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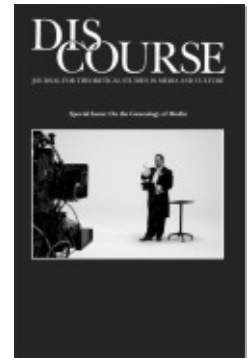
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On the Future of Our Incorporations: Nietzsche, Media, Events

Barbara Stiegler
Translated by Helen Elam

Premises of the age of machines. The press, the machine, the railroad, the telegraph are the premises from which nobody has dared draw the conclusion for a thousand years.

—Friedrich Nietzsche,
The Wanderer and His Shadow (1880)¹

The Hammering of the Telegraph

The new technologies of communication that aim to connect—at least materially—everybody on the planet, faster and faster and further and further on the earth, have not heard, as is often heard, the beginning of the third millennium about to explode. The explosion took place more than a century ago, in the last third of the nineteenth century and its industrial revolution, at the very time of Nietzsche, the first to try to think about an unprecedented phenomenon: the era of *nihilism*, conceived as the time in which the

highest values are devalued. A few dates to remember: Nietzsche is born (1844) at the same time as the telegraph (1837, 1844, 1850), and he comes to philosophy (1872) at the point at which the telegraphic network literally explodes (1865), deploying exponentially its spectacular effects, “[offering] in effect to nineteenth-century man a communication system without precedent, which allows the linking in a few hours . . . of the main economic or politically interesting points on the planet. Impressed, people of the time dream of a dense web of means of communication that will permit contact at every moment with every point on the globe”²—a dream that, as we know and *as Nietzsche already knew*, the next two centuries will fulfill: “What I tell is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what cannot come in any other way: the advent of nihilism” (posthumous fragment 1887–88 11 [411]; 189).³ For at the same time as the telegraph the railroad also grows, and alongside these two innovations, the explosion of *mass print*, or what the English language will call at the beginning of the twentieth century *mass media*. Nietzsche will strive throughout his work to think the intimate connection between this new dominance of the press, the creation of a leveled *mass*, and the coming of *nihilism*. From *The Wanderer and His Shadow* on, he notes with compelling lucidity that “we hear very well the hammering of the telegraph, but we do not understand it” (posthumous fragment 1877 22 [76]; 392) and that “the printing press, the machine, the railroad, the telegraph are the premises from which nobody has dared draw conclusions for a thousand years” (*The Wanderer and His Shadow*, sec. 278, 674). The conclusion has to be drawn for *a thousand years*, that is to say, for the duration of a reign into which Nietzsche and his contemporaries begin to enter and in which we are today lastingly installed. In that regard, Nietzsche is certainly the first philosopher who strives to *think the media*, in the sense that he is the first who confronts in the first person the unspoken questions that they the media pose for us, at the risk of falling ill from them and hastening his own explosion.

So one has to begin by putting aside the superficial idea of Nietzsche’s contempt for media. Of course, the judgments directed against the press, newspapers, and journalists paraded under his pen: thus he judges the press “a permanent false alert” (*Mixed Opinions and Maxims*, sec. 321, 511), the reading of newspapers a “profound debasement” (posthumous fragment 1880 4 [61]; 114), and the journalist the type one has to despise on principle: “Principle 1) *Profound contempt for those who work in the press*” (posthumous fragment 1884 25 [134]; 49). A superficial Nietzscheanism invoking these texts might be tempted to see here an opposition, in the

sense of an absolute and unbridgeable separation, between on the one hand the leveled masses that constitute the support of mass media, and the solitary aristocracy on the other, fortified within the icy solitude of the heights. But whoever has read *Zarathustra* knows very well that this position is untenable *for Zarathustra himself*, who says already in the prologue that he *must* decline, descend toward the lowliest of men and try to gulp down the worst pathologies of the time, to the point of achieving the greatest disgust. That is precisely the test and proof of the eternal return. How to get to will the eternal return of everything that happens, when what happens is the creation of a debased and failed mass of men experimenting with all the possible modalities of decadence? How to get to want everything and love everything, even the creation of this mass that generates disgust?—a question that replays quite consciously the ordeal of Christ. Briefly, how does one get to want mass media, when they contribute to the failure and debasement of the human animal? The thinking of the eternal return destroys the one-way view of an elevated solitary thought, aristocratically isolated from the conditions of the mass and impervious to the effects of the media.

A major text, to which not enough attention has been given, allows us to go further. It suggests that the thought of the eternal return could be constituted as a new response to the new situation created by the media:

The erstwhile means to produce, through long generations, durable and *identical* essences: . . . the cult of the Ancients (origin of the belief in gods and heroes as in ancestors). Today . . . the opposite tendency: a *newspaper* in the place of daily *prayer*; the railroad, the telegraph. Centralization of a huge sum of different interests in a single soul: which *for this reason* must be very strong and capable of transforming itself. (posthumous fragment 1884 25 [210]; 68–69)

At the point where “the eternal world” (*aiōn*) of Plato and the new *aiōn* of Saint Paul—where the souls of the dead were supposed to be preserved eternally as identical to themselves—are in the process of liquidation, the thinking of the eternal return tries to think eternity no longer *against time*—as no doubt did metaphysics, and toward which Christianity paradoxically tended—but *in relation to time itself*: eternity can no longer be spoken of from outside of time, but from within the temporal itself, that is to say, from events that occur in the flux, and about which it is necessary to think, will, and experience the eternal recurrence, exactly identical—an experience that finds its best paradigm in musical listening, which

demands and finds within itself its own *da capo*. Now this double selling off of an atemporal world above the becoming (the platonic world of Ideas) and of an eternal life beyond passing and death (that which Jesus, St. John, and St. Paul announce in diverse ways) is accelerated by the development of new media, which function as *catalysts of nihilism* by destroying the “eternal world” where up to that point stable essences, the highest values, and immortal souls were preserved.⁴ The era that is inaugurated with an explosion of media corresponds at once to an acceleration of history and to a *fluid becoming of all being*, which loses all form of stability and which increases the consciousness of an *absolute flux*:

Prehistoric eras are defined by tradition across immense stretches of time. In the historic era, the determining factor is each time a freeing from tradition, a difference of opinion, the *free thinking* which makes history. The more the reversing of opinions accelerates, the more the world hastens its course, chronicle is transformed into journal, and in the end the telegraph ascertains what the opinions of men have become in just a few hours. (posthumous fragment 1876 19 [89]; 352)

If the thinking of the Return has to raise in a completely new way the question of the *always*, it's because the old ways of constituting eternity are in the process of being destroyed by the acceleration of events, which for the first time make manifest the reality of *absolute flux*. The era of nihilism is the era when Dionysus (the divine name of absolute flux according to Nietzsche) comes onto the scene of history, appearing in person before men: “I *foresee* something terrible. Chaos is very close. All is flux” (posthumous fragment 1882–83 4 [80]; 137).⁵ All souls help at the same time the acceleration of flux, beginning with that of their own internal flux, and the intensification of their contradictions. A soul at the end of the nineteenth century is exposed in an unpredictable way, not only to the chaotic contradictions of history—it's at this time that, as we know, history is constituted as a discipline—but also to the chaotic contradictions that rend the world *at the same time*, pure form of logical contradiction according to Aristotle's definition. The telegraph and the printing press force the world of the “machinal age” to concentrate on itself an enormous number of different and contradictory interests: “centralization of an enormous number of different interests in a single soul.” The growth of this internal chaos forces the soul to be *far stronger* than the souls of the historical era, because it forces the soul to remain itself (“centralization in a single soul”) while at the same time transforming itself a great deal more and a great deal faster: by incorporating into itself a larger and larger mass of flux

and its contradictions. We will show further on how the thinking of the eternal return attempts to respond to this test, or how the hammer of the Return attempts to respond to the hammering of the telegraph. But we can see from this point on that this putting to the test is the unpredictable work of the media, which forces the era of nihilism to invent a new relationship to constancy and eternity.

Media: Organs of Remote Love?

The pure and simple condemnation of the media is not tenable in Nietzsche's name, not only because the media themselves introduce a considerable renewal of our modes of temporalization, but also because, it turns out, Nietzsche is the first philosopher to affirm *the necessity of media*. From beginning to end, he insists persistently on the necessity of what he calls "love of remoteness,"⁶ that is: the ability to be compatible with what is far from oneself, such compassion allowing at the same time the creation of a *We* and an incorporation of the other into oneself. These concepts (love of remoteness and incorporation) appear in the 1880s, but Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, already speaks of the necessity of an ecstatic compassion with all living beings, a necessity that he baptizes with the name of the Greek god "Dionysus," god of drunkenness and compassion (suffering and joy).⁷ So, from 1872 onward, Nietzsche understands (against Schopenhauer but also against Wagner) that Dionysian *ecstasy* cannot be immediate and requires on the contrary *mediations* that belong to Apollo: figure, image and delimitation. Dionysian compassion assumes the mediations of the tragic scene, that is, the apparition of clear delimited figures in front of the entire Greek public (Apollo), whereby the spectators are together able to bear up under the excess of possibilities that overflow them (Dionysus). These mediations are of course not yet media, if one understands by media the material support of mass communication. But if one holds to a less restrictive definition and if the media designate "any socially instituted structure of communication, then, by extension, the support of the latter,"⁸ the tragic theater seems the medium permitting the Greek community not only to "communicate," but to feel its arch-unity (at once compassionately and affectively).

This originary need of Apollonian mediations for Dionysian *ekstasis* readies Nietzsche to think the necessity of media for the love of the remote. Contrary to what is often said, Nietzsche does not contest the need for compassion. As in *The Birth of Tragedy*,

he affirms on the contrary that the loftiest of men are the most compassionate.⁹ But once again against Schopenhauer, Nietzsche recalls in the 1880s that no compassion is immediate, and that it always engages intermediary conditions or mediations. And among these mediations figure what is called the media, in the most restrictive sense of the term. The telegraph enables traces (*graphein*) to be written at a distance, the telephone transports voices across space, and later tele-vision (in German: *Fern-sehen*) literally permits to *see far*. Equipped with these contrivances, which allow us to access remote human flesh, we are required to “enlarge the concept of nourishment” (posthumous fragment 1881 11 [2]; 441).¹⁰ This enlargement begins already with the appearance of conscience, which, far from allowing a solitary relation to oneself (as in the Cartesian cogito), was first destined to network individuals by assuring their “communication.”¹¹ Unlike other animals,

[w]e are not any longer capable of feeling the unicity of the ego, *we are always at the heart of a plurality* . . . we have transposed and reduced the “society” within us. . . . We welcome within us not only God but all the beings that we recognize, even without naming them: we are the cosmos. . . . Olives and storms have become part of us: the stock exchange and newspapers too. (posthumous fragment 1880 6 [80]; 215–16)

Nietzsche seems to put on the same plane all of man’s incorporations: society, God, the environment, the stock exchange and newspapers. But this “too” (“the stock exchange and newspapers too”) has rather to be heard as an intensification. While earlier man incorporated social relations and the characteristics of his country (“olives and storms,” the vegetation and climate of his land), the man of today incorporates news from the whole world (“the stock exchange and the newspapers”). From whence there arises an unpredictable situation. In extending our field of perception, the media extend our organs of incorporation in forcing us to ingest a huge mass of foreign flux:

“Modernity” under the symbol of nourishment and digestion, / Sensibility inexpressibly more excitable . . . the abundance of disparate impressions greater than ever—the *cosmopolitanism* of dishes, literatures, newspapers, shapes, tastes, even landscapes, etc. / the tempo of this influx a *prestissimo*. (posthumous fragment 1887 10 [18]; 464)

It does not escape Nietzsche what the theoretician of media Marshall McLuhan will explain a century later: “During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today . . . we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace.”¹²

What Nietzsche contests in return is that the media extension of the central nervous system has automatically increased our sense of responsibility and our capacity to sympathize. McLuhan thinks naively that it is enough to extend the central nervous system electrically for it to become more compassionate and responsible: "In the electric age, when our central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action. . . . Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree."¹³ Nietzsche describes to the contrary a fatal turn. At the point where the technical conditions of compassion toward the other and incorporation of the remote accumulate, one has to recognize on the contrary that man's digestive capacities are weakened:

[T]he tempo of this influx a prestissimo: impressions erase each other; one defends oneself instinctively against absorbing anything in depth, "digesting" it" / The result is a weakening of digestive capacities. A kind of adaptation to this accumulation of impressions intervenes: man unlearns how to act. He does nothing more than react to external excitations. . . . Profound weakening of spontaneity. (posthumous fragment 1887 10 [18]; 464)

True digestion—or the making-enter-in-one's-own-flesh of which "incorporation" (*Ein-ver-leibung*) consists—supposes at once that the organism assimilated the foreign body and that the foreign body obliged it to reorganize itself, constraining its spontaneity by new inventions. Here, on the contrary, one witnesses an *adaptation* without tension of flesh to flux, destructive adaptation of ancient organizations and of organizations to come. While *incorporation* allows the organization of strong and individual bodies, *adaptation* leads to the disorganization of all the bodies into one homogeneous mass, ready to bend docilely to all situations. As for the mediating compassion, it has nothing to do with the one invoked by Nietzsche; on the contrary, it inscribes itself in the moral misinterpretation of the *Mit-leid*. It is sympathy with the neighbor or with the one closest (rather than most distant), which means that it is never other than sympathy toward oneself, or complacency toward one's own flesh and its affects:

Sensibility inexpressibly more excitable (under moral tawdry dresses, like the increase of compassion [*Mitleid*]).—Artificial *arrangement* of its own nature to the state of a "mirror": interested, but so to speak in epidermic fashion: a coldness of principle, an equilibrium, a *low* temperature

maintained just below the surface held where warmth, movement, "storm," the play of waves are produced. (posthumous fragment 1887 10 [18])

The paradox is that it is the very organs of incorporation and compassion that destroy the one and the other. This paradox is not new: already in the Socratic age of Greece, the Apollonian media were also detoured from their first aim—to make Dionysian *ekstasis* possible—to the point of making it impossible, this detour working itself out by a transformation of Apollonian figures into fixed concepts, and this in light of an excess of carnal possibilities.¹⁴ Here, too, the organs of incorporation become paradoxically those which make any incorporation impossible. How to interpret this paradox and how must one respond to it? And, especially, how to give once again to the media that which gives them their sense and their function: making possible incorporation of and affection for the remote?

The Criterion of Incorporation: The Recurrence of Flux

If the media have a crucial role, it's because they are at the cross-roads of flesh and flux. Absolute flux (Dionysus) demands to be received and incorporated by an ear embodied (Ariadne). Hence the erotic description, through the love between the god Dionysus and the mortal Ariadne, of the relations between flux and human flesh. If the flesh needs to incorporate flux to become itself (perception, nutrition, digestion), and if human flesh is marked by an extraordinary capacity for incorporation (perception of the distant, compassion for all other flesh, thought and passion for knowledge), the flux is for its part like the score of a piece of music: for the music to start playing, it has to be received, welcomed, and loved by an ear in the flesh. If the flesh needs flux, flux also needs flesh. The one and the other are linked, and must remain linked, by desire or by love (*eros*). Now, just as any great piece of music demands to be heard in the mode of its own repetition (according to the *da capo* that structures all musical listening), so overstrained and oversaturated flux, too, demands to be heard in the mode of recurrence. It wants to be *learned by heart*. Dionysus is the "genius of the heart . . . whose voice knows how to descend to the caverns of the soul," and which "*teaches him to hear*" (*Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 295, 237, my emphasis). At one with this *education of the ear*, recurrence also insures the only connection to *always* that is possible at

the time of the death of God, that of the remembrance of flesh, or of the capacity to incorporate flux “by heart,” that is to say, in its very depths.

Now, the practices of mass media destroy all the conditions required for such incorporation to take place. The destruction is accomplished on the side of producers, as well as receivers.

On the side of producers, who seek an *immediate* connection to the event—a phantasmatic immediacy, we know, since the very term *media* contradicts it. This phantasm of immediacy carries with it a series of destructive consequences: “hot” reactions (which generate a false heat), an economy in the shape of a setting it denies, systematic privileging of the “direct” over the staged (direct access to an event that is itself phantasmatic, since always rendered indirectly by its mediatization). On the side of the receivers, the first consequences go all the way: inflation of “shocks” that do not really touch them since they have not been incorporated by the emitters themselves, incoherent rhapsodies of events that the memory of the receivers never has time to incorporate and that never reach their *heart*—this heart that a music and a poetry learned by heart can reach—the prerogative of an easing of and a diversion from the hard work of incorporation. To the *astrigent* action of incorporation, which always implies at once an opening to flux and a recentering on oneself, to this incorporation that settles itself in the unresolved tension between the chaos of flux and its reorganization by the organism, Nietzsche opposes the *dissolving* and *disorganizing* action of mass media in which what he calls “the letting go” (*sich-gehen-lassen*) prevails:

European democracy *is not* an unleashing of *forces*, but is above all an unleashing of relinquishment, of a search for comfort, of intimate *lazinesses*. The same for the press. (posthumous fragment 1885 34 [163]; 475–76)¹⁵

Nietzsche announces here the confusion, explicit today, between information programs and programs of ease and diversion.¹⁶ Media information seeks the easy and easygoingness of conscience. Instead of tensing up and forming itself through incorporation, the bodies that pretend to “inform themselves” *let themselves go* in a superficially compassionate chaos, allowing themselves to be excited by the titillation of a few “shocks”—which never achieve the fixed base of their selfishness and their calculations:

increase of compassion . . . but so to speak in epidermic fashion: a coldness of principle, an equilibrium, a *low* temperature maintained just

below the surface where warmth, movement, “storms,” the play of waves are produced. (posthumous fragment 1887 10 [18]; 464)

Thus begins a false account of the excess of flux and the happening of events. The “events” that the press tells—and that later the great audiovisual media will relay—are only shocks, which are not incorporated into memory and which, for that very reason, will never become archives of the flesh. *Thus one must refuse them the status of event.*¹⁷ Events that will remain in memory are those temporalized in the mode of recurrence: those that historians, writers, and artists will have taken the time to shape, undertaking a long labor of digestion, of incorporation and staging, such labor implying what Nietzsche terms “philology,” that is, love of the text and of reality.¹⁸

At the same time that the affective disorganization of the flesh grows, what Nietzsche has termed *the mass* also grows and will impose its reign dramatically in the following century. The mass is the rigorous result of the disorganization of flesh. Disorganized and linked among themselves by a common network of affective shocks, bodies resemble one another and end up losing what assures their singularity, as well as their individuation. The key to individuation being incorporation, that is, the tension between the ecstatic exposure to flux and the reorganization of the self that this exposure requires, the destruction of *media of incorporation* by *media of letting go* leads necessarily to the liquidation of individuation. It is this destruction of the media themselves that Nietzsche managed to foresee when he understood, very early, that mass media had taken hold of *Bildung* by imposing their laws on “our educational institutions,” that is, on those media that were to insure the formation (*Bildung*) of human bodies. The mediatic destruction of the media that assured incorporation requires in effect that the question of *the future of our educational institutions* be posed in a new way.¹⁹

To abstain from raising this question would be tantamount to welcoming the reign of what Nietzsche calls “the last man,” that is, a human flesh for whom and through whom nothing happens. The temporalization that prevails in the era of nihilism destroys at once the past, systematically forgotten, and the future, systematically prevented from arriving, to the advantage only of the now. The last man is he who has ensconced himself in the comfort of an instant closed within itself, without relation to what precedes it and what will follow, and which, for that very reason, ignores all responsibility with regard to the flux. The ecstatic instant of Recurrence implies on the contrary a maximum effort of incorporation, and it alone can guarantee the relation of human flesh to the *always*, that

is to say, to the recurrence of flux. This is why the question of the possibility of an Ariadne—and of her ear—of an exact and rigorous counterpoint to the closure of the last man who does not hear at all what is coming, appears before everything else as the problem of *the future of our educational institutions*.

On the Future of Our Incorporations

To hold the question of media in contempt would be to abandon the task of thinking the conditions, necessarily new, of the incorporation of flux. We have just seen that the mediatic *prestissimo* was incompatible with the slow digestion that the incorporation of events requires. But is that not a constraint imposed by the synchronous character of media information? How do we ask media, which want to tell of events that happen at the same time, to take the time to organize them? Are they not constrained, by the absolute flux itself, to observe only speed and its *prestissimo*?

It is enough to recall that all flesh is also, in its own existence, exposed to the speed of absolute flux and its avalanches of events in order to realize that the objection does not hold. To me, too, in one instant, a ton of things occur, important or insignificant, always new and menacing, which it is my obligation to face. This obligation never relinquishes me—on the contrary—from the task of organizing them in organizing myself. As organized flesh, I know, or I feel intimately, that this is the second condition for events to happen to me still. An organization without accounting and accountability would lead my own flesh to sclerosis, a slow form of my own death, but an accounting without organization would lead it just as surely to its dissolution in an indistinct and homogeneous mass of identical flesh, another form of slow death in the nihilist era.

This double task of accounting and organization imposes itself with great rigor on the media and on the great collective bodies they are supposed to inform. Everything that Nietzsche says about the flesh, that its cohesion, for example, is assured by telegraphic communications conveying a huge mass of messages and information, shows that flesh—no matter which one—already experiences the task of organizing its own flux, and this in real time:

The hand of the pianist, the link that guides it and a sector of the brain together form an organ (which must *isolate* itself so as to contract itself strongly). *The separate parts of the body linked telegraphically*. (posthumous fragment 1883 7 [211]; 308)²⁰

Thus nothing authorizes them to be relieved of the task of organizing the flux, not even the synchronic dimension in which the media tend to hold themselves. For the effort to catch the speed of absolute flux will never manage to surmount the noncoincidence between flesh and flux. Instead of a synchronous coincidence with absolute flux, the organization of flesh implies always, on the contrary, a slowing down of the flux.²¹ Flesh is like the dam or weir in which the flux accumulates and organizes itself. Only this slowing down or this *temporization* of the flesh in face of the flux makes possible the surging of events and, beyond, the retaining of distinct epochs. Thus, the media ought to assume a necessary slowness, necessary to the incorporation of flux in flesh, that is to say, in the mode of its eternal recurrence.

For what Nietzsche says about musical listening and its *da capo* is worthy of the reception of any event. The one, like the other, is never immediate, but supposes on the contrary the active work of the ear, itself bound up with *procedures of apprenticeship*:

One has to learn how to love.—this is what comes to us in music: one has first of all to *learn to hear* a figure or a melody in general, to distinguish it, to differentiate it, to isolate and delimit it as if it had a life in itself; then one has to put to use effort and good will to *support* it despite its strangeness, one needs patience [*Geduld*] toward its look and its expression, tenderness for whatever it has of the bizarre,—and finally the moment arrives when we are *used to* it, when we await it, when we feel that we would miss it if it did not come; and now, it does not cease to exert upon us its power and its charm, to the point of making us her humble and enchanted lovers, wanting nothing other in the world than her and again her [*und wieder sie*].²²

To get to love that which arrives in the mode of its eternal return (“her and once again her”)—*be* it, according to the criterion of incorporation—is never an immediate given. This always presupposes an education of the ear (“the genius of the heart . . . *learns how to hear*”): a long labor of delimiting contours (distinction and differentiation), accompanied by an ability to expose oneself to the remote and the strange (patience and hospitality in regard to the new). This slow work of the ear on flux is the activity proper to Ariadne, who attunes her ear until she makes of it a labyrinth comparable in complexity to the labyrinth of the flux.²³ It is clear that what happens in music is a paradigm for no matter what incorporation of flux:

But this does not happen to us only in music: it is precisely thus that we have *learned to love* all the things we love. We end up always by being

recompensed for our good will, our patience, our equanimity, our gentleness toward the stranger, while the stranger slowly lifts her veil and presents herself as a new and unspeakable beauty—that is her way of saying *thank you* for your hospitality. He who loves himself has only learned to love himself in this way: there is no other. Love too has to be learned.²⁴

Like Ariadne's ear, art is the human activity that aims to realize the highest incorporation of flux in the flesh and which, for that reason, invents new organs of incorporation, whose workings it has to learn. It is because it has equipped itself with the tools of art that human flesh has managed to surpass ordinary animal flesh by a higher capacity of incorporation and compassion toward everything that comes its way. But it is that, too, which gives function and measure to art and its craft. Great music, for instance, is not that which excites the flesh with an avalanche of more or less intense "shocks" (Wagner): it is that which manages to equip the flesh for a higher incorporation of that which befalls it (Bach, Mozart, Bizet), that is, for what Nietzsche calls *the affirmation of becoming*, which one must never confuse with the Romantic abandonment to chaos.²⁵

Risking themselves in the front lines to the invention of new organs of incorporation, it is the experimental procedures of art that ought to impose themselves on the media networks of the incorporation of flux. But exactly the opposite happens. While the media ought to be held under the authority of art and its slow procedures of incorporation, nineteenth-century art allowed itself progressively to be governed by the mediatic *prestissimo* and its aesthetic of shock, the destroyer of all incorporation.²⁶ Beyond art and artists, whole institutions of incorporation (cultural and educational institutions) have allowed themselves to be governed by this aesthetics of shock, which held that it was better to affirm the absolute flux by destroying all the tools of incorporation created by the flesh. This process is what Nietzsche calls the loosening of the arc,²⁷ of the arc of incorporation, which was once tensed to the maximum, owing to the efforts and methods of philology. Thus we are left with the "directness," which pretends to substitute itself for the staging, or the event *in first heat*, which pretends to be able to do without choices and *cool* selections that all shaping into form implies. In the face of the dangerous destruction of events, Nietzsche formulated steadfastly the same reply: to the Romantic illusion of immediate compassion of all flesh toward itself (Schopenhauer, Wagner), he opposed first of all the necessity of Apollonian mediations (1872); to the illusion of an adherence without conditions to the flux of becoming, he opposed (contra Wagner

and all nineteenth-century Romantic art) the necessity of inventing new organs of incorporation capable of resisting the flux by imposing upon it new *forms* and new *rhythms*. It is these forms and these rhythms, these complex and refined means of a slow digestion of flux, that today find themselves attacked from all sides in the name of speed—of the direct and immediate access to events.

Opposed to this tendency, which destroys flesh as well as access to flux, only the understanding that our procedures of incorporation occupy a critical place could make possible the refastening of human flesh to the recurrence of events. At a time when the phantasm of the mediatic *prestissimo*, that is to say, of the illusion of an immediate and unconditional access to the new, imposes itself in formative institutions, it would be necessary on the contrary that art, culture, and education reappropriate for themselves the technical possibilities opened by the new media in order to make of them new organs of incorporation. But this requires that philosophical thought consider these modes of organization as constitutive of events, not in the sense of a creation of objects by a sovereign subject (*ego* or transcendental subject), but in the sense of the conditions of possibility constrained and affected by the flux that they have to take in. In the face of the manifestation, in person, of absolute flux and the concomitant liquidation of ancient spheres that guaranteed the always (Platonic and Paulinian *aiōn*), it is thus no longer possible to hold to a *first philosophy* anterior to questions of formation, education, and culture—an impossibility that one must recognize in the very name of the advent of events. Nietzsche's profound conviction, as the first witness to the "age of machines," was that it had become possible *that no event ever reach us*, and that that possibility (the *nihil* of nihilism), far from granting us full powers, gave us a responsibility: that of *organizing* ourselves in organizing *mediatically* our own modes of reception of the flux. Whence comes the necessity of raising once again the question of *the future of our educational institutions* in relation to the new media. On the answer to this question depends the advent or event of the future—the *future of our incorporations*.

Notes

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1880), sec. 278.

² Frédéric Barbier and Catherine Bertho Lavenir, *Histoire des Médias* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1996), 127.

³ Hereafter, Nietzsche's texts are cited with the title of the work followed by the paragraph, the subtitle and, in the case of posthumous fragments, the year, and the numbering of the Colli-Montinari edition. Finally, we indicate the page of the German edition (*Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 15 vols. [Munich: Walther de Gruyter, 1980]).

⁴ In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche interprets in effect the Paulinian opposition between time and eternity as a betrayal of the Christianity of Jesus, for whom eternal life was on the contrary lived here and now.

⁵ Also see posthumous fragment 1882–83 4 [83]; 138: "The decomposition of morality leads, in its practical consequence, to the atomized individual, and, besides, to the fragmenting of the individual into pluralities—absolute flux."

⁶ Posthumous fragment 1882 3 [1]; 93: "Above love of what is close is love of what is far away."

⁷ See the first section of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

⁸ Barbier and Lavenir, *Histoire des Medias*, 5.

⁹ For instance, see posthumous fragment 1881 12 [182]; 607: "A man without any love or any participation with others is . . . a poor man." Also see posthumous fragment 1882–83 5 [1] 30; 191: "To experience a lot of living; thus experience together a lot of the past; experience a lot of living proper and strange as one unity: that's what makes men the loftiest; I call them 'sums.'"

¹⁰ "Enlarge the concept of nourishment. . . . We will aspire to the other, to all that is outside of us as to our nourishment." See also posthumous fragment 1880 6 [450]; 314–15: "If we do not know how to read a book for the love of the other, how poor we will be! . . . If we remain folded in on ourselves, how could we grow and enrich ourselves! For nourishment we need the pleasure taken in that which is foreign to us, *that which is precisely nourishment*. The pleasure taken in the human is necessary to our *nourishment*."

¹¹ See *The Gay Science*, sec. 354.

¹² Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964; repr., Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

¹⁴ See *The Birth of Tragedy* sec. 12 and following.

¹⁵ On the press as "letting go," see also posthumous fragments 1885 34[65], 34[76], and 36[17], texts preparatory to the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

¹⁶ See *Twilight of the Idols*, sec. 30, 130: "*The right to stupidity*. The tired worker . . . who lets things go as they come; this typical character, whom one finds now, in the era of labor . . . in all classes of society, pretends today to reclaim *art* for his use, including the book, and above all the newspaper. . . . In similar eras, art has the right to *pure idiocy*, to vacancies of intelligence, of spirit and of heart." Also see Bernard Stiegler: "[A] society which annuls the existence of those who make it up, in subjecting it to the imperatives of subsistence . . . is lived by all, consciously or not, as a *global process of debasement*, where conscience (the time of conscience) has become merchandise the price of which is calculable in a marketplace where it is exchanged each day according to supply and demand" (*Mécréance et discredit*, vol. 1: *La decadence des démocraties industrielles* [Paris: Galilée, 2004], 54).

¹⁷ On this point see Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 313–55. Claude Romano distinguishes in this tradition between event and information: "[W]hile the event shakes our foundation and *shakes us up*, information limits itself to *hit* us, but touches us less deeply to the precise extent that it takes on the appearance of a 'shock'" (*L'événement et le monde* [Paris: Puf, 1998], 279).

¹⁸ On the Nietzschean concept of philology, see *The Antichrist*, sec. 52, 23: "By philology, one has to understand here, in a general sense, the art of reading well—of being able to read events *without* falsifying them by interpretation, *without* renouncing, in the exigency for understanding, prudence, patience (*Geduld*), and delicacy. Philology as *ephexis* in interpretation, whether it is a matter of books, news, facts concerning the weather or destiny." Philology thus presents itself as the paradigm of *slow digestion* permitting the incorporation *by heart* or *to the letter* of the flux of flesh.

¹⁹ See Bernard Stiegler's reflections on the trouble with our educational institutions (*La technique et le temps*, vol. 3: *Le temps du cinéma* [Paris: Galilée, 2001]).

²⁰ See also posthumous fragment 1885 34 [54]; 437: "The 'external world' acts upon us: the effect is telegraphed to the brain, there it is placed, shaped and geared to a case: then the cause *is projected and only then the event enters our consciousness*."

²¹ On life as a necessary slowing of the flux, see posthumous fragment 1885 36 [22]; 560: "Life . . . as a durable form of a *process of fixation of forces*." Also see posthumous fragment 1885–86 1 [92]; 33: "*All struggle*—everything that happens is a struggle—has need of *duration*."

²² *The Gay Science*, sec. 334, 559–60.

²³ On the labyrinthine complexities of Ariadne's ear, see posthumous fragments 1887 9 [115] and 10 [95].

²⁴ *The Gay Science*, sec. 334, 559–60.

²⁵ On this point, for instance, see Nietzsche, *Nietzsche contra Wagner* (1888; "Wagner as a Danger," 422), which opposes to a Wagnerian continuous melody "the necessary measure which [obliges] that we follow certain accents of tempo and intensity of equal value, [demanding] of the soul of the listener a constant *pondering*. [It is] the contrast between this current of fresh air, born of thinking, and the lukewarm breath of enthusiasm, which [makes for] the powerful enchantment of all *good* music. . . . The 'continuous melody' *wants* precisely to break this harmonious regularity of tempos and intensities . . . the complete degeneration of the rhythmic sense, *chaos* in the place of rhythm."

²⁶ This aesthetics of shock, Nietzsche also calls the aesthetics of "effect" (see *Nietzsche contra Wagner*).

²⁷ See the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* and preparatory texts already cited.