensation of complete impersonality, even to the point of experiencing it as evisceration. And at the next moment, and at the one after that.

It's not so simple as the risking actor being the one who takes the risk of feeling sliced open, over and over. The ice cold fear we might say. It's that a

risking actor is ahead of the blade. While a selfish actor opens her arms, and looking out, not down at the guts lying on the floor (because it is no more than a floor at this stage), she acknowledges that, like you, this is all she is. She basks in the acknowledgement, lets herself go in the recognition, a tear might even come to her eye. Yes, I am poor and human, and a human is a thing, and it is a material thing who stands before you, will you now strike me?

It is a challenge a selfish actor makes in her sacrifice. A risking actor makes do with an economy of means. These are not media, they do not mediate. They carry the war forward, an inch or two before the blade. So we can say it is a political move, this one: it does not require violence.

A risking actor does not economise on his movements. This is not how it works. He can go crazy, roll on the floor, climb another actor like a monkey, but the explosive actions in which he may engage are completely still inside. They are only crystallisations: an exploded view in exploded view. At the empty centre is a small piece of foreign matter, a hole in time, an outside, a window, through which he has quietly slipped.

20 November 2021: on movement

The static: civil war: it elicits a ... breach, that runs through society. It breaches, then runs in all directions at once. But this is to say that it surfaces. It surfaces as the mobile displacement of every certainty. It has that other meaning of static, white noise, and causes a superfluidity of motion, like the sea. Passes like a wave over the world, without resolving, so, also cloud-like. Vaporous. And intoxicating.

Static, it is the music that doesn't allow you to hear. Only in the last instance will it resolve into melody, in Bergson's terms, time. Yet at that instant, along comes a tragic figure, limping. And we should note that for Bergson there *are* no instants: we are always in the cloud, caught in the wave of time as duration, for as long as we can. So he supports this confusion: is it like the

thought severed from itself? or severed from potency? No, Oedipus chooses for just this type of displacement, just this type of mobility.

We must ask how things differ for us when everything is in this shifting cloud of abstraction which is more like a screaming hurricane or jet engine. The difference is that we are immobilised. In those beautiful lines from *La mort en direct*, Everything is of interest. And nothing matters. Enormous effort is expended on trying to make it matter again. This is unlike any will to power we have ever seen before. It is, as Houellebecq writes in the novel of the same name, atomised.

Each harbouring her little cut. Yes, I recognise it as a sexual image. And each his.

It will be a great relief to be able to use words again as they were intended: to enable movement. A similar relief was found, you recall, when we were talking of theatre people, about how, after the show, after the evisceration of it, happy or unhappy, about how great it was to have imposed on one the most ferocious violence of language, about how being called a cunt and a cock doubled for those organs one, happily or unhappily, had left or spilt on the stage. And this is in fact the way we have been using the language of theatre, without malevolence. To speak for movement, not on behalf of bodies, but to offer them some relief.

Another film: *My Dinner with Andre*. Wallace Shawn is speaking with Andre Gregory. He asks why the other gave up theatre. Gregory answers, Everybody got so good at acting in their everyday lives. Gregory, a theatre director, having given up theatre had initiated a new project he called a *hive*. Really just a dinnerparty where everybody turns up and we just see what happens.

With everybody so good at acting all the time, performing, as well as being their own (atomic) impressarios, *entrepreneurs of the self*, we experience humanity as an endless mobility. But not an open-ended one. Since each one is the end point. A stop.

And this is the word one cannot say. At least, it brings no relief to say it. Saying it is like plunging into the punctuation point at the end of a sentence.

Mobilities are of those old things, gender, race and class: the working class is on the move like never before and so has been the main victim of the various state-imposed lockdowns. Gender fluidity has been called by some performance, while those little words, the linguistic shifters, have become intransigent like never before, and we are asked to have our pronouns permanently assigned. Like smiles. Race and gender have most exercised the middleclasses even in the middle, exactly in the middle, of their crisis in values. When, perhaps, it gives relief from being squeezed. And when that class is empty, will the mobilities remain?

Yes, we are in the cloud of our own carbon emissions. Stumbling around and trying not to acknowledge how we falter. Seeking therapy not to make that acknowledgement. Or plastering over the cuts. When along comes Oedipus, not that old one we can thank for doing so much harm in the century before the last one. And not that Anti-One Deleuze and Guattari take out for a schizo stroll. This one solves the Sphinx's riddle. By choosing to walk with a faltering step, he (or she, or both, let's see) is two-legged, three-legged, and four-legged.

22 November 2021: on movement

We experience communication as bodiless, yet we feel it as movement. All those pleasures we feel from being communicated with, and all that pain: it is what makes us human, keeps us human, leads us to hope or wish to be. But isn't so wishing also to wish to be bodiless?

If there's a spiritual realm it belongs to communication. It doesn't belong to emotion, to our feelings. It causes them. And yet it is the authority we most invoke for their expression, which communication authorises, so is seen to be despotic in the prohibition of that expression, and, in granting it, beneficent

and even munificent.

Art's humanising task: to elevate through its emotional appeal, and its function: communication. To bring our emotions to their fullest expression, with communication in judgement of their truth: that is the aspiration to being human art sets in motion. This would be a function of language except that so little of what we say, or signal through language, arrives at communication. It rather tends to reinforcement, habits of expression, expressive habits.

Not until we reach custom, the customary, do we experience communication. That is: the coded. Codes of communication encode language as institution. And institutions are judged for their humanity on whatever values of truth they embody. That is: disembody. This value derives from its production, with the despot ruling its range and the munificent one to grant the fullest range of expression. That is, the codes of expression like those of behaviour are political avenues.

Zones of relative freedoms, they are relative to being a nobody without any right to express emotions, and without their having any claim on truth. Such a nobody opposes the spirit, is all body, and is less than human. Somebody who doesn't communicate is however thought to have a mental disorder before they are considered to have a communicative one, as in the case of autism.

Is emotional intelligence an intellectual capacity, an emotional one, or a communicative one? If it is a matter of communication, it is at once a question of institutional codes, of their humanising or dehumanising purpose. And of the role of art, the purpose of which is ... to be free: free in the sense of an always politically arbitrated, calibrated, conforming relativity.

And if art should wish to be free of politics? It should accede to the highest form of humanity. And in its disembodyment, participate in the spiritual economy of communication.

23 November 2021: on movement

Our irony is not reserved to that which dismisses the body, to the pretension to spirituality, spirit, spiritualism or art, but to an automatism that is that of the general economy and of the cognitive-behaviourist brain. Boys, don't they? tend to add to their toys an active component. Girls, I've seen, tend to add to them a social component.

Imagine the appeal of the toy that had both! The social economy is such a readymade—the readymade of social stereotypes and of their mobilisation in institutional codes. (And, of course, the readymade of gender stereotypes, social performativity, and the fluidity of roles: that whole theatre, where transitions of scenes are transitions of subjects, meaning, their production.)

The problem with a generally mobilised social economy is not that it exists. It's not even that it's a product such as engenders the commodification of social identities, stereotyping from the given material by a supplemental material, which, if we are sticking with the theatre metaphor, we can call symbolic. (Or phallic.) Its problem is that of already having been activated and socialised. That is, what's a boy to do? What's a girl to? Here is the repertoire—again, the theatrical metaphor—you are the supplement. Yet: you do not get to add the active component; and you do not get to add the social component. In other words, You're it.

I seem to be speaking indirectly about social media. Not entirely the case: by general or a generally mobilised social economy I am referring to the mobilisation in the social of the economy, the *socialising* of economic drivers, capital as data, and, data as capital, to the rendering of the economy as social. It goes both ways.

Yes, we can see the boys excited on the floors the stock exchange. And the girls rising through the managerial ranks by virtue of their social intelligence. (Or emotional intelligence.) But they are such for having been reciprocally produced by the economic supplanting the social and the social supplanting general political economy.

When we ask what is to be done we can see we are doing everything we can: flowing in all directions. This is what the code allows, which Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* call the axiom of capital: a double parasitism or double ventriloquism. Am I speaking for myself here?

Do I really believe it? Well, yes, of course: what other cause could there be for giving rise to so many misunderstandings? All I want to be is clear about this: and immediately disown every word I have written.

How to eke out our little bit of world? our little patch of earth, as Deleuze and Guattari also write, when across its surface there is this general semiotic dispersal? We should note in this word, semiotic, both seeds and atoms; and note a change in register, or atmosphere. If there are still enough of the primary elements, if there are still enough atoms making them up, still enough air to breathe, the right amount of warmth, enough water, and sufficient soil, the seeds are subjects: that is, they contract these elements. Their *coming-to-life* is not so important as this.

Some time ago, we stated that there seem to be two principles. We were not concerned with their mediation but by the contracting power of what contracts them, which we have identified to be a subjective power. A subjective power is at work contracting elements of social economy, just as a subjective power is at work in the misunderstanding synthesising the meaning of these words. Such is the bad habit of being human: to focus on the mediation as the moving part.

24 November 2021: on movement

We are dealing with two different notions of movement. The one we have described both as mobility which we are subject to, and as comedy; the other we see to be static, a suppressed tragedy: that is, the human comedy subjects us, as its subjects, no others, to this tragedy. We have gone further to say the whole surface is mobilised, giving the impression, metaphysical, or symbolic, we too are. Then, we don't seem to be able to do anything about it. Neither do

we know how to go about ourselves. In the effort to keep up, we mobilise these material supplements called identities. And they produce, without seemingly producing effects, unless we count in their effects our greater subjection.

To these two different notions of movement belong two different temporalities: but we ought pause here, since our own doubling is doubling, and we are entering the general economy two-by-two. What lies behind the two is the break over which synthesis occurs, materially, and is either passive or active. To say over is to give it height. This the synthesis does not possess. It possesses no purview, no point of survey. Although... there exist infinite points of survey, or, as Raymond Ruyer would have it, infinite forms.

The forms would be those gestures Kirkkopelto talks of, in the smallest of which there is a world. A world not in movement already, we should add. We might also add that the mobility of the surface is upheld by the void just as the movement is, as a stepping out onto it. That is, the void supports the world; the world comes to be in the subject: the subject is that of survey, but not, as Ruyer puts it, *absolute* survey.

The distinction between passive and active appears to indicate motority and production, its activity, the component in our boy identity we like to add, and, in passivity, being subject, mobilised, pushed around and in the flow, the component of sociality, or gregariousness, that in our girl identity we like to add. How do then differences in subjects occur except by movement or being moved? Or: is passivity a subjective power, like activity? It is. And sages have called it the greater. Think of the Dao and the position of water, and its power.

Materials make a difference. Two notions of movement; two temporalities; and two types of materials contracted in and by the subject: are not all of them produced by some activity? set in play on some economic level? Let us return to the stone, the stone Heidegger says is poor in world. We can imagine it a dark and black theatre, as belonging to a poor theatre.

The 'activity' such as it is is internal, plays inside the stone and in a measure of time that is very very slow. Yet in its externality we are able to immediately discern crenelations, fissures, irregularities, ruptures, texture. Brittleness, flakiness, friability—don't these rather belong to items which are manmade? As in some drug dream, images fly off from manmade surfaces, phantasmata. To this drug dream there is a temporality of dilations and extreme accelerations.

The stone or the water is passive yet carries its temporality as a force within it that it expresses on its outside, of which its outside is the expression. Two things are happening here, one passive, the other active. Both are powers of the subject: and yet there is another, time. This is time as an edge that passes over things, goes through them, informing them throughout: we have the three, and in time its completion, the completion Heidegger only saw. He didn't see the stone's extradimensionality, its fractional activity and its fractal passivity.

25 November 2021: on movement

The complete entity is complete in time. It has come to pass that it is; it has come to time: it comes to pass. It doesn't pass but it remains a fact of the present, so that having passed away, its passing away is also complete.

If we think of the passing of events on the stage we are not dealing with a representation of time and if a representation is given, such that we say, Once upon a time it was the middle ages..., it enters into time. As Bergson writes, this is a subjective time; and here it seems equated with dream. The whole dream passes and we can recall its events in memory, or the events have not been substantial enough that we do recall them. Or we are not one of those people who can recall dreams.

Perhaps this is why Badiou wants us to chat in the interval, wants the interval for us to chat in, so that we replay the events shown, each hearing in the other's interpretation a subjective take on the events of the play. Another play

is going on right there. We might ask the other to describe the events she saw if our own interpretation radically diverges: If you think it *means* that, what happened, in fact? ... Oh, I didn't see that!

Yes, yes: it was clear. He took her hand and grimaced. Disgusted.

Are we awakening from the dream or extending it into lived reality? And wouldn't a discussion like this, a small *contretemps*, have a political dimension we might want to encourage? Surely the reason Badiou's an advocate for the interval.

We are not yet ready to concede to the other's opinion, however, and should we, does it matter much? Should we become ardent, it's enough to go on an online forum to have our views dissed. In other words, minds already made up or minds changed, there is simply the mobility of opinion, in a swathe of subjective positions through which it might not be impossible but is hardly worth it to cut.

And we might ask, where is the cut, since that has been out theme; and where the movement? since the movement is its contraction, before it is its issue. But we can't really relate it to a birth contraction, or to a birth. Nothing is yet alive. Well, not in the ordinary sense.

For the issue, for what matters, what we think matters over political chitchat, a difference is synthesised into a divergence. And the subject object is the issue. Or the theatre writing. So its not, a bit from here, a bit from there; your view against mine: nah, mate, you're dreaming! This is how it was. Let's then agree not to.

Neither is it like this in material synthesis, where there is complementarity without agreement. Complementarity is not supplemented in the completion of a kind of prosthesis to the argument, of a kind of a waving dick, as it were. This isn't the time we enter into; and it's not because we're in the thick of it that we don't see it, that it's *in process*.

Progress has no truck with dreams. Neither, really, does becoming an other. So are we witnessing movement? or the birth of movement? Or the movement of a differential?

26-27 November 2021: on movement

It has become a commonplace, the initially critical claim for the divided subject, invoking Rimbaud, or, better, Pessoa: I am bursting with others. In our agreement we lose sight of the division, and—await the explosion, or sense the slow leak, as the meanings, feelings, dynamisms and intensities leak out of us. Or, otherwise, we are forced into a condition of having to agree. These freedoms are no more and no less than differentials of movement. They are minima. And we should conserve our energies.

What we are called on to accept is the production of a subjection as a complete entity, such that the completion occurs: being is what happened. This is the view of time we have from the state of the surface we have ascribed to its mobility. So, what is the entity? What entity has survey over this concept of time?

Here time is full. It is full forever. Never trickling in from the future. Never flooded by the past. Being full, we get the impression of immobility; or, it presses on us: time is the constantly taut surface of a time under pressure.

Virilio talks of the pressure exerted on time by speed. Everything speeds up, is in competition for time, and so exerts a global pressure. The squeeze is on, for the earth and its resources. He calls this the dromosphere. An atmospheric pressure.

How is the impression static? when the surface is in motion? because we are talking of two distinct systems. It appears one leads to the other, that global mobility leads to stasis. Or is there an error of levels here? since what applies to the individual cannot be said, except in hyperbole, to apply to the globe. That is, my impression of immobility owes nothing to dromospheric pressure.

But it is this creation of a globe which is completed in time, in one of them, in the time of the anthropocene.

Knowledge is this accumulation. We may concede it to be incomplete but it is under pressure to be complete. Not the past pressing up against the present, drawing from it a form incommensurable with its antecedents, in Bergson's phrase, knowledge, complacent or despairing, neither despairs of its form nor, think of science, is not pleased with its results, and think of where these press. They press on the future, giving us the sense of it being an accomplished fact, one that human knowledge is sufficient to, or, inducing in us a false humility, insufficient. Philosophy has come to seem chiefly concerned with our reassurance.

Being is this accumulation, in a terminal time. Catatonia, as we have said, in all the parts that matter: stasis. The static system is not the one arresting movement, or giving us the feeling of arrest in time. It is rather the system coupling in us speed and stasis, at least as they are formed in impression, where we see everything moving too fast and ourselves stuck.

The problem is not to introduce movement into a static system or to arrest time. We want to allow movement from being stuck. We want to be pulled out of time, or the current temporal arrangement, why many turn to the sacred. It is into association with the sacred that we might bring the notion of sacrifice: both cut into temporality: they go outside, go by way of the outside.

The problem is physical not spiritual. It is one of physics, or, physics' problem that it can't get outside. It can't leave its theatre of operations. Laruelle, in proposing a nonphilosophy, has said the same of philosophy; but he then goes about refilling the glass that he has emptied. The mystic knows emptying to be endless, until we have removed the glass.

Having said the problem is physical, then it's clearly one of bodies. Perhaps too many bodies. As in Aristotle's injunction to avoid the unnecessary multiplication of characters. Or, is it in an atomisation of performing bodies

that we have exploded onto the screen: the necessary articulation of technological advancement, of information technology?

I once thought it was this. I don't think so anymore. I think it's this: the inside can fill up. And we are still inside.

We have been concerned with movements of the inside, the movement that is the event of the subject. We've said it to consist of minima, a slight gesture, or even a hesitancy, either an active decision or not: an active decision is still a build-up of passive ones, just as the nonstatic system, the system of mobility, can lead to stasis—but in the other direction. That is, it is unidirectional: we might reconsider what kind of freedom lies in this direction: if it belongs to space, it is of external freedom of movement; if it belongs to time, it is of internal freedom, to choose that which happens. So, in a sense, the active leads back to the passive.

29 November 2021: on movement

The brain selects items for action. It is not, for Bergson, for knowledge and does not select to *know*. It already practices an economy. Economising as a part of the system of perception, the brain is like any other organ in this respect: it synthesises problems of the outside.

If we know anything at all it's out of habit: Hume's insight, from which Deleuze gains the syntheses of habit. What then is synthesised, or contracted, from habits as problems of the outside? The brain takes this to be information. It takes syntheses of habit as items for action as well. Yet they are the products of habit.

That the syntheses of habit are products of habit as well, and are synthesised for action, makes that action general. Although divided into institutions, like institutional knowledge, institutional systems of representation, structures of cognition and grammars for recognition, the general action is indivisible. It performs an indivisible mobility, engaging the whole surface in movement so

as to perpetuate its symbolic economy. That is, products of habit form another economy concerned with their symbolic reproduction with institutions to take care of their symbolic production.

Perhaps for the reason of the syntheses of habit being largely concerned with a symbolic economy, for Deleuze the brain is a sign signal system. As for Bergson, however, it is not for cognition and not to represent to itself that the brain and system of perception are geared, for example, representing to itself the problems of knowledge or cognition, which it would then act to process and contend with resolving. For Deleuze, the sign consists of a problem and the signal is an action.

Symbols, as matters of habitual synthesis, are still subjects of action and meanings are actions. Yet, what other meaning can they have but that acquired from habit? And, what may be parsed from these words but the syntheses of habit?

The issue is not that of bringing new meanings or a new meaning to light. Neither is that of naming this brain the false one and that one the true, the symbolic economy the secondary, or the brain of artificial creation, and the perceptual economy, the sensible one, primary and of natural creation. We are still talking of theatre and there is still the selection of subjects and for movement.

The issue is how to move in the crowd of subjective apprehensions. How to move when their alignment, the alignment of their outsides, is given by the misapprehension of symbolic actions, on a surface mobilised overall by the habitual syntheses of others. And what is movement when it is no more than the connectivity of outsides in their symbolic interplay, already, all over. The issue is, what is doing the work of the brain now it is no longer selecting items for action, for symbolic production, but the technological means, for the reproduction of habitual syntheses, that is doing the work of selection?

30 November 2021: on movement

Clarification might be needed. Clarification is always needed, not necessarily to avoid confusion. And not necessarily to avoid the confusion of what we have called misapprehensions around symbolic connectivity. Clarification is not needed in the way of a clearing made and for there to be communication. Clarification is always needed to let in a little air. ...Although, the question of air is immediately perilous: how polluted is it?

First, it seems, we must clear the air. We must clear the air of what we have done to it. But look at us.

We have this pretense we speak the same language. We come to the same point on the page, presupposing we're on the same page. A sentence runs out of breath.

And, with an intake of air, we start again. At least, we try to. What for?

What for, if not to be understood, to have clearly before us... and to ask for clarification... of the subject...? Or should it be, simply to connect? Yes, to connect fills me with apprehension. Does it you?

I mean, as if clarification were necessary, I am filled with apprehension about the task at hand, or would be, were it, if it is, for the sake of connection. Those office minds who say, You can't write a book that noone will read! It's like they're infected with business.

You can't *eschew* connection. Unless you at once admit—and commit to it—that you have a pathology; that you have concurrently undergone. We all feel a *little* that way *sometimes*.

How much?! How much is it just about breathing? And here clarification would mean a little life. Not such a big demand. *Life seeking to expend its energies...* as Nietzsche writes.

Alphonso Lingis, Al. Are you there? In a beautiful passage you are standing at a supermarket checkout counter. You are in a country where you don't

understand the language—just like us?—and you have gone there in the vacation, in a break from academic life.

You have bought the plane ticket you could afford. Your criteria were *preferably* a country where I neither speak, nor understand the language, and price. You don't mind spending your whole pay, to be somewhere where you have never been before. Perhaps it's Mongolia.

In front of you in the checkout queue is a woman. I think she has a coat on, and right now you wished you'd worn something warmer. She doesn't look to see what's in your basket. She doesn't look you up and down, assessing what you're wearing, or say You're not from around here are you. She looks you in the face and in her eyes you see a spark of recognition. Before saying a word, that anyway you wouldn't understand, not giving you a chance to shrug apologetically in incomprehension, you both break out laughing.

What sort of connection is that? It is one of mutual recognition but recognition of a minimal intent: you and she both intend to go on breathing, are both in this climate, which isn't exactly hot. You'll each need to eat at some point, and take a drink. Isn't that why you came to the supermarket? And now you're both standing in this checkout queue, seeing each other for the first time and recognising in each other the minimal elements, the minimal requirements of life.

It's not a need or a desire you recognise. It's an imperative you each see in the other, and recognise. Like a spark that each in the other you would shelter with your hands. And so you burst out laughing.

If I should seek to clarify this, it's in that spirit: what is it at stake in the symbolic? And why 'symbolic'? Wouldn't a better word be semiotic? seeing as how Guattari writes about the present phase of capitalism being a *semiotisation*, and this semiotisation permeating social life, suffocating it?

What I have in mind is that the signs semiotics studies have a gestural part, a working part, which Guattari also calls *asignifying*. He is theorising a

semiotics of the asignifying that for us is caught up in, is the gesture. You recall it: that gesture of which the smallest is a world.

Having a gestural part the signs, produced, reproduced through, as Guattari writes, semiotisation as the current form of capital, can be taken to be symbolic gestures, gestures with a symbolic, mythic quality, invested gestures. What Guattari calls the asignifying part, the gesture, puts the sign to work in a way that is symbolic, mythic. Causing it, the gesture-sign-symbol, to be invested, is *what is at stake in the symbolic*. That is, desire.

The question of the symbolic is: what then are the myths animating desire, in the current era of its semiotisation? It is in service of these myths that there is and will be symbolic production and reproduction. We know the prompting, eliciting of desire to serve production, through something which is called consumption, but that through its semiotisation has become significant, has become sign and is sign-production, or straightforward production. The asignifying and the signifying work together, in the symbol.

Yet there has to be a will to desire. For it is required a myth of the personal. For it the myth is the personal, where we can ask such questions as, Should we abandon desire? As if it is ours to be taken on its word or to be given away.

1-4 December 2021: on movement

The distinction we would make is not that between illusion and reality, or, as Deleuze does, between the virtual-intelligible and the actual-sensible which proceeds from it. And we are in no place to impugn artificiality, the artificiality of symbols, say, and praise the naturalness of stones. But here is the difference: the myth of the stones is charming and remarkable; the myth of symbols is always at our expense. So we would distinguish the artifice, art, illusion, the nothingness of thought and the public or private virtue, from that artifice, art, illusion, appearance of the sensible, and actual public, private and subjective powers which use the myth to maintain their power, their power and our subjection.

The power has to be doubted that needs to enlist myth in its support. And this is the strategic task we are engaged in here; not to distinguish good myth from bad: perhaps, more adequately, good theatre from bad, although the formula rests on a moral distinction. We should ask how symbolic myth makes us indebted, how it takes away from our enjoyment of life, social and individual, if this question were not already substantially answered by Marx: it does so through the medium of capital.

The change I think which has occurred from Marxist analysis is that the mobilisation of capital has led to the mobility of the medium itself. It has metastasised. From it come the metastases of the manmade, that is, the symbolic form as a subject of synthesis. This is what we have talked about in terms of synthesis contracting or synthesising symbolic entities, but we can perhaps see it more clearly in the metastases of for example plastics in the environment: the synthesis which is of plastic particles in living flesh.

Plastic—not a symbol, you will say: yes, but a commodity: the commodity form is the symbol-thing and, converting one into the other, makes them completely reversible. The non-fungible token is so through the fungibility of thing-person-signature-sign-and-symbol as an economic unit. We can't attack mobility directly, however, and will have recourse to the symbolic reference, not in the thing, person, author, artist, meaningful sign referred to, but in the myth.

Movement changes the subject, moves it from where it has been fixed by an established power. Establishing power are what we had as three subjective powers. These have their use to power and are its founding principles, for as long as they are animated by another world, since they are at once mythic principles.

Symbols turn to face them, and we gain from these the sense of our own desire being animate, autonomous and automatic: our own desire is animated, given autonomy, becomes automatic by virtue of subjective powers made founding principles, establishing and emblazoning their power, maintaining subjection as that that we have chosen for, the three myths. They are, of a

structural economy, identity, and just causation. The latter we had formerly identified, specifically because of its symbolic character, with a *poor excuse*.

How are these founding myths? To take the second, identity: it describes the personalisation of desire. If we consider ourselves compartmentalised, this part human, this other part too, that one sexual human, then over here, a human consciousness, a social unconscious that is human, then, in part deriding all the parts, and ruling over them regardless, no, not the limbic system, but desire, the system of desires distributing the parts, accounting for them: why am I like this? because of desire.

It was instilled in me. And, therefore, like a genetic inheritance, it is what I must choose. But is this the choice in which we found for a kind of freedom?

No. The movement here is all inside. A full inside. A bound inside, bound to oneself, and, in this way, what one is bound to do.

If Oedipus has any part in power, it is here. What we have in the myth of desire being a governing principle is not *it was always like this* but *I am a fraud*. And with all the more avidity, I will bind myself up in a destiny, not the brave destiny of Oedipus, but one of auto-oedipalisation. What else can I do?

I am bound to do nothing other than choose the soft-furnishings over the hard. And shift them around the deck, like private prostheses publicly displayed. Making myself comfortable, or, practicing austerity, faced with the inevitable.

The law of desire is binding inasmuch as it cleaves to the stage and is obedient to it. However, due to the mobility of the surface, auto-oedipalised immobility, in stasis, follows the mob—traversing desire at once in every direction. We should listen to that ‘at once’ because it is a clue to there being a static time, a time of war, of drama and movement. We don’t tend to hear it, or listen to it without hearing it. As if we don’t want to hear its judgement.

Instead the misapprehensions of the crowd, travelling in every direction, as we have said, at once, go to the individual. And the self is groundless. Or these are bits of the self demanding synthesis, demanding its contraction, of which

it is no longer capable. They go to the self *inside it*. We have also claimed theatre to be a good way of addressing the inside.

The mobile swarm of public opinion, symbolically expressed, with the mobility of signs, across the void, out onto which, sooner and later, an individual steps, fill the space. We might consider space here to signify a time, and this temporality to occupy a pure spatium. But what do we do with all these *signs*, gestures, symbolic of the mythic constructions of others?

We attempt their synthesis. Hence the pulling apart of the self, its fragmentation occurs according to a time, on the timeline traced along the surface: to live each day. To endure the at times unendurable passage of the hours. Cleaving to the stage, its surface escaping us, leaving signs the only mark of passage. Down to minutes, seconds, microseconds, nanoseconds, a metastatic time: this time corresponds to the mobility of the surface, a temporality where the movement of subjects in which every bit of time is synthesised is indiscernible and there is only speed: a temporality of the metastases of synthesis. And no longer audible is the clicking of tongues, but a human hum.

5 December 2021: on movement

Why is there misapprehension? is it out of malevolence? Is it out of malevolence your signals are misunderstood? that they are taken for meaning something far away from your actual desire? And the desired meanings, they have somehow been wrested from you.

Now they are being used to control you, so you should suppress them. You really ought to exercise self-control. And is it with a kind of malevolence then that you turn on yourself, practice austerities on your own libidinal economy, at least inasmuch as the messaging is concerned? And isn't it with sadness you look at the comments, take literally the feedback, which might not be unkind, might be of the kindest sort and might have the best intentions behind

it, but feeds back by a closed loop into the structured economy of your identity, exercising a control which becomes a suppression?

Must suppress internal difference, you don't think it, you do it. Especially the most internal difference of all, sexual difference is given over to the comedy of mistaken identity. That is, it is identified with the symbol for it, with which one should, such is its morality, identify oneself.

Fraudulence—what is its source? Well, in play are the symbols, each one of which, like the smallest gesture, expresses a world. But what has happened to the choice of world? What has happened to its decision? And what has happened to the cut?

It's a craze, a frenzy, we have said, and a froth, buried under layers and layers of similarly mobile surfaces. A metastasis, we have named it, belonging to a metastatic temporality. For each particle of the subject, all the human parts are instantaneously reassembled. And the sign itself is left outside, so each one, static on its surface, is like a doughnut. Each expands with such rapidity, internalising its outside, the hole, externalising structure, so avid for expansion, it goes unnoticed. The misapprehension of the crowd is like a yeast working from the outside and froth of oil slicking and lubricating the surface of the public comedy, the local slapstick.

Each has these three mythic parts... then why misapprehension? because the symbolic is exactly that which cannot grab hold of them, only gesture towards them, either inwards or outwards, centrifugally or centripetally ...having the structure of a subjective economy: this goes for the whole socius; identity, given the economising motif of its lack, its *in-the-hole*-ness; and a toroidal, or doughnut-shaped feature of completion and continuity, throughout society: the famous circular economy. The famous circular economy stands here for the myth. The myth stands for the foundation. This is human in that it feeds back, to the extent that power here is circular.

Misapprehension, the flaw in the myth, goes from crowd to individual.

Individual is mobilised. But this does not account for the *apprehension* of, the

feeling of *not being understood*, that, introjected, spirally, becomes, *I am a fraud*. We might here be describing false consciousness, reinscribing the individual into the ideological state apparatus, except that what we are describing is the object of it, its outside. Where? ...the hole... and if we could only join up, not the fatty tissue of inflating yeasty dough suspended in bubbly grease, but the holes, we should see fissures and cracks start to form.

Going from the crowd into the individual, in fact, all shame is from the social institution. The very same can be said of the foundation myth. So there is shame in marriage in the same way as there is shame in the self. Shame in theatre: we have seen before, in the beginning actor, in her hesitancy and indecision, as to *what to do*; but more powerfully in the confusion of the audience with the action onstage.

In the consciousness of one's shame being asked to participate, or being required to, by the direction the show has been taken in, one is like anybody before, we might say, the law. But such is the mythic law, the human, and the sad; and not the natural law that would address why it is we are made sad by what should make us happy. In the unhappy consciousness, shame, turning-away, self-suppressing, desexualising at the same moment it auto-oedipalises, we see human consciousness being, acting like the rehearsal for public shaming, turning away, and so on. And, yes, this is its role, given the shape of the symbolic and thrice-greatest foundation myth that is subtractive with being contracted, signed up for the social contract. That this is its role public misapprehension implies, from which private shame draws its inference.

Yet, if the role of consciousness can be seen to be *in rehearsal* its place is in the invisible work, and the *inaudible*. Being overheard here on the little stage of the self, the void which makes up that hole, comes before structure, the structure of character, the role, the play, the show and self-display. It prepares it and comes before the production. Only confusion would lead one to invite an audience in to hear one's private thoughts, and then to take a seat among the spectators. This human participation would be the opposite direction to go in if we want to avoid shame, sadness and misunderstanding.

Should we want to increase joy we might respect the process, attend to the production in ourselves of what is not yet a human subject, overhearing the animal cries and invisible vegetative states, the stony stares, of us, and move from one to an other. We can move by way of fractions, degrees of difference: time fractures the natural surface, it is fractal. In movement, changing the subject, the myth may be undone; because, in turn, founding the myth, we have the dream of being human: to which art is antidote.