

Ordinary Possessions¹

or

Possession as the root to everything human

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Close to the Butoh approaches, in terms of material imaginations or rather imaginations of the matter, of course I always had Bachelard's beard above my shoulder. But I now have even more, since J. Karl Bogartte was kind enough to inadvertently drive my nose on [Malcolm de Chazal](#)...

“Puisque l'eau est totalement détendue et que, dans le même courant, aucun de ses gestes n'est contraint et empesé, puisque l'eau est la simplicité absolue, l'aisance même, et puisqu'on ne peut simplifier ce qui est déjà l'essence du simple, pour "découvrir" l'eau donc, il nous faut trouver autre chose. Et cette autre chose -- cette condition essentielle -- c'est *d'ajouter* à l'eau, comme on ajoute à une substance une autre substance pour provoquer une réaction et la "révéler". Et ce réactif qu'on ajoute à l'eau pour la découvrir, c'est *soi-même* qu'on intègre à l'âme de l'eau, de la façon suivante. L'homme qui voit couler un cours d'eau oubliera après un certain temps qu'il est lui, et se sentira peu à peu "devenir" l'eau qui coule --- faisant siens les gestes de l'eau elle-même, comme l'amoureux s'abolit dans le visage aimé et pense et agit les moindre gestes de son visage jusqu'à ce sentir disparu au sein de la vie d'un autre, englouti et comme fondu dans sa substance. Cette intégration, qui est tout le contraire du narcissisme, nous fera bientôt "penser eau", "agir eau", "vivre eau", nous mettant forcément peu à peu dans un autre vase de connaissance, sur un autre plan de vie, sur un autre degré de conscience..."

Malcolm de Chazal - *La Vie Filtrée* Pages 88-89 - Collection Imaginaire Gallimard - Gallimard 1949

"Since water is totally relaxed and since, in the same current, none of his gestures is constrained and² starched, since water is absolute simplicity, since it is ease itself, and since we cannot simplify what is already the essence of the simple, to "discover" the water, we must hence find something else. And this other thing - this essential condition - is to *add* to water, as one adds a substance to another substance to provoke a reaction and to "reveal" it. And this reagent, added to water to discover it, is yourself that you incorporate into the soul of water, in the following manner. The man who sees a watercourse running will forget after a while that he is himself, and he will gradually feel like the water flowing - making the gestures of the water itself, like the lover abolishes himself in the beloved face and thinks and acts the slightest gesture of her face until he

1 - What is meant by "possession" throughout this text is possession in a kind of voodoo sense. However the target of this text is to remove the associated phenomenon from the realms of esoterism and religions and to show that it is a normal feature of the human mind.

2 - An expression that is quite close to Taoism (Stuart Inman)

disappears in the life of another, engulfed and melted into her substance. This integration, which is quite the opposite of narcissism, will soon make us "think water", "act water", "live water", putting us inevitably little by little in another vase of knowledge, on another plane of life, on another degree of consciousness... "

In this page by Malcolm de Chazal, there is more than surrealism. There is a deep connection with [Butoh](#) and the *possession* experiments that are a part of Butoh without really being a part of surrealism that most often only approaches possession from the outside. It is also connected with the myths and associated songs in which two rival wizards successively transform themselves into different animals, plants or things, and vie.

Not only some aspects of the possession phenomena that are part of Butoh can be found in Malcolm de Chazal, but they are even connected to dancing in De Chazal's text as well...

« Tous les gestes de la nature se résument en un mouvement de danse. [...] Ainsi, tout mouvement imprimé à l'eau fait s'animer tout d'abord la *danse première* comme un tout -- danse première existant déjà en principe-essence dans l'eau, étant le point de départ même de la forme de l'Informé. Aussi le mouvement de danse dans l'eau est-il double : la *danse première* qui, dans l'Informé, lui a imprimé une forme-essence, et la *danse secondaire* qui, telle une enveloppe de danse autour d'un noyau-danse, fait danser l'eau comme un tout et fait redanser en lui-même le "coeur de danse" de l'eau, qui est son mouvement pivotal et initial, sa danse primaire... »

Malcolm de Chazal - La Vie Filtrée P72-73 - Collection Imaginaire Gallimard - Gallimard 1949

"All the gestures of nature can be summed up in a dance movement. [...] Thus, every movement given to water makes the first dance come alive, first of all as a whole - the first dance already existing as principle-essence in water, being the starting point of the form of the Informed. So the dance movement in the water is twofold: the first dance which, in the Informed, has given a form-essence to it, and the secondary dance which, like a dance envelope around a nucleus-dance , makes the water dance as a whole and makes dance again in itself the "dance heart" of the water, which is its pivotal and initial movement, its primary dance... "

But we also know that this connection between dance and possession is by no way restricted to Butoh nor to De Chazal's perception, but is widely spread among the peoples that were not contaminated by Abrahamic religions.

Yet Butoh actually appears to mask something that Malcolm de Chazal rightly points out. And it is that *possession is not a state of exception* which would be linked to the always somewhat spectacular movements of the trance. It is actually the *normal* state of Malcolm de Chazal at the very moment when he writes. And it's ours too when we read him - at least to the extent that we accept to share his state of mind in order to understand what he writes.

[add another quote here where De Chazal explains his own state of mind when writing]

However, we all consciously experienced such possession states when we were children. We all knew this "*doing as if*" in all its depth and intensity :

« L'enfant apprend beaucoup plus par son jouet que par mille formes de conversations -- son jouet : ce premier des points de départ de sa pensée, lieu où il commença en premier à *inimager*, puis à *imaginer*, car par cette limitation de son champ visuel que crée l'instinct possessif, l'enfant se cloître par son jouet à un champ restreint de pensée, et, ne pouvant transporter d'autres images dans ce bibelot limité, l'enfant est forcé d'y mettre du sien et *d'imager* en plein centre de lui-même, de se "transplanter" dans son jouet, de faire des constructions de son propre esprit et de son propre moi dans cette piste fermée de la vie, terrain subitement muré contre les images du dehors ».

Malcolm de Chazal - *La Vie Filtrée* P58 - Collection Imaginaire Gallimard - Gallimard 1949

"The child learns much more through his toy than through a thousand forms of conversation - his toy: this first of the starting points of his thought, where he first began to inimage and to imagine, because by this limitation of his visual field created by the possessive instinct, the child encloses himself by means of his toy into a restricted field of thought, and, being unable to carry other images in this limited trinket, the child is forced to put something of his own self in his toy and to imagine in very the center of himself, to "transplant" himself inside of his toy, to make constructions of his own mind and of his own self in this closed track of life, a ground suddenly walled against the images of the outside".

While Malcolm de Chazal rightly points out an important phenomenon, critically important because it lightens the way our minds are progressively built, I disagree with some aspects of his interpretation...

The first one is the role or function of what he calls the child's "possessive instinct" in the whole process. He should actually know better because in the quotes above about water, he makes clear, by pushing aside narcissism, that the mind when possessed by the spirit of water is obviously no longer haunted by his own self, much less by any sort of possessive instinct at all. Rather the opposite.

The second issue I have with De Chazal's interpretation is the need that the child would specifically have to dive into "a ground suddenly walled against the images of the outside". The child has to do that not because he is a child, but quite simply because he is a human being. To the extent that we wish to invest a given object or being by means of our spirit, from within ourselves, whatever our age may be, we all have to dispossess ourselves from the grip of the outside world in order to let ourselves be possessed by the object or the being in question.

[and that is also made clear in the quote about water]

The third problem that De Chazal's formulation raises for me is : what is the goal of this mental possession game that children play within themselves when they are left alone and even when playing with other children ? Such an activity is so typical and so frequent that it has to fulfill some sort of important function from a biological point of view or from the point of view of human biology. *What do children actually learn this way ?*

My own answer would be that they do not learn anything specific *except doing what they do*, that is, letting themselves be possessed by things around them, in order to put a mental grasp

on these things and become capable of anticipating, of guessing the future behavior of these things or of these beings. While the objects chosen to exercise this sort of skill are of no importance - "just toys" - the process itself is of critical importance...

A few years ago, a television show showed paleolithic hunters tracking animals in their environment. While some of them, being superstitious, tried to get the good graces of the local hunting spirits by means of magical practices, others did not, but all of them used their ability to let themselves be possessed by the spirit of the animals they hunted in order to guess where their preys were going and where they were hiding.

If such abilities have been critical for the survival of mankind for hundreds of thousands of year, one can be sure that they are still critical in obvious, although concealed, ways in our daily life.

This may be made clearer based on a story that I witnessed in the -- so said -- very realm of logics : software development.

About 15 or 20 years ago, IBM managers in the software development area decided to react about the great, unpleasant and above all *costly* numbers of errors left within computer software programs. After some inquiries they found an efficient way to remove errors from newly developed software by setting up what they called an "Inspection system".

The process consisted in having several programmers cross re-read their software code in order to identify problems and errors. By registering the number of errors found per thousands of lines of code and making statistics based on these registered figures, they proved that these inspection practices were much more efficient in terms of error removal than traditional testing the software itself. The word "inspection" sounding quite nastily to developers' ears, these practices were later renamed "Peer Reviews", a wording more common in the field of scientific research and publishing.

The company I was working for at that moment decided to set up the same type of peer review process, but the average number of defects per thousand lines of code detected in our firm by means of peer reviews were way below the figures announced by IBM. We hence asked some ex-engineers from IBM to study the reason why we had such poor figures.

After a couple of hours spent by our american experts on studying our practices, they finally told us that we had to *speak out* our code, *interpret* it like in a theater play, otherwise our peer review process would remain weak and almost useless.

Being already aware at that moment how the paleolithic hunters used to perform while hunting, my personal (and secret) conclusion was that we had to reach a point where we would feel to some extent *possessed* by our software code.

Any software developer or even systems engineer knows that, when blocked by a problem or bug, the best way out of the dead end is to describe the problem aloud in front of a friend or coworker while making lots of diagrams on a blackboard. There is actually no need for the selected friend to listen to what you say or to look to the diagrams. This has actually proven to be useless. Yet after half an hour or less of vehement gesturing in front of the emptiness, you usually find the solution to a problem that you had been worried with for one or two weeks, while

your friend who only cared for his own business in the meantime, has kindly served you as a virtual audience.

Such is the wisdom of possession³.

Now, long before software peer reviews were introduced⁴, every software developer intuitively knew that *interpreting* his software code *in his own mind* is a pre-requisite for the considered piece of software to reach some hopes of working properly. This is the reason why it is not that unusual to hear a software developer speaking aloud when he or she is programming in a place where he or she is alone.

And if you have developed an attentive ear and you happen to observe a few technicians at work you will realize that any of them who is confronted with a somewhat difficult technical problem, tries to get out of trouble by describing to himself in a low voice or even aloud the encountered problem which unfortunately resists.

Instructed by Malcolm de Chazal, I would say that this person *lets the problem enter into her* - another formulation of the same phenomenon of *voluntary possession*.

You will find the same thing again when observing a person who tries to convince herself of the validity of a non-trivial mathematical proof. This, although mathematics are (somewhat quickly, I fear) usually considered as *the* domain par excellence of rationality.

Even more commonly “learning something by heart” involves the same mechanisms and speaking things aloud or silently is usually required one way or another.

Based on such plain observations, I have come to the point of thinking that such phenomena happen (although in a silent or even unconscious way) each time a human being is confronted with the use of a tool, a machine or more generally when confronted with a task that has not yet become an automatism. As human beings, I think that the only way we have to anticipate what may happen with a technical object (and all things around us are technical objects) is - so to say - to let the “spirit” of this technical object *enter* in us, or to let ourselves mentally *enter* in this technical object. Since our entire human environment is mostly made of technical objects - forks and spoons even - this means that this sort of conscious or much more often unconscious “possession theater” is permanently active somewhere in our brains.

Yet, I had to put a restriction and to say that my hypothesis is only valid for tasks that have not yet become automatisms. This because I know that once a behavior has become an automatism, it gets “stored” in the *Procedural Memory*, and things in this procedural memory are known to become unconscious - you do not need to use the “possession theater” any longer, to ride a bicycle or to swim, or even walk and speak.

3 - Merl Fluin, dans un texte publié à l'époque du Surrealist London Action Group parlait de l'inconscient des ordinateurs (D. Nadeau – 2018-02-19).

4 - Un ami informaticien et lacanien avait écrit un texte nommé « Psychanalyse des machines symboliques ». (P. Petiot -- 2018- 02-19)

Intermède : proposition de Bogartte.

Using Chazal's possession as a point of departure,

I invented these ideas about possession being an usual state of mind more than 30 years ago (around 1985, I think) when I wrote to a friend that "*ideas possess us in a Voodoo way*". This was, at that moment, my interpretation of *Les Grands Transparents* as mentioned by André Breton. Some 5 years later [Richard Dawkins](#) developed his theory of *memes*, [[Dawkins, Richard](#) (1989), "11. Memes: the new replicators", *The Selfish Gene* (2nd ed., new ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 368, [ISBN 0-19-217773-7](#)], although the idea and word *meme* itself is older in his work.

However, my theory and approaches are quite different from Dawkins ideas, as you will see further :-)

to imagine space as a vast body of water, and allow the mind to dive into it, instead of viewing it, or attempting to 'see' space as something separate from being, outside. By swimming in space, moving, to stimulate interruption or reaction... Becoming space, or space-water... Including the surface and how it interacts with depth. Through movement? But since space appears to be perhaps the essence of lightness, and water, quite heavy, being space-water, movement becomes imaginary...

That is a topic that should be discussed with Rik Lina, dear Bogartte.

In the meantime, yet... :-)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxTcHZxsJlc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fdf3r1nUEdw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKLBSwdSMH4&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUam-3vPbos>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZTY0H1Hst8>

Fin de l'intermède

Suite page suivante...

Mirror Neurons

For a long time, the phenomena of possession were most often explained by the effect of trance or the effects of the drugs that often accompany it. Malcolm de Chazal is undoubtedly closer to the truth when he insists on what he calls *Instinctive Imitation*, which he clearly associates with what he calls splitting, "*dédoublement*". Moreover, maybe the word "dédoublement" is much more precise and adequate than the word "possession" because a person who is possessed does not cease to be herself, she is either partly possessed, or only possessed intermittently.

« L'imitation instinctive. [...] Par cette loi d'*imitation instinctive*, tel homme, par exemple, imitera inconsciemment tel autre individu avec lequel il vit en communauté, quelque puissante pourrait être sa propre personnalité -- personnalité que l'autre en retour imitera avec d'autant plus de force que sera faible la sienne -- le plus fort ici se faisant toujours plus imiter qu'il n'imité, l'imitation allant dans le sens et dans les régions de moindre résistance de la personnalité et inscrivant son empreinte tout autant dans le physique que dans le moral ou dans le spirituel des gestes du corps aux mouvements de l'expression, de la mentalité à l'humeur, des goûts aux habitudes, imprimant son sceau à travers tout le champ des activités et de la pensée de l'homme. Sans cette *loi d'imitation instinctive*, il n'y aurait point de société, de patrie, de nation, car l'individualité, déjà assez pressée par l'intérêt, déborderait partout et engloutirait tout. L'*imitation instinctive* est la force de cohésion des sociétés humaines. »

Malcolm de Chazal, Ibidem P117

"Instinctive imitation. [...] By this law of instinctive imitation, such a man, for example, will unconsciously imitate such other individual with whom he lives in community, some powerful could be his own personality - personality that the other in return will imitate with as much strength as his will be weak - the strongest here being made more and more imitate than he imitates, the imitation going in the direction and in the regions of least resistance of the personality and inscribing his imprint all as much in the physical as in the moral or in the spiritual from the gestures of the body to the movements of the expression, from the mentality to the mood, from the tastes to the habits, imprinting its seal throughout the field of the activities and the thought of man. Without this law of instinctive imitation, there would be no society, no country, no nation, for individuality, already pressed enough by the interest, would overflow everywhere and swallow everything. Instinctive imitation is the cohesive force of human societies. "

As in all comparisons between strong and weak, better or worse, adapted or non-adapted, etc. we must raise the question of what scale is used. And Malcolm de Chazal does not provide any specification here. Does the "strength" of a rose lies in its scent, its colors, its resistance to drought or changes in temperature, in the duration of its flowering? To ask the question is to answer it: everything depends on the considered context and on the view points.

So I will leave this relative way of thinking to concentrate on what is less relative, namely the kind of *instinctive imitation* of which De Chazal speaks here. Although observations of this nature are relatively easy, common and used to be done much earlier than those of De Chazal, we now know that it is no longer simply intuitions requiring a degree of sensitivity and subtlety to

which this author has accustomed us, but that it is Science and a science that De Chazal could not know at the time he wrote *La Vie Filtrée* (1949), since the [mirror neurons](#) were only discovered in the 1990s by Giacomo Rizzolatti.

I translate here a part of the text found in the French version of Wikipedia. The English version sounds different. I shall try to find better information in *Pour La Science*, the French version of Scientific American.

Mirror neurons are a category of neurons in the brain that exhibit activity when an individual (human or animal) performs an action, or when observing another individual (especially of his species) performing the same action, or even when he imagines such an action, hence the term mirror. They are known to be the cause of yawn. There are also known as *echo neurons*.

In cognitive neuroscience, mirror neurons play a role in social cognition, especially in imitation learning, but also in emotional processes such as empathy. Professor Ramachandran, an authority in the field, calls them *empathy neurons*.

Mirror neurons are considered a major discovery in neuroscience. If, for some researchers, they constitute a central element of social cognition (from language to art, through the emotions and the comprehension of others), for others, these conclusions remain very hypothetical about the role of these neurons in these psychological processes. - French Wikipedia (Neurones miroir)

We see that the term *possession* - which is after all nothing more than a quite excessive form empathy - is not exaggerated since mirror neurons are actually *a real incarnation of the spirit of the others in ourselves*. "Spirit" being taken here in the strict sense of what *animates* the other (but soul - anima – in its ancient and original meaning would perhaps be better).

The fact that the imitation of the other is not necessarily restricted to the members of the same species (animal or human) is noticeable among ourselves as primates, but can also be seen intermittently in our domestic species, as far as is for example the spread of yawning.

On the other hand, the fact that animals can learn by imitation is beyond doubt. It's even one of the ways they learn best. In the processes used to teach parrots, it was customary to place a (human) master in front of a parrot (a gray parrot from Gabon) and the master repeated his lesson with the parrot until the parrot learned it. This method worked but was not very effective. The new procedures consist in placing another animal (usually a human) near the parrot to which one wishes to teach something, and the (human) teacher teaches the same thing to the two students, the human and the parrot. With this new way of doing things, the parrot learns by imitation, with the difference, however, that the parrot no longer imitates the teacher, but the human student and, playing the game with some passion sometimes manages to give the right answer faster than the human student.

But Malcom de Chazal pushes his conception of *instinctive imitation* a little further and generalizes it to contexts where mirror neurons can no longer be called into question, because they do not necessarily exist.

« Les règnes et les espèces sont les compléments les uns des autres -- les forces latentes des autres règnes et espèces poussant chaque unité particulière de la nature à imiter tant soit peu l'espèce avec laquelle elle vit en communauté et qu'elle coudoie ».

Malcolm de Chazal – Ibidem P118

"Kingdoms and species are the complements of each other - the latent forces of other kingdoms and species push each particular unit of nature to imitate the species with which she lives in community and rubs shoulders"

And he is not wrong to the extent that nature does not lack mimicry phenomena, animals imitating their mineral environment (e.g. Octopuses) or plant (e.g. Phasmes) or other animals (e.g. non-harmful animals imitating harmful animals to ward off predators or *batesian mimicry*), plants imitating animals (e.g. Orchids mimicking the belly of a female bumblebee to attract males), plants mimicking other plants (Passiflora mimicking the leaves of other plants to escape the clutches of their predatory butterflies). All these mimesis illustrate in a striking way the propensity of even unconscious life to mirror the mineral environment or other forms of life. In this perspective, mirror neurons indeed constitute something like a particular case of a much more general set of phenomena.

However, Malcom de Chazal generally centers his discourse on the "psychic" aspect of instinctive imitation in humans, showing that in the human species, instinctive imitation is in no way reduced to the animal and intraspecific human domains.

« Mais outre l'imitation des plantes par les animaux, il y a aussi l'imitation des plantes par l'homme. Mais ici l'imitation est moins directe. Elle est d'ordre psychique, participant de la faculté de dédoublement. Car en fait, ce qui fait croire à tant de narrateurs que la forêt s'anime, c'est qu'ils l'ont en eux, sensation qu'éprouve au plus haut point l'enfant, qui vierge encore du monde, est plus près de l'instinct que nous et s'intègre à la Nature. »

Malcolm de Chazal – Ibidem, P119

"But besides the imitation of plants by animals, there is also the imitation of plants by men. But here the imitation is less direct. It is psychical, and participates in the faculty of duplication. Because, in fact, what makes so many narrators believe that the forest is alive is that they have it in themselves, a feeling that the child, who is still virgin of the world, is closer to instinct than we are, and integrates with Nature, experiences within himself to the highest point "

The question that arises is whether this instinctive imitation by which human beings are able to imitate, to internalize or perhaps more accurately to mentally *model* almost anything is always done by using mirror neurons or via other types of neurons and neural circuits.

And here, I prefer to use the term *modeling* rather than the more usual ones of imagination or representation, because both have a rather static connotation while the term modeling also refers to the *dynamic* and behavioral aspects that are always integrated in the memory patterns that our brain builds, reuses and constantly improves, and at least some of the dynamic aspects are probably provided by our mirror neurons or other similar functioning.

Modeling allows *simulation* and since our brain does not bring the real objects into our head for good, since it records the dynamics and it relies on it for action, we can say that our brain *simulates*.

For all that, it would be inappropriate and especially wrong to say of a shaman that he simulates in the flat sense that he would pretend to be the spirit that possesses him. *He does not pretend*. He is not in a show. His purpose is not to impress the audience. No. *He is just trying*.

Just as a modern scientist executes a simulation from a model on a computer, the shaman also performs a simulation, except that the computer is himself and that what the shaman simulates is the particular model of the spirit by which he is possessed, as well as the interactions between this external spirit and his own. And just as the result of a computer simulation is not known in advance - otherwise it would not be undertaken - the result of the act of voluntary possession performed by the shaman is heavy with all the uncertainties of life, *for the Spirit*, as they say, *blows where it will*.

The imprint of the tool

It must be admitted that being haunted, inhabited by the world as I hope I have suggested that we are, is probably not without consequences. The human world is populated with spirits, populated by things and living beings that surround it, as ancient and far-off mythologies, as well as the art and-or ritual objects that haunted them, demonstrate to us. In those times when technical objects were much rarer and (though highly sophisticated) much less complex, human brains were more populated with natural objects than now, so that they incorporated mostly living things, animals and plants, some singular places and ... also, of course, already many more abstract sorts of spirits.

The rapid depletion of usable local ecological resources caused by a somewhat prolonged stay of a group of men -- even a small one -- forced the hunter-gatherers, not at all to starve as theoreticians once believed, but almost always to a certain nomadism ([Cf Marshall Sahlins](#)). However, nomadism before the domestication of animals rests on the shoulders of men and probably even more on those of women, which drastically limits to a strict minimum the number of technical objects that can be carried with oneself. So that the technical development as sophisticated and subtle as it was at that time, was thereby also limited.

The world in which we live since the Neolithic is quite different. The domestication of animals and the implementation of agriculture allowed much more comfortable nomadic forms in most cases, and a real sedentarization in just about all the others, circumstances that favored the accumulation, not only of food in the attics, or on horses and camels backs, but also the accumulation of all kinds of technical objects originating from art, crafts and commerce. So, even though plants, animals and singular places continued to haunt men's minds, they did so in very different ways ... While hunters in hunter-gatherer peoples often had the habit of apologizing to the spirits of their preys before or after killing them, the Neolithic peoples behaved in a very different way regarding their cattle.

Because cattle is the ***tool-animal***. And tools... we manufacture them, we take them, we give them, we forget them or we throw them away when we consider them no longer usable. As regards tools, one has *the right to use and abuse* as Roman laws about property said. So with the cattle too, although with a little bit of moderation, since that's what we eat.

With the Neolithic, the technical objects, animals and plants included, are there when you want them and are no longer there when you no longer want them. But in a hunting and gathering economy, the tools are always too heavy, animals do what they want, and plants produce beautiful pickings when they want as well.

The *slave*, who can only appear when the population increases, when the inter-group distances are reduced and the foreigners in the neighborhoods become inevitable, the slave is the tool-man or rather, more frequently the tool-woman. The slave as such is not incompatible with the hunting-gathering economy, but you have to feed him (or her) and ecology again imposes its limits on the size of the groups. While a slave may not be unfit for picking, it is a little more

thorny to send him, armed, in a forest to hunt for you. And by the way, if you eat your slaves, once you have done it, then there are no slaves left anymore.

So that, with Neolithic, almost all the world, plants, animals, land and men turned into technical objects. So that the souls, ie the independent spirits, who were supposed to animate the corresponding wild things have gone, little by little - at least, of human brains. Everything that was only a little bit or not at all manipulable in the world of hunter-gatherers became daily manipulable in the Neolithic world. Of course, we continued to respect the spirits of some animals, and until today, we find lions, tigers, bulls, falcons and eagles, oaks and olive trees, on emblems, currencies, in logos, on cars and even on flags. But it's only allegorical. The heart and passion are gone, and the magic is gone as well.

However, while a man can still sometimes walk naked, we can be sure that he will never walk with an empty mind, so that the spirits of animals, plants and more generally nature having deserted, it had to be filled with other things.

Hence, what is on a man's mind ?



No. This image, known well enough for being sold on most sidewalks around the world, is not a view of the mind. Assuming that the unconscious is structured like a language, perhaps questioning the language will open some doors to the unconscious - at least collective.

The analysis of a thesaurus of approximately 350 words and expressions designating the male sex in the French language provides the following results:

- 46% of terms and expressions related to technical objects or technology (including war technology)
- 14% of terms and expressions related to animals or plants (e.g. anaconda, eel, asparagus ...)
- 9% of terms and expressions related to names or surnames of characters (eg Adam, Adolf, Jack, Freddy ...)
- 4% of culinary terms (e.g. nem, noodle, andouille, ...)
- 4% adjectives (e.g. huge, inexorable, indomitable, painful, ...)
- 3% of diminutives (e.g. zizi, zigounette, zezette, ...)

The set of terms analyzed thus represents approximately 80% of the considered thesaurus.

Even taking into account possible misclassifications or misinterpretations, it must be admitted that the collective unconscious related to the male sex seems rather strongly marked by technology and that, if human beings seem somewhat obsessed with sex, it seems that the male sex itself is somewhat obsessed with *tools* and *work*.

What about terms and expressions for the female sex?

The analysis of a thesaurus of about 270 words and expressions designating the female sex in French provides somewhat different results:

- 28% of vocables from the technical world - including religious ones. (e.g. ring, doors, jewelry, altar, mortar, ...)
- 22% of words related to animals or plants (e.g. broccoli, beaver, cat, crayfish, elephant, ...)
- 11% of diminutives (e.g. chouquette, chounette, conelet, conillon, frifri, mimi, minette, monette, poupoune, ...)
- 6% of geographical or geological terms and expressions (e.g. cavern, mountain, stream, ...)
- 2% of culinary terminology (e.g. cutlets, puff pastry, honey pot, hair tart, ...)
- 1% of qualifiers (e.g., drooling, bearded, ...)

The set of thus analyzed terms representing about 70% of the considered thesaurus.

Once again the frequency of technical terminology, provided, of course, that care is taken to extend it to the domain of the technical objects of the house, of architecture or of the religious context, is not negligible, although less striking than in the case of the male sex. It is roughly in line with the percentages of occurrences of plants, animals added to the occurrences of geographic or geology terminology.

Of course, the considered thesauri randomly selected from the Internet are arbitrary, as may be in some cases the choice of classifications operated. However, it would certainly be difficult to find equivalent amounts of technical terms among hunter-gatherer peoples such as some pygmies, some aborigines of Australia or some "bushmen" of South Africa.

Yet is it not surprising to find so many technically "civilized" terms in a context that religion have so often described as the very place of animality?

What the vocabulary suggests, the sadomasochistic imagery confirms it. One can almost identify it for sure with the presence of the objects that creep between the bodies: ropes, whips, costumes, cabinets of tortures, erotic meals, decorations looking like workshops, automobiles, fantasies of slavery, complex and quasi architectural postures and as in Sade's writings, etc. Even more than in the masks of pain so externally similar to those of pleasure, in sadomasochism we are in an Atelier, in a workshop and sometimes almost in a factory, as in Sade, for example, where the excitement of the pure number sometimes reaches a kind of passion.

The sadomasochistic theater, although governed under the covers by the rules of the *contract*, likes and wants to be taken seriously. That of men, especially. In this respect, erotic shops for men are very different from those frequented by young women since such shops now exist for their daydreams.

In the men's shops, you really feel like you're in a theatrical accessory store where every object strives to look realistic, an objective that it does not usually achieve, and which annihilates quite

a bit the dark imprint of seriousness of which it would like to be adorned. So that one must generally give oneself a little trouble to "believe it".

The opposite is true in women's boutiques, where the playful atmosphere of glittering pink and rhinestones gives them a show of joy and where the objects and utensils are undeniably aimed more at curves and aerodynamics than at realism. This is another and quite different game, the lack of seriousness is total and from a point of view, from the male point of view, almost ... unseemly. Girls are probably more playful than us guys - which can sometimes be slightly depressing.

Sometimes I happen to remember our playground games when I was four or five years old. I particularly remember two of them. We dug holes in the gravel bed of the courtyard, we squatted on it and, very convinced and penetrated by our actions, we covered imaginary eggs. I guess some of us had invented that by observing the hens of the surrounding farms.

But we also had other games more connected with technology, which consisted of running with the arms spread in the playground by whirring at which better. We imitated the airplanes of the nearby American base, of which we embodied the different species of airplanes that we could see flying above us. Those who impressed us the most were the "two tails", double fuselage devices that seemed very strange to us and for which we had a special quality of devotion.

I am no longer used to visit playgrounds anymore, but I heard a few years ago that the games have changed. Now kids are "programming" each other. One sets himself in the back of his comrade and taps on his overcoat, temporarily transformed into an imaginary keyboard, instructions that the other is quick to perform once the final start key has been engaged

But since these memories have come back to me, and these words have come down to me, I can not help but think that the grown up people in their sadomasochistic games are very similar to those kids who play to become *things* or to manipulate other kids who temporarily decided to become *things*. This led me to consider the the sadomasochistic drama theater in a different angle from the one with which it is still often considered, I mean that I look at it with an amused eye, sometimes frankly humorous but ultimately rather tender.

It is difficult to imagine when these games of masks that we play with our things could have been introduced. They are probably as old as the existence of the masks itself. But it seems to me that they reveal the duplicity of our things, which are *from* us, and which are in a way *ourselves*, without being us and with whom we have long buried ourselves sometimes together with our wives, our horses and our slaves. If our things did not inhabit us so deeply, if they had not reached such a degree of existence in the depths of our minds, why would we try to take them with us to the next worlds? And closer to us, what else is *inheritance* but this *ballet of things* where brothers and sisters sometimes tear each other apart?

I also remember one episode, while I still was a teenager and I was digging in the garden. I was quite proud of myself, athletic and almost Stakhanovist, because I had dug a rather big piece of land, and confusedly, more or less consciously, I felt almost as powerful and radical as a mechanical excavator. My mother came on a different note and broke my brave momentum.

"You know," she said, "you have to tear off and remove the roots, otherwise what you do is useless because the weeds will grow back".

No ! It had been quite exciting to embody a machine for a moment, and now my mother had come to remind me of the boring condition of being human ... Not to mention that in addition it was necessary to bend, to kneel even sometimes, in order to tear off these pesky roots. It stopped me at once and I put the spade aside. But my mother was wrong. She was definitely old-fashioned and out of play. I can not see anyone worrying about removing the roots of weeds when using a rototiller.

However, I still see very well my father, a retired teacher, a son of peasants and who was then 80 years old, almost removing the rototiller from my hands, and drawing furrows as convincingly as possible and especially caring for his "rounds ", the piece of land that can not be plowed right away because it is the place that is reserved for turning the plough in order to start plowing the next furrow in the other direction. I do not think that the noise and the relative power of the engine moved him a lot, but I think it would have been a great pleasure for him to put a horse in front of the rototiller. He did not incarnate the engine but the plowing. The plough. Different technology, other daydreams...

We do not always imagine how deep the *soul of things* may nest within us ... There were some time ago in mathematics classes, many children who did not want straight lines to *intersect* or *cut*. All of them had at one time owned penknives and what usually happens in such a case of course, used to happen to them: wounds, blood, smell of ether, tingling of alcohol, compress and all the tralala. In short, a kind of frightening disaster for a child. And it was these memories that used to make abstract straight lines very aggressive, dangerous, unchallengeable for them. Since this period of time, in maths classes straight lines no longer intersect nor cut each others but gently *meet*, things are a little better. Even though mathematics classes have remained pretty much what they were: *a disaster*.

Nevertheless, I do not personally use the word "*section*" without a vague apprehension, that reasonable as I am, I of course I negligently discard with a swift mind movement. As for the word "*vivisection*", it is not for nothing in the root causes why I did not become a doctor but a computer scientist. Silicon does not bleed, especially when you do not really need to touch it too much.

We must embody or incarnate our tools, our things, mimic them, model our relationships with them, let them haunt us to a certain extent, in order to anticipate the consequences of their use and to avoid accidents, just as we do with animals and other human beings. This is not always smooth, without difficulties and sometimes not without trauma.

But that does not go either without feedback effects. Namely, the shadow, the spirit of our tools and our things *haunts us*, consciously, as we mostly think, but above all *unconsciously* although we oddly forget to think of. The use of our tools and things changes us, transforms our brains and of course our relationships to the human and non-technical world.

On the one hand, to some extent, we have to consider them as *alter ego*, in order to be able to mimic them, but on the other hand our short-term vision, our *realism*, urge us not to do so. It

tells us to reduce them to what we believe them to be, to what they were meant to be, simple functional beings, familiar and therefore dominated (since "domus" means the family house). Realism entirely stands in this wording : "**this is only that**".

So we tend to stick to the visual evidence that a tool or a thing is only the object that stands in front of us⁵, without being aware that this thing has its roots deep in ourselves. So deep that we do not even realize that not a single one of our things has any meaning at all without these roots within us. Roots that do not only includes its "instructions for use" but also incorporates all the dynamics that is associated with the use of this thing, as well as the mimicry associated with this thing, that we shall have to interpret within ourselves if we want to use this thing properly and effectively.

Just as we do not realize that this thing also has roots in the world that is external to it and that it is actually interwoven in a huge web of processes that includes its production, the environment and the technical context required to use it, as well as the methods and precautions to store it or to safely get rid of it.

So is it rather woesome to hear so many people - including many who should know more about the nature of realism - say that their tools (mobile telephone, computer, etc.) are "just tools". They bought a refrigerator and thought *it was just* a tool to cool their food, and did not realize that it was also a way to destroy the Earth's ozone layer. They bought a car to travel more quickly and easily, and thought a car is only a car, without realizing that it was also a way to send carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and create a greenhouse effect.

In fact, no object can ever be reduced to any function, it irrevocably constitutes a part of Universal History and as such it is open to all hazards. *Outside the human world, nothing in the Universe has a function.* And within the human world itself, the notion of function remains indeterminate at all times, because it is constantly subverted by by the unforeseen use that can be made of any object.

During one of his lectures, the theoretical biologist [Stuart Kauffman](#) asks the public to list all the possible uses of a screwdriver. The hands are up, the proposals are coming from all sides and the list continues to grow. He then proposes to the public to list all the possible uses of a screwdriver, but of an isolated screwdriver within the outer space, even considering that a human arm has been added to the screwdriver in order to make use of it.

Then in the conference room, the audience remains silent. This proves that the function does not lie in the object, but in our mind. In our minds, for sure, but not only, because the function also lies in the context. To tell the truth, any function is never more than *an encounter* and to look at it more closely, it appears that it never loses this somewhat evanescent character of the *encounter*.

The entire set of ecological issues is actually related to the realist and reductionist sentence "**this is only that**" that reduces anything to what we think we know of it.

It should be better known that realism is nothing else than a mousetrap. As Nietzsche pointed out when applying the antiphon of realistic reductionism upside down:

5 Cf. etymology of the word "object" latin *objectum* . "what is placed before or in front of"

“The realist painter claims to paint the real, but he only paints of it what he knows how to paint.”

No, "**this**" is never *only* "**that**". The universe is irreparably an adventure to live. Or to better say it, the Universe is a living adventure. Not a place where it is permissible to pretend avoiding some toil by letting the tools and things live in our place.

The ecological and social problems that result from the realist attitude show that this point of view is false and dangerous. We must grant our tools and our things a certain independence and we should practice towards them a minimum of animism (since in any case our technical unconscious does not allow us to escape it). And we should grant them some sort of technically educated *respect* as suggested by [Gilbert Simondon](#). That would probably be a wiser and healthier attitude than to consider them more or less as slaves.

Properly, an ecological problem is not a technological issue. It is what the vendor did not tell us about what he sold to us, it is what ("*par une étourderie de système*" as Fourier said) he "forgot" to tell us. To reduce a technical object to its listed use, to what it is supposed to do, to what it is claimed to be doing, is always to take the point of view of who makes a profession of selling it to us.

Besides, a vendor does not sell us a thing or a tool. He only sells us the **ownership** of this thing or tool, but *not the use of it*. Whether we use it or not is not a problem for him. He does not care about it. He sells you a car but he does not sell you the driving licence, nor the expensive driving courses. He does not sell you car breakdowns nor car accidents although they are actually an integral part of the car. He does not tell you that you do not drive a car, but that the car drives you from a gas station to the next gas station. And he does not tell you about the wars associated with the access to oil in which you or your children and friends may die.

Like any kind of human society, capitalism relies on technology but it is in no way identical to technology itself. It makes a very specific use of technology, a specific use that actually excludes the *end use* of technology, as capitalism is based on the exchange value and not on the use value.

It has become a very common and usual attitude nowadays to condemn technology, hence forgetting that the kind of technology in which we live is not technology "in general", but only a very particular subset of technologies as selected and adapted to the internal needs of capitalism. This results both from a deep absence of analysis as regards the way things, tools and techniques are related to the human thought or more generally to the human brain -- and body ! -- on the one hand, and to weak analyses of what capitalism actually is, what it does with technology on the other hand.

Almost no political analyses of the technological decisions made in the history of capitalism have been conducted. Why did steam engines requiring to buy expensive coal were originally preferred to water mills that did not have such associated costs ? Why were individual cars preferred to tramways and to extending railway networks ? Etc.

While some people at least are aware that Paris was entirely rebuilt by Haussman in a way that allowed to much more easily deal with workers riots, while the Situationist International made clear that post WW 2 architecture, and more generally urbanism, had been driven by the need to impose capitalism's political order and by the requirements of generalized mental repression, since architecture and urbanism are definitely technologies, by what sort of odd intellectual miracle do most people fail to understand that the same has been done with *all* decisions made as regards *all* technological fields used in the capitalist world?

The fact is that most people's thought about technology rarely goes beyond the level of autonomy reached by plants. A plant does not have the ability to move, it has to adapt to where it grows, as if this place was the only one in the world, or else perish. An animal, when the place where it is does not suit it, knows that there are other places and moves there. The absence of technological thought leads people to consider that the currently deployed technology is the only possible one, for this sole reason that it exists. Like plants, their thought adapts to what is there and is unable to move beyond it.

The depths of human lack of imagination are decidedly unfathomable...

However, considering the ecological problems ahead, it should be reasonable to make a set of studies to identify and criticize the technical decisions made by capitalism all along its history, in order to identify why were some solutions selected, what were the possible other solutions, as well as why they were discarded, and to thus be able to check whether these discarded technical solutions could be used in a non-capitalist society *or not*. But this kind of *political history of technology* is not done at all, and people tend to stick to the blank page syndrome and re-invent the wheel.

This situation reveals another aspect of the way technology has taken possession of men. And this, whether they may be "geeks", technically speaking, or whether they are a complete opposite of a "geek", that is to say people who do not realize that they are not only relying on technology but are literally sitting on it (Yes. A simple chair is also a technological item !). It has now come to the point that as technology haunts our minds to such an extent that we are caught between the two alternative positions of either being fans of what is there, or to reject all of it. It actually looks a lot like the kind of stupid and sterile binary opposition that had become almost universal during the Cold War era. You had to be either a fan of capitalism or a fan of "communism", without any possible escape. But although people have finally recognized the artificial and factitious nature of such a binary opposition, this did not prevent them from jumping happily into the next one.

And yet another aspect of the way technology has taken possession of men, is that you may often hear people complaining about the huge mess and garbage that has been accumulated out there, while they do not seem to be able to realize that this mess and garbage only has one single origin, which is *the human brain*, including theirs.

The fact is, that human brains contain exactly the same sort of mess and garbage as what is so obviously visible outside, and actually a much worse sort of mess and garbage, since it does not only include what has actually been produced, but also what *could* have been produced, what *could not* be produced, together with what was dreamed of.

What is even worse, is the extent that is reached with some categories of suicides. People are haunted by tools to such a depth that they get completely lost, and get an overwhelming feeling of overall *absurdity*, when they happen to realize that they are *useless*.

They failed to realize that the only things that have a *use* in the universe are tools, machines, objects ... Such people are haunted so deeply that they come to the point of envying tools. *They want to be useful* they want to have a *meaning*, they want to *serve*. To *serve* some cause, to *serve* some people, to *serve* something, whatever it may be. God or Devil.

And their minds crash when they realize that neither themselves nor the universe were ever meant to serve anything nor anyone. Even more radically, that neither themselves nor the universe were *ever meant to mean*, never meant to have any purpose at all. Having a purpose, a meaning, a use, a target, an objective, a goal, is a concept that only has a meaning inside the human world. Inside the human technological context. But outside the human world such concepts are meaningless. People suddenly realize that, they call it *absurdity* and some of them die from this finding.

Human brains are located *right on the edge*, right on the interface between a useless universe, a useless living nature, and the human technical bubble in which everything has a purpose. Human beings are both natural and cultural. Denying that we belong to both these worlds, leads to a form of underlying madness, such as the idea that everything in the universe serves some purpose. It is the *grandeur*, immense *freedom*, and *marvelous* feature of the human condition to be useless, to have no meaning, to serve no purpose. To proudly stand and remain far beyond any sort of utilitarianism. And to daily *fight* for that even.

Now, just as it is impossible to human brains not to be haunted by images - might it even be the image of a pure and total emptiness, as is proposed in some oriental traditions - it is also impossible to human brains not to be haunted by tools and machines and more generally by *things*, whether material and concrete or whether *abstract* and '*intellectual*'. This is just the way brains work, even animal brains, and if you expect to get rid of such images, of such ghosts, then you should get rid of your brains too. A decision that usually requires some sort of prior careful thinking.

Yet, while there is no way out of it, there is a way to *live with it*. There is a way to reach some sort of graceful symbiosis. And this way is called poetry. A poet is not just haunted by images, but *he intends to be* and *he must be*. That's his job, his way of living, the very movement of his soul. However, a poet is not stupidly *submitted* to images, he is conscious of the game that images play in his mind. And *he plays with images* simultaneously and within the same process as the process in which he is himself *played by images*.

The poetic process makes the poet aware of the passage and movement of images in the human mind. Where the non-poet - that is, the one who has forgotten that he was a poet - is

manipulated by images precisely because he opposes to them and refuses to take them into account. The poet, on the opposite, lets them come into himself, follows them, up to the trance if necessary, but in the end *he knows them as images* and agrees to live with them. He accepts the company of this moire that Antiquity called "the muse" of the poet.

The surrealist, that is, the poet whose movement is (or should be) a study and free use of *the very functioning of the human thought* is in the most proper position -- and he is actually in the best position known yet -- to be aware of the movement of images in his own mind, hence *including the dynamics of technical images and processes* just as well, at least once his attention has been drawn towards these aspects of both the conscious and unconscious features of human thought.

While some past surrealists were drawn to consider the Freudian unconscious only, it is very likely that there is a possible path to get some sort of access to the *procedural unconscious* too. A type of unconscious that is so usual and common that we completely forget about it. And yet, while we do not remember the time when we learned how to walk, how to speak, and while at any given instant of any conversation, we do not even know by what sort of miracle we can possibly succeed to utter anything, language has for us become some sort of reflex - although not really a reflex since we can use language to say lots of different things. Although we can actually create with language.

Almost anything has been written about language and the unconscious, except about the relationships of language and the *procedural* unconscious.

Similarly riding a bicycle or swimming or just using a fork or a spoon to eat, also have since long become reflexes - although not really reflexes either, since we can adapt and curve these "reflexes" according to our will and to context. Although artists and poets will not feel happy with it, I would tend to think that in some official or formal circumstances, when some important decisions may be made during a dinner, the simple use of a fork and a knife, has sometimes to be somewhat creative too.

If we accept that language is really the core part of what makes us human beings (which I personally doubt), if with Lacan we may even come to the point of considering that "the unconscious is structured as a language" (which is questionable), then since a language is a tool, a tool that is structured differently depending on the languages we learned, then the same is true of all what finally ends up being sucked into the depths of our procedural unconscious. All these skills that we once learned are parts of us, and in some way, they *are* us. Or else we should restrict our vision and only consider what we are without them, which may only mean to be something like a newborn baby. And no doubt that we are that too, that we are this newborn baby. But throwing away the entire imprint of human culture in ourselves, may be considered as somewhat exaggeratedly restrictive.

Now, what could we get out of such an approach ? Some new sort of art ? Some new sort of poetry ? Maybe or maybe not. But we should not care, *as surrealism was supposed to be an adventure* and because art and poetry never were what surrealism was supposed to be restricted to. "*We do not like art nor artists*" said Jacques Vaché.

However, we could investigate how human beings *learn*. How they both “physically” and “intellectually” *learn*. And we could investigate what sort of roles the unconscious part of ourselves plays in it. Something similar to what [Gaston Bachelard](#) did as regards the historical evolution of scientific conceptions, when he created the notion of "obstacle épistémologique". Or else, instead of complaining, in the most ugly, lazy, and passive way, about the way machines now learn and all the newspaper stuff related to the so-said "deep learning", maybe we could learn something learning how human beings and animals actually learn - much more effectively than artificial neural networks do - and hence venture into investigating and playing with that.

At a more collective level, in a similar way as Vincent Bounoure and Effenberger's friends once switched from *individual automatism* to *collective automatism*, and since we are aware enough that the biggest part of learning is very likely to be *based on the skills of the unconscious* (similar ones or even the same ones as those that a newborn baby uses), we could also play with something like *collective automatic learning*. This would be quite in line with the extension of surrealism proposed by Bounoure and Effenberger, when they envisioned encompassing all human activities, including the *infrastructure* (i.e. production and exchange) as well as the *superstructure* (i.e. ideas and representations) and hence *the entire scope of human expression* as the legitimate playground of a *surrealist civilisation*.

Not only such a project would be in line with Bounoure and Effenberger's perspective, but it would also drive us more or less directly *to the unconscious roots of all human activities*. I hope that, to some extent, the reader has now guessed that we are not far from Butoh here, although what is outlined is not restricted to the “physical aspects” of learning nor to dance itself only, but encompasses much more than that.

We may actually expect to recover human “lost powers” as always was the purpose of surrealism as well... For, after all, when things are to be considered a bit seriously, *if the lost human powers are not present at the heart of the way in which the newborns learn, it is difficult to see where they could possibly find their origin*.

From another point of view, everything suggests that the way in which adults and adolescents learn, as soon as the core of it is examined deeply enough, cannot not be so different from the way babies spontaneously do.

A bit like what Matta attempted in his *psychological morphologies*, the idea would then be to capture the shape before it has fossilized into form. The difference then being that the target would not be to only investigate and reach the visual aspect of the process, but *all* the aspects of human learning - in other terms the way we get in touch with the world and the way the world touches us and penetrates into us.

But let's first consider what is currently happening to language and poetry in the type of social organisation we live in...

When the use that is currently made of technology takes us too far away from any actual contact with the world, from its touch. When everything we meet in our daily life has been *delivered* to us as [Günther Anders](#) says, that is to say, just like Joan of Arc is said to have been

delivered to her English enemies, bound hand and foot, and hence, in plain words, as a prisoner. When we only meet things or tools or machines that have been ready-made for their *intended* use and are hence *prisoners* of this intended use, whether explicit or sneakily implicit and hidden. When thereby we have lost a kind of contact that is not only *individual*, but also, and much more deeply *collective*, a contact with the real world that is offered to the stakeholders (or rather to the *actors*, or even better said to the *players*) of a production process *created, performed and controlled by the workers themselves*. When every man is dispossessed of any contact with the technical and non-technical world, when work and life outside work no longer allow us this touch with the world, the poetic capacities of language drastically diminish, or rather *collapse*. And that's certainly what Annie Le Brun meant in "[Du trop de réalité](#)" and even more clearly in "[Appel d'Air](#)" without really naming and identifying -- as far as I could perceive at least -- the root causes of these vanishing abilities of current language for poetry.

Words lose their meaning because everyday technical life itself loses its meaning for the simple reason that it disappears. Words lose their meaning because meaning is attached to *action*, because meaning is a *revelation*, because *meaning is revealed by the uncertainties in which any action occurs*. While each profession created its own language, its own slang - slang properly speaking only representing the particular case of professional language of thieves, murderers and crooks - when the trades and craftsmanship themselves disappear, the common language is cut off from a considerable source of new expressions, new words and even new syntactical possibilities, to say nothing of the associated semantic collapse.

The languages of the trades, the languages of the crafts are intimately penetrated by action. They are always heavily loaded with meaning because in action you always have to be careful, one way or another. They almost always incorporate *dialectal* features, traces of the areas where a given activity once originated or reached its highest level. They can also make extensive use of metaphors, whether sexual or not, but the smallest thesaurus would easily reveal their poetic charge. As is the case, moreover, as regards the popular names of many kinds of plants.

When the languages of the trades, when the languages of human work is lost, then language is reduced to this language of managers of different levels, whose essential function is to *lie*. Since managers must lie to their superiors to let them know that everything is fine and they must also lie to their subordinates to encourage (or compel) them to work more and better in order to increase profits of which they will never benefit or, even more often, to convince them that the new way of working, recently and brightly designed by people who never did any work at all is definitely an improvement.

The activity of managers essentially consists of doing nothing, creating nothing, producing nothing, but simply passing orders downwards to actual workers, counting the results and reporting the good execution of the orders and the excellence of the results towards the higher levels. It goes without saying that language itself has then no other possibility than to become more and more abstract, more and more "formal" as Bounoure and Effenberger say. Language does not simply become the support of the lie, but more exactly that of emptiness, of a pure

nothingness. And the type of poetry associated with this type of language is the highly subtle art of saying nothing, while letting the interlocutors believe that something is said. In other words, the lie has now spread into the very act of speaking. It no longer has anything to do with language, it is its simulacrum.

Such is the current status of language and the same, or even worse, obviously stands as regards images that mainly are targeted to connect us with the essential emptiness of money as Annie Le Brun's recent although somewhat late book⁶ illustrated.

Now, far from such a situation, assuming that the surrealist field of investigations would encompass *the unconscious powers that allow human beings to learn*. We would hence reconnect with the touch that both our minds and bodies constantly build with the world itself. A world that we actually only know through this permanent activity of the mind (and body). In other terms, we would then reconnect with *the very sources of poetry*.

And yet, I have to realize that such a project has almost no chance of meeting the slightest adherence since surrealism is today reduced to a more or less unfortunate artistic or poetic exploitation of a vein that was originally considered as fit for a much higher and a wider scope, and for much broader ambitions. I realize for sure, of course I do, but I do not accept that.

6 [Ce qui n'a pas de prix](#) - Annie Le Brun - Stock, May 2018