Knowledge, Spirit, Law, Book 1: Radical Scholarship

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INTRODUCTION

RADICAL SCHOLARSHIP

I. COMMENTARIES ON COMMENTARIES

The birds are singing in your eyes today / Sweet flowers blossom in your smile / The wind and sun are in the words you say / Where might your lonesome lover be?¹

Woody Guthrie

As a phenomenology of scholarship, Knowledge, Spirit, Law takes the measure of discursive and non-discursive forms of knowledge without resort to an epistemology or theory of language, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein sought in his Philosophical Investigations, his post-Tractatus attempt to divine how language-games operate when ideality is bracketed and

¹Woody Guthrie, “Birds and Ships” (1947). Guthrie never set these words to music. Instead they were transmitted via his daughter, Nora Guthrie, and the Woody Guthrie Foundation, to the English left-wing folk musician and activist Billy Bragg, who then composed the elegiac song performed and recorded by Natalie Merchant and Bragg (with Wilco) on Mermaid Avenue (New York: Elektra, 1998), sessions intentionally designed to transplant the lyrical gifts of Guthrie to a new generation of folk artists.
subjective agency is effectively demoted or neutralized in favor of collective “forms-of-life” and expression.\(^2\) The premise is that subjective agency is the missing ingredient in all theories of instrumental knowledge that return to language to ground discourse and/or system—an irreducible or unavoidable existential return, should anyone wish to attempt to say anything whatsoever about the unsayable. Conjoining high and low, then, or conjoining the ideal and the real in the manner of David Lang’s choral work, *The Little Match Girl Passion* (2007), where the high-theological prospects of the libretto for Johann Sebastian Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* (1727) are imported into Hans Christian Andersen’s tragic fable “The Little Match Girl” (1845), to exceptional effect, relies on the now-fashionable penchant for seeking the transcendent in the immanent and vice versa (the paradoxical or paralogical act of “planting lotuses in fire”).\(^3\) Such a quest

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\(^3\) First published in December 1845 in *Dansk Folkekalender (for 1846)*, “The Little Match Girl” has a long history of being assimilated to other media. The somewhat sentimental or mawkish tone of this disarmingly simple tale suggests that its power lies somewhere outside the simple frame of the narrative. Almost Dickensian in spirit, “The Little Match Girl” contains minefields for the moral imagination. So, too, is the purpose of the fantasia (musical or literary), and of both gothic and decadent literatures. As a possible parable for the
has, since time immemorial, served as foundation stone for fusing the arts and humanistic or philosophical studies, generally. Yet this quest or inquisition also advances meta-historically, in apparent reverse chronology, toward the mysterious origin of the arts and allied humanistic concerns that suggests “a secret concordance” only legible from a perspective that collapses normative time-senses and delivers what Wittgenstein sought (but through purely non-objective, non-utilitarian means), natural philosophy thereby falling back into an uneasy relationship with moral philosophy.

Knowledge, Spirit, Law seeks to re-assess and re-configure the resources available today for new-old forms of high scholarship previously advanced under the auspices of pre-modernist, modernist, and post-modernist avant-gardism, but caught somehow in the still-born auspices of neo-liberal capitalism. Thus the anti-capitalist sublime as antidote, plus the relation of disparate forms of anti-modernism to anti-capitalism.

redemptive power of the imagination, the importation of aspects of the libretto from Bach’s St. Matthew Passion (via St. Matthew, Picander, and H.P. Paull) confers wholly other precepts upon “The Little Match Girl,” forcing the audience of the “chorale” to make ethical and moral connections (via ethical and moral revelation) between the otherworldly Passion of Christ and the this-worldly nature of human suffering. In this manner, the power of imagination invokes Revelation, exiting the mere existential register for immemorial metaphysical and meta-historical prospects. Comments based on the performance by the Virginia Chorale (Charles Woodward, Conductor) of Bach’s Motets BWV 227, 230, and 244, St. Matthew Passion, and Lang’s The Little Match Girl Passion (for Chorus), February 8, 2015, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Norfolk, Virginia, USA.

4 The premise is that all three forms of modernism belong to Modernism proper, and that the great missing term is anti-modernism. While syllogistic, this eliding of difference returns arguments to the ground at which they might actually accomplish something—Modernism as subset of Modernity. The latter conclusion pushes spectral aspects of anti-modernism into the picture through the retrospective analytic of countering Modernism’s claims to have neutralized historical antecedents through the miracle of its virgin birth.
As such, the critical coordinates for proposed new works of this order of intellection in service to nothing are entirely provisional and futural, at once. In many ways the state of humanistic scholarship in Late Modernity has been undermined by pseudo-objective or pseudo-scientific protocols that are, in fact, productive of a stalemate that neutralizes revolutionary praxis across the Arts and Humanities. It is the concord or discord between discursive orders and non-discursive orders that tell the tale most succinctly; while it is the transmigration of the tenets of high scholarship to the arts, and the transference of the subjective states of art to scholarship, that might undermine the biases of so-called scientific research in humanistic studies and endeavors. For these reasons, as well, it is the “voice” in such avant-garde works, past and present, that signals what is at stake through such works—arguably, subjective states as they exist in or inform collective states.\footnote{This suggests that the primary target of neo-liberal capitalism is subjectivity itself.}

Collective states, here, are configured as the “socio-cultural” register within collective experience, while the “socio-economic” is demoted due to its prevalence as tableau for endless excuses for no progress whatsoever toward ending the stalemate. Incrementalism under present conditions might, in turn, be dismissed as the precise generative cause for the forms of circularity dissected below, insofar as the rapid expansion of the technological supports for neo-liberal capitalism erase any gain via incrementalism and its bias (biological and Darwinian determinism).\footnote{Burkeanism always appears and disappears during times of utter socio-economic or socio-political distress, as does (its opposite) Augustinianism. It might be said that one favors teleology and the other eschatology; or, Burkeanism favors the “long march through institutions” and Augustinianism foresees the relegation of such institutions to the scrap heap of History. See, for example, how Augustinianism informed the debates between Aquinas and Bonaventure regarding Agent Intellect in Gavin Keeney, “Not-I/Thou: Agent Intellect and the...
in the Twenty-first Century misses entire swathes of so-called labor and cannot account for the most pernicious forms of theft by Capital. This theft now proceeds via immaterial means, and it is immaterial labor that is the ultimate frontier

Immemorial,” in Manuel Gausa et al., eds., Rebel Matters/Radical Patterns (Genoa: University of Genoa, 2015), 446–451.

7 Thomas Piketty, Capital in the Twenty-first Century, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014). In political terms, the present failure of the European Union (EU) pact might be seen as the failure of a socio-economic union that is, explicitly, not a socio-cultural union. Notably, the socio-economic pact, and the intra-state exploitative practices associated with it, attempt to condition and control socio-cultural programs within the EU bureaucracy for, solely, socio-economic gains. Thus the EU project, as neo-liberal putsch, has severed productive relations between the economic and cultural regimes of Europe, all the while, through its Brussels-based ministries, attempting to dictate terms to those who actually produce intellectual and cultural capital—including academia, through, for example, the inducements of Horizon 2020 research grants and the Bologna Accords (circa 2010). Thus the Franciscan “anti-capitalist” concept of the “right to have no rights,” but from within a Rule (“form-of-life” as larger project and its collective, radical functions/purposes). See Giorgio Agamben, “Highest Poverty and Use,” in Giorgio Agamben, The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 123–143. Agamben credits the interpretation of the Franciscan rule as the renunciation of all rights (“the right to have no rights”) to Hugh of Digne’s De finibus paupertatis (On the Ends of Poverty): Hugh of Digne, “De finibus paupertatis auctore Hugone de Digna,” Archivium Franciscanum Historicum 5 (1912): 277–290. For a discussion of the “right to have no rights,” see Gavin Keeney, “Montanism: Insurrection and Resurrection,” in Gavin Keeney, Not-I/Thou: The Other Subject of Art and Architecture (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 95–110. Hugh of Digne (d. 1285) was a Provençal Franciscan ascetic. Francis of Assisi died in 1226. A mere 59 to 60 years separates their deaths. The Provençal connection is perhaps telltale, as Francis’ early days were spent mimicking the Romantic exploits of Provençal troubadours, and (arguably) it is late-medieval “Langue d’Oc” that, in part, animates Franciscan religiosity.
for Capital, its conquest prefigured in the violation of regimes of thought; that is, regimes of speculative praxis previously, for the most part, beyond the reach of mercantile and industrial capitalism. This new form of conquest, labeled here and there as Cognitive Capitalism, clearly requires an equally powerful response at the very level by which the conquest operates.\(^8\) New-old forms of radical scholarship, then, suggest an agenda that must remain ultra-immaterial yet range fully from “star to furrow.”

When did high scholarship become commentaries on commentaries—a “commentariat” resembling contemporary media (and its reduction to talking heads)?\(^9\) Why and when

\(^8\) Indeed, there is an immaterial aspect to all labor that is not reducible to capital. Arguably, this excess is what is now sought by Capital via immaterial means (spectral exploitation). “If capital ever succeeds in quantifying, and subsequently fully commodifying, labour, as it is constantly trying to, it will also squeeze that indeterminate, recalcitrant human freedom from within labour that allows for the generation of value. Marx’s brilliant insight into the essence of capitalist crises was precisely this: the greater capitalism’s success in turning labour into a commodity, the less the value of each unit of output it generates, the lower the profit rate and, ultimately, the nearer the next recession of the economy as a system. The portrayal of human freedom as an economic category is unique in Marx, making possible a distinctively dramatic and analytically astute interpretation of capitalism’s propensity to snatch recession, even depression, from the jaws of growth”: Yanis Varoufakis, “How I Became an Erratic Marxist,” The Guardian, February 18, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/feb/18/yanis-varoufakis-how-i-became-an-erratic-marxist. Article adapted from a lecture originally delivered at the 6th Subversive Festival in Zagreb, Croatia, in 2013. See http://www.subversivefestival.com/.

\(^9\) The exponential explosion of academic conferences, fees and peer-review games included (plus the preference for conferences as proof of “research”), is one example of the increasingly circular nature of academic discourse. Another is the set of rules now managed from above, from within the hierarchical corporate management schemes of universities, for what constitutes “impact” for research. Books no longer matter, whereas co-written papers for conferences and highly
did scholars decide to not risk their own subjectivity (always more than mere opinions) in the production of texts—bracketing or burying the revolutionary praxis of the speculative? The circularity of textual criticism and the endlessness of commentary is, indeed, a symptom of some larger, mostly unseen or unacknowledged complex that has permeated late-modernist cultural production, no less and no more subservient to capitalist reification than other forms of information and entertainment. “Garbage in, garbage out” has been converted to “Garbage in, product out.” Scientific research is an oxymoron, as a result, in the Arts and Humanities. Its premises are borrowed from disciplines that have no relationship to humanistic exegesis or artistic intent—such borrowings simply mirror the productive élan of the sciences. In fact, the protocols of scientific research destroy humanistic concerns, converting them to data, analysis, and repetition—circularity itself. This circularity gives the lie to professed forms of interdisciplinarity and intertextuality, foremost given that the “borrowing” is rarely the speculative gist of a discipline but, instead, the well-worn apparatus or empty rhetorical gesture (emptied of any dynamic content).

Why is the speculative confined to the arts, or—worse still—to cultural studies (the circularity of endless discourse present there mimicking knowledge production based on citation and interpretation of received wisdom)? How have the arts been isolated and rendered toothless since the inception of Modernism, when revolutionary-critical and productive work was one of the key operative elements of the “architecture” of Modernism (if not Modernity)?

The venues for the dissemination of such radical works have been notably narrowed—cinema remains one, while the much-vaunted situational madness of forms of constantly mutating new media (said to be available to one and all) both allows reflexion and disconnects it from most or all larger networked journals receive the highest marks, a demand-driven campaign for attention that translates into funding and/or promotion.
socio-cultural projects. Yet a *détourned* new-media project (for example, the EZLN campaign noted in Essay Four within this volume) might use these analogues for speculative thought against the grain—against neo-liberalist anomie and the preservation of post-modernist *différance* as means to atomize consciousness and instill the intended—a society of control.¹⁰

¹⁰ For a concise definition of neo-liberalism, see Benjamin Selwyn, “Neoliberalism is Alive and Well,” *Le monde diplomatique*, December 2014, http://mondediplo.com/blogs/neoliberalism-is-alive-and-well: “Neoliberal policies have been implemented from 1973 in Pinochet’s Chile, in the UK and US under Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s and then across increasing swathes of the world. These policies include, privatization, the de-regulation of the financial sector, increasing openness to foreign trade and investment, and cuts to public welfare spending. Supporters of neoliberal policies argue that these will increase economic efficiency as state regulation of the economy is replaced by more accurate ‘market signals’. These are held to be better at encouraging and allocating investment, which in turn leads to higher economic growth and greater benefits for the economy and population as a whole.” Selwyn adds: “Neoliberal policies aim to reduce wages to the bare minimum and to maximize the returns to capital and management. They also aim to demobilise workers’ organisations and reduce workers to carriers of labour power—a commodity to be bought and sold on the market for its lowest price. Neoliberalism is about re-shaping society so that there is no input by workers’ organisations into democratic or economic decision-making. Crises and austerity may not be intentionally sought by most state leaders and central bank governors, but they do contribute significantly towards pursuing such ends. Consequently, these politicians and leaders of the economy do not strive to put in place new structures or policies that will reduce the recurrence of crisis.” And further, according to Selwyn: “The rising levels of inequality associated with neoliberal policies are often decried by critics as weakening social ties and generating social conflict. But this is exactly what neoliberal policies are designed to do—to break apart social organisations such as trade unions, transform worker’s into individuals at the mercy of firms’ hiring and firing strategies, and transfer resources from workers to owners and managers of capital. In this regard neoliberalism uses crisis and austerity to great effect.”
It is the theft of speculative praxis that is most disturbing—its conversion to information, data, and entertainment well-known and endlessly noted. Post-Marxist diatribes notwithstanding, reification proceeds in many cases by complicity—that is, out of ignorance or out of rote self-interest. The platforms for the dissemination of such “other works” remain the issue, and the hardware and software available increasingly turned against such works, making the advent of the Digital Humanities within academia particularly frightful for revolutionary socio-cultural action, whether direct or indirect. The appropriations are stunning, as in, for example, “Malevich to

11 See the link between Direct Action in political terms and Direct Cinema via Chris Marker. Marker adopted the term Direct Cinema as an antidote to 1950s’ French documentary cinema (roughly equivalent to cinéma-vérité) around the time of Le joli mai, which is curiously the time of his great pseudo-sci-fi film, La jetée: Chris Marker and Pierre Lhomme, Le joli mai: Mai 1962 (1962). Le joli mai concerns the mood of the French electorate near the end of the Algerian War. Marker’s commentary (the voice-over) has been criticized for being less than objective—more specifically, for being condescending. Notably, the film was also initially censored. “Michel Delahaye says that the people to whom we are introduced [in Le joli mai] are all awful, but that this is because Marker’s superior attitude portrays them so that we can only judge them thus”: Sarah Cooper, Chris Marker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 40; with reference, also, to Michel Delahaye, “La chasse à l’I,” Cahiers du cinéma 146 (August 1963): 5 [5–17]. For a summary of Le joli mai, plus La jetée’s near simultaneous creation out of the dust of the latter film, see Catherine Lupton, Chris Marker: Memories of the Future (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 78–95. Regarding the controversies surrounding this film, via its non-objective, engaged status, see: Cooper, Chris Marker, 38–45; Birgit Kämper and Thomas Tode, eds., Chris Marker: Filmessayist (Munich: CICIM, 1997), 241–245; and Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar, “Cinéma-vérité and the Documentary Film of Ideas,” in Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar, The Technique of Film Editing, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Focal Press, 1968), 297–321 (regarding Le joli mai, see 303–317). For an analysis of the overall thematic structure of the film (“principles of selection”) and the role of the commentary, see the latter.
the Tate” (noted in Essay One in this volume), etc. Generally, the macabre premise is that avant-garde works are worthless until the artist/author is dead (in cases of posthumous success) and out of the way. Appropriation proceeds, mercilessly, via the death of the work itself or the artist/author—the “death of the work” being its belated assimilation.

The mocking of the “care of the self,” primarily on the left due to the political implication (but equally on the right), is utterly spellbinding and malicious, at once. Why denigrate those who choose to step back from circular discourses to investigate the articles of subjective agency in close proximity to an idealist inquest into the shattered project of knowledge of the self (knowledge in/for itself)? Sophie Calle et al. (including Bruce Nauman and Bill Viola) might be said to have precipitated in the contemporary visual arts a return to psycho-social navel-gazing on the one hand, while on the other hand, the more severe aspects of hyper-consciousness go unnoted in commentaries that revert to the art-historical or art-critical versions of circular discourse (via academia) or popular commentary (via the art media). The high-idealistic prospects must be preserved, regardless, as they lead to, or open onto, other prospects that are, ineluctably, present in all such operations (as proverbial absence, ghost or unholy hole in things).

12 The term contemporary in relation to art criticism is relative to contemporary art’s relationship to modernist and post-modernist art. Contemporary thus confers the status of “not modern and not post-modern” on the work. The term super-contemporary has been invented by the art world to signify “now,” or that one must be alive to be contemporary, dismissing anyone dead or passé as pre- or not-super-contemporary.
II. PRE-CONSCIOUS MOODS AND BLIND FATE

The pre-conscious or semi-conscious mood (roughly equivalent to, or consistent with Georg Simmel’s concept of *Stimmung*) that crosses a work or set of works as series is what gives a work or set of works the ability to synthesize the episodic aspects of its production, Aristotle’s point in the *Poetics* (c. 355 BCE); while the mood also conveys an extreme existential crisis, the work becomes strangely universal in an earth-shattering, ethical and moral (non-moralistic) manner. Such is the reason why the libretto of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* could be mapped onto the fable, “The Little Match Girl,” to profound effect in Lang’s *The Little Match Girl Passion (for Chorus)*; and such is why in certain artists—for example, Andrei Tarkovsky—all works become one work. In the latter case the mood is sustained across all works. This universalizing trait rooted in existential-metaphysical desire is perhaps musical (or, at the least metrical) in its fundamental disposition, proceeding by way of the states or time-senses provided by “musical” composition—perhaps yet another reason for Arthur Schopenhauer’s privileging of music, over and against (as antidote to) blind fate. Eros/Thanatos is the structuralist dyad most often used in criticism to signal, discuss, or justify this dance. Shakespeare’s universality, in turn, is traceable to themes that permeate his plays (each one a closed book or circuit, operating as sustained mood and Wittgensteinian language-game unto itself), as if they contain an internal weather, with *Cymbeline*, for example, drawn against the often-stormy skies of Arcadian experience. This “weather” is a half-atmospheric, half-linguistic affair that is sustained as subtending chord coming to full self-consciousness in the most poetical moments of the “operatic” apparatus of the play. From such a mood the theatrical *mise-en-scène* emerges, minimalist or not. Dramatist Peter Brook is superb in this former, minimalist regard. Andrei Tarkovsky’s acute attention to *mise-en-scène* in cinema is exemplary in this latter, non-minimalist regard, as is Jean-Luc Godard’s recourse to “pop-
ulating” his film-essays with ciphers and enigmatic gestures drawn from parallel disciplines (literature and music) as a way of providing just such a level of reflexion or revelation to the work. Gestures of this order are decidedly not symbolic. They register, instead, an irreality that underwrites reality. Mise-en-abyme, in turn, is the inversion of this substantiation of self-consciousness for the work, most often utilized to invert the self-same premises, yet to also signal their absence or presence, anyway, through negation (direct or indirect). Thus we have occurrences and recurrences of anti-aesthetic and neo-iconoclastic movements in art and art criticism, most often during times of crisis. So-called scientific scholarship, on the other hand, versus artistic scholarship, obliterates both mise-en-scène and mise-en-abyme as formal options for the language-games deployed in the production of knowledge—opting for the clear light (or clear weather) of “pseudo-objectivity.” The sunny disposition of natural or analytical philosophy applied to scholarship hides or elides all of the above. It is only in the very origin of this split between natural philosophy and moral philosophy, such as represented in the life-works of Giordano Bruno or Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, that we find both the sunny and stormy disposition played against each other to significant artistic and proto-scientific effect, and arguably this is what resurfaces in the Surrealist excurses of Gaston Bachelard, yet under the rubric of “Surrealism”—“Surrationalism” surely the same complex that animated Romanticism, the halfway house for malcontents between Neo-classicism and Modernism.

All works of such a caliber are, therefore, lived—through sustaining a mood for the duration of the work (through full immersion). The pre-conscious meditation that sustains the work is, then, transferred to the work and lives on in the work. For these reasons, and in exemplary fashion, art criticism has conferred upon Caravaggio’s late paintings a status that approaches an “operatic” structure or whole, conferring upon innumerable paintings a singular mood (shadow of the Kingdom) that resembles what crosses all of the films of Tarkov-
sky—that is, recourse to a type of Rule (form-of-life) that might justify one work, several works, or all works by an artist-scholar. Caravaggio’s late works share the common theme of the existential threat he lived through and died for via those last paintings—in other words, his always impending arrest, and his flight to Malta and then Sicily. The Rule for the work of art or scholarship, indeed, resembles monastic rules, and the existential plight most often incorporated into such rules is the great subtending chord of the sustained meditation that produces works of this order. So too could Cara-

13 Chris Marker’s cinematic portrait of Tarkovsky, Une journée d’Andrei Arsenevitch (1999), claims just such a set of dynamic principles for his films by conferring upon them an elemental structure—the appearance and re-appearance of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water.

14 The Rule sustains the subtending mood of monastic orders. This would, in part, explain the schism between the Conventuals and the Spirituals in the Franciscan Order, a break that occurred just after Francis’ death, but a break that was already prefigured in early skirmishes before his death. The foremost cause of the schism was the relationship of the order to Holy Poverty, to its preservation through lived experience, versus interpretation and elaboration—that is, the preservation of lived observation for and toward the exceptional Franciscan “right to have no rights.” The same might be said for the Early Christians, perhaps justifying the burial of the Gnostic texts in the sands of North Africa as their persecution proceeded from Rome. The absence of a Rule (or, forms-of-life) in the production of works of art (with Lars von Trier’s Dogme 95 manifesto being an extreme example of a Rule for cinema) justifies the arch-critical operations of art and textual criticism, while supporting the attendant thematic that artistic and literary works are either episodic or fully synthetic works with a form of self-consciousness that confers upon them qualities of subjectivity or subjective agency—a surplus value that is nonetheless often at odds with the artist-scholar, and most assuredly outliving the artist-scholar. Alain Badiou’s statements regarding fidelity to the Event for poets (the event or premonitional aspects of Art, Revolution, and Love) are consistent with this presentiment for the expressive regimes of high art and high scholarship as forms of Being (forms of life) addressed to an “as yet to come” (with Becoming as prefiguration of the inherent multiplicity of an excessive universality
vaggio’s last paintings in many instances be called “self-portraits,” foremost the very late painting of Francis of Assisi meditating upon a crucifix (the crucifix resting on an open book, and the open book resting on a skull), the gloomy weather of its prevailing mood the exact something else that crosses all of the late paintings.\textsuperscript{15}

proper to experience itself). The mood, therefore, is the Rule, and the Rule is held in relation to the originary mood by way of dialectical sublimation.

III. GUIDEBOOKS AS SCHOLARSHIP

The Universe: His wine cellar; / The atom’s heart: His measuring cup. / Intellect is drunk, earth drunk, sky drunk / Heaven perplexed with Him, restlessly seeking, / Love in His heart, hoping at least / for a single whiff of the fragments / of that wine, that clear wine the angels drank / from that immaterial pot, a sip of the dregs, / the rest poured out upon the dust: / one sip, and the Elements whirl in drunken dance / falling now into water, now in blazing fire. / And from that smell of / that spilled cup / man rises from the dust and soars to heaven.16

Sussan Deyhim/Sa’d Ud Din Mahmūd Shabistārī

How to chart a way out of this claustrophobic mess other than to destroy authorized forms of speculative praxis—“authorized speculative praxis” serving as a faux-glorious oxymoron from which to proceed. Pop scholarship is clearly not an an-

16 Sussan Deyhim, “The Spilled Cup,” in Bill Laswell, Hashisheen: The End of Law, Audio CD (Brussels: Sub Rosa, 1999). The lyrics for the song are based on Sa’d Ud Din Mahmūd Shabistārī (1288-1340 CE), “The Wine of Rapture,” Gulshan i Rāz (The Secret Rose Garden). Gulshan i Rāz reached Europe in 1700 via unidentified travelers and was translated into German c. 1825 and English in 1880. See Sa’d Ud Din Mahmūd Shabistārī, The Secret Rose Garden, trans. Florence Lederer (London: J. Murray, 1920), 12. “The whole world is his tavern, / His wine-cup the heart of each atom, / Reason is drunken, angels drunken, soul drunken, / Air drunken, earth drunken, heaven drunken. // The sky, dizzy from the wine-fumes’ aroma, / Is staggering to and fro; / The angels, sipping pure wine from goblets, / Pour down the dregs on the world; / From the scent of these dregs man rises to heaven. / Inebriated from the draught, the elements / Fall into water and fire. / Catching the reflection, the frail body becomes a soul, / And the frozen soul by its heat / Thaws and becomes living. / The creature world remains giddy, / For ever straying from house and home” (The Secret Rose Garden, 56). Deyhim (presumably the author for this version or transcription of the Sufi poem) has interpolated the middle passage: “Heaven perplexed with Him, restlessly seeking, / Love in His heart, hoping at least / for a single whiff of the fragments.”
swer, nor is open-source publishing, which is a form of “authorized speculative praxis,” albeit a slightly shady one given that it is formulated as “outside” authorized or predatory neo-liberal academic practices but quietly moves “inside,” insomuch as practitioners are generally utilizing the suspect schematics of Open Source from within the academy, pretending to be outsiders, giving their work away with both aplomb and disdain (practiced and feigned disdain) for Intellectual Property Rights and the Moral Rights of Authors.  

In academic terms, Open Source started as an institutional alternative to corporate piracy within academic circles, a well-intentioned attempt to circumvent the ownership of platforms (journals and networks) by for-profit interests. Corporate media, in attempting to control distribution, momentarily was confronted by the fact that research is often publicly funded. The universities lost this campaign due to either internal malfeasance by corporate interests that had already situated themselves in the burgeoning bureaucracies of academia or through naiveté, the model being flawed from the beginning due to the very Balkanization of academic regimes—geographically and institutionally. Yet Open Source devolved quickly, after the institutional failure of the model, to become a badge of courage for dissenting academics. As alternative “pre- or part-publication” strategy, Open Source has its merits—that is, to promote a larger withheld or “perpetually curated” project. Additionally, the game of losing all control doubled for institutions with the arrival of the Cloud, and Cloud-based instruction and dissemination of work. The Cloud is part of that great apparition called the Digital Humanities. Its arrival marks the last hurrah (with caveats) for independent, non-scalable intellectual work inside of academia. Advocates of the Digital Humanities resemble advocates for late 1990s’, early 2000s’ post-theory, and the pseudo-avantgarde pretenses are telling. In the case of post-theory and projective practice in architecture, for example, with post-theory arriving late to the discipline (as architecture has a penchant for belated assimilation of de-natured and/or borrowed discourses), the short-lived justifications nonetheless shattered the larger pretenses of architecture as a critical or radical discipline, casting it adrift as hapless operative criticism (Manfredo Tafuri’s nemesis). The emergence of post-theory across disciplines is generally attributed to arguments purloined and misread in Terry Eagleton’s anti-postmodern jeremiad, After Theory (New York: Basic Books, 2003).
There are no clear options to advance the demolition project of circular discourses other than to bring artistic-creative speculation inside of scholarship and, concurrently, to transplant high-discursive practices to the arts, with (hopefully) the two timeless and useless projects meeting in the middle in the timely and useful socio-cultural circumstances specific to, or “native to,” socio-economic concerns, thus situating the radical agenda of speculation in service to no singular this-worldly master, plus prefiguring redemption for such works through the absolutely irreducible relationship to subjective states given to the same.

If 100 percent of the world’s population spends roughly 33 percent of its time sleeping (not all at the same time, alas), what proportion is spent dreaming? And is dreaming to be reduced to unconscious activity of the brain while asleep, or does it include reverie and, more critically, Revelation?¹⁸ The

See the review by Abdelkader Aoudjit in Philosophy Now 55 (May/June 2006): https://philosophynow.org/issues/55/After_Theory_by_Terry_Eagleton. “‘Cultural theory,’ Eagleton explains, ‘has been shamefaced about morality and metaphysics, embarrassed about love, biology, religion and revolution, largely silent about evil, reticent about death and suffering, dogmatic about essences, universals and foundations, and superficial about truth, objectivity and disinterestedness’” (quoted in Aoudjit). Both post-theory and the Digital Humanities, for scholars and humanists, represent a peculiar disembodied form of the Stockholm Syndrome, a hovering spectral nothingness, with the progenitors and apologists for both effectively caught in a carefully crafted wax-works perpetrated by the neo-liberal capitalist putsch. The captive subjects thereby extol the virtues of being held captive in a semi-fictional and macabre world of pseudo-scholarship and patronage (servitude), reversing centuries of escaping such systems of patronage.

¹⁸ One of the more absurd premises of Luc Besson’s blood-splattered film Lucy (2014) is that humans do not use the majority of their nerve and cerebral resources. Yet how do we know that we do not? Is it not possible that in sleep or in reverie (and most certainly in Revelation) we do access such fearful, non-rational capabilities? Might they be transferred to scholarly praxis?
concordances, often invisible, between rationality and irrationality (a false dichotomy anyway) “live” at the nexus of waking and sleeping—in dreaming of or about worlds that do not quite exist. This is escapism, on the one hand, and the utopian project itself, on the other hand. The nexus is the discredited speculative register in systems of knowledge—systems always rooted, one way or another, in dreaming (absence, not-here, over-there, etc.). Reverie and Revelation are forms of time-traveling, and they are productive of guidebooks. Such guidebooks do exist (and have existed), as they are once again called for by the deplorable state of insurrectionary practice in the humanistic discourses of late-modern times. Indeed, “travel” is called for—that is to say, out of this world and toward another. Is scholarship not sometimes a form of lucid dreaming, a faux-objective system for divining pre-conscious or unconscious forces at play in determinist and often noir-ish systems (inclusive of objective scholarship)? 19 Is not radical scholarship similar to the pseudo-science of mundane astrology (the non-determinist kind), which claims to map inscrutable cosmic forces in favor of the individual psyche? And, is this not why radical scholarship annoys empiricists and is reducible for all such epigones of rationality as the functional equivalent of wet dreams, bed-wetting, navel-gazing, and rote narcissism? 20

Drugs, alcohol, and extreme-existential states (lives) are

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19 If yes, this would seem to consecrate Pierre Bourdieu’s methodologies for unearthing (making conscious) unconscious mechanisms in socio-cultural production and Wilhelm Dilthey’s claims that History itself has an unconscious....

20 Subsumable under the French term nombrilisme, so-called narcissism in scholarship is generally equated with “self-centeredness” versus philosophical self-reflexion. The latter, however, is the foundation for ethics and morality, with extreme forms actually de-centering the subject and inducing what Tristan Tzara and Paul Éluard sought through the poetic states “transindividuelle” and “dé-singularisante,” which are, indeed, subject to the subjective state of the poetic subject. See Anne Régent-Susini, Paul Éluard: Capitale de la douleur (Rosny: Bréal, 2000).
the foremost “way out” for classic bohemian cultures, past and present. The dream states induced confer upon reality a sense of irreality (commend irreality to so-called reality), and the frightful circumstances of such lives (as lived experience but also retrospective problematic) are often conducive to tragedy, yet on occasion also lead to revelation of an order that approaches religious sublimity.21 “Chasing the dragon” becomes a path toward dreaming (reverie), against the dictates and protocols of Reason.22 The escape from circularity, claustrophobia, and paralysis in the Arts and Humanities is no less daunting. Why the avant-garde discourses of past and present need the firepower of unrelated disciplines returns all arguments for and against the avant-garde project to the existential-metaphysical here-and-now with a large or small dose of the here-and-there thrown in as de-stabilizing, homeopathic admixture. For the Arts and Humanities, as singular concern, requires extreme existential-metaphysical states as much as the bohemians required (and still require) the same to escape bourgeois conformity (the bête noire for both the decadent and Marxist avant-garde) and intellectual convention, in order to exit imposed variants of Realism (via hedonist decadence or via radical refusal of socio-political orthodoxy).23

21 See the life of Francis of Assisi, after the event of the Stigmata. Notably, these grim episodes in the life of the saint have never been dealt with in cinema, both Roberto Rossellini’s and Franco Zeffirelli’s treatments featuring the early days of Francis. More critically, they have been dealt with, explicitly, within the “cinematic” novel of Nikos Kazantzakis, God’s Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi, trans. P.A. Bien (London: Faber & Faber, 1975). First published (serialized) in the newspaper, Eleftheria, 1954, and, in book form, Ο φτωχόλης του Θεού (Athens: Difros, 1955). See Roberto Rossellini, Francesco, giullare di Dio (1950), and Franco Zeffirelli, Fratello Sole, Sorella Luna (1972). Francesco, giullare di Dio was co-written by Federico Fellini.


23 For a brief discussion of the Dadaist and Surrealist insurrections in
Where are the guidebooks, past and present? Where are the literary-critical equivalents of Henry David Thoreau’s walks, Johann Gottfried Herder’s walks? Or Chris Marker’s Petite Planète series of travel guides? Milton Grundy’s provocative and cranky, obsessively revised “anthology guide” to Venice, with its brilliantly imposed and purloined selections from past guides—Ruskin et al.? Such works (texts as so-journs) attack convention from within and without, simultaneously. They sit uneasily in the textual continuum; they fall off of bookshelves and open their pages to passersby as if haunted from within by a language that refuses to be silenced—a language that seeks the outside world (and its putative origin). If America’s libraries were full of tears in 1956, it was Allen Ginsberg’s “apperception” of other causes hidden in the broken promise of America that allowed him to condemn 1950s’ America in such a way, when he was down to “two dollars and twenty-seven cents,” invoking Walt Whitman, yes, but also invoking what the Beats later fomented (the 1960s’ cultural revolution originating in Beat alienation). In this manner, all books of speculative-radical agency are guidebooks for a mood that is pre-conscious in origin but fused to the formal apparatus of the work. Arguably, the mood of endless commentaries is either contrition or capitulation. Is there a commentary that demolishes this overriding pessimism? Can the commentary comment upon itself (and, perhaps, escape its own deathly closure)?

The verb tenses and time-senses of religious works come close. The syntactical and semantic resources of such often conflict, and the discord is a distended or warped rapport relationship to the nineteenth-century French decadents (in the context of artists and scholars being, on occasion, “failed saints,” and saints as being, on occasion, “failed artists and scholars”), see Gavin Keeney, “Critical Introduction: Nervous Systems,” in Keeney, Not-I/Thou, 1–14.

with tradition and convention (received wisdom) and an in-born and in-borne rapprochement with Revelation (all nominal times speaking, simultaneously, of one time). From such models (guidebooks nonetheless) the commentary and its analogues trip over their own contentions to servitude (serving commentary). What then of present-day works serving Capital and its invasion of academia? Might such works examine its (Capital’s) diktat to produce marketable, or merchandise wares—popular and erudite, patentable or scalable (given to conversion to data and, thereby, theft)? It would appear the answer is “No.” So, what has changed, other than the increasingly extreme and grotesquely irrational measures of Capital, imposed under the imprint of a self-righteous religiosity of its own contrivance, toward dictating all terms for commentary, elaboration, and dissemination of knowledge?

Revolts in scholasticism often proceed by invoking forms of Gnosticism. Indeed, the demiurge today, for academia, is Capital in concert with its twin handmaidens, “metrics” and “data-mining.” Deconstruction, for example, and its genera-

25 For those obsessed with data and quantifying such charges, the only way to show that this is true is to open the books of academia—that is, to audit them. Of course, such books are closed books, even to the faculties and most of the managerial class of present-day academia. That public universities are increasingly riven by such practices is also a sign that the traditional firewalls between publicly funded research institutions and the machinations of neo-liberal capitalism (historically porous in many cases anyway due to government funding for research) are utterly breached. Only provosts and chancellors are privy to this data, and they are either under confidentiality agreements, unable to speak of such things, or moving in ever-more-rarified circles that benefit the CEOs of universities (recent salary scandals being Exhibit A). It would take a Thomas Piketty to unravel the statistical knot that rules such caprices, while the effects of the same may nonetheless be felt from faculties down to the level of lowly postgraduate students.

26 In terms of socio-economic systems and models (inclusive of Marxism) and the errors implicit in reducing anything whatsoever to a demonic clockworks, see Varoufakis, “How I became an Erratic Marx-
tive ghosts, was (in its Derridean configuration at the least) a
direct outcome of and response to the ruling demiurge in
intellectual affairs of mid-to-late, twentieth-century High
Structuralism. In all such cases, without question, Gnosticism
returns any discipline whatsoever to subjective states voided
or suppressed by artificial conventions, arbitrary authority,
and misread traditions. The new arrives by way of the old,
ist”: “Marx’s first error—the error of omission was that he failed to
give sufficient thought to the impact of his own theorising on the
world that he was theorising about. His theory is discursively excep-
tionally powerful, and Marx had a sense of its power. So how come
he showed no concern that his disciples, people with a better grasp
of these powerful ideas than the average worker, might use the pow-
er bestowed upon them, via Marx’s own ideas, in order to abuse
other comrades, to build their own power base, to gain positions of
influence?” Varoufakis writes further, “Marx’s second error, the one I
ascribe to commission, was worse. It was his assumption that truth
about capitalism could be discovered in the mathematics of his mod-
els. This was the worst disservice he could have delivered to his own
theoretical system. The man who equipped us with human freedom
as a first-order economic concept; the scholar who elevated radical
indeterminacy to its rightful place within political economics; he was
the same person who ended up toying around with simplistic algebraic models, in which labour units were, naturally, fully quantified,
hoping against hope to evince from these equations some additional
insights about capitalism. After his death, Marxist economists wasted
long careers indulging a similar type of scholastic mechanism. Fully
immersed in irrelevant debates on ‘the transformation problem’ and
what to do about it, they eventually became an almost extinct spe-
cies, as the neoliberal juggernaut crushed all dissent in its path.”

Pre-conscious states and the Immemorial are not synonymous in
Gnosticism; the former, instead, might be said to lead to the latter.
“Life’s anteriority to every living (and similarly, the First Self’s anterior-
ity to any particular self) corresponds to the most radical forgetting.
Forgetting here no longer bears on what one is without knowing it,
but rather on what happened before one existed—on the system of
autarchic enjoyment constituted by the reciprocal interiority of Father
and Son, when there is not yet any me nor any ego such as our own.
In the absolute already of Life’s autarchic enjoyment lies the Imme-
memorial, the Arch-Ancience that eludes any thought—the always al-
plus—“plus” being what moves toward the present, or the futural, the latter’s station unknown but sensed (not unlike a planet orbiting beyond naked or instrumentalized perception, yet part of a system nonetheless). It is all a matter, then, of Odysseus and Ithaca, of Penelope and suitors, of arrival and dissemblance, of night and day. Dreams and the Real conjoin. Scholarship accesses both—night and day, dreams and the Real. All we can ask of it, today, is that it not be complicit in the production and preservation of perpetual nightmares.

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