

Peter Sloterdijk

The Operable Man

On the Ethical State of Gene Technology

It is neither our failure nor our accomplishment that we live in a time in which the apocalypse of man is an everyday occurrence. We don't need to be in amidst a storm of steel, under torment, in an extermination camp, or to live near such excesses, in order to experience how the spirit of the most extreme situations breaks through into the innermost process of civilization. Expulsion from the habits of humanistic appearance is at present the main event of logic from which there is no escape into good will. But this expulsion reaches even further: it touches all illusions of being-together-with-oneself. For it not only does away humanism, but also affects the overall relation that Heidegger addresses as dwelling in language. Who could overlook the fact that the House of Being is disappearing under scaffolding - and nobody knows what it will look like after the renovations. In the current state of the world, the single most striking feature of intellectual and technological history that is that technological culture is producing a new state of language and writing. This new state has hardly anything in common anymore with traditional interpretations of language and writing by religion, metaphysics and humanism. The old House of Being turns out to be something wherein a residence in the sense of dwelling and of the bringing close of the distant is hardly possible any longer. Speaking and writing in the age of digital codes and genetic transcriptions no longer make any kind of familiar sense; the typefaces of technology are developing apart from transmission, and no longer evoke homeliness or the effects of befriending the external. On the contrary, they increase the scope of the external and that which can never be assimilated. The province of language is shrinking, while the sector of straight-forward text is growing. Heidegger, in his letter "On Humanism," expressed these problems in an old-fashioned, yet factually correct manner, when he called homelessness the outstanding ontological feature of man's contemporary *modus essendi*.

"Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world. Hence it is necessary to think that destiny in terms of the history of Being ... Technology is in its essence a destiny within the history of Being ... As a form of truth technology is grounded in the history of metaphysics."

Since Hegel, one of the great intuitions of modern European thought is that there exists a connection between truth and fate implying something more than a metaphysical resort to the eternal. These intuitions are prefigured in the schemata of Christian eschatology. Hegel sums these up in his attempt to provide for the spirit a path that is modeled on the old-European scheme in which the sun's course is traced from Orient to Occident. It seemed as if the Hegelian spirit managed to enter into a second eternity that follows its arrival in the distant twilit west. The most extreme state of Hegelianism is the spirit's complete grasp of itself: its geopolitical symbol is the farthest extreme of the West. In it, the being-together-with-itself would attain its final form, and thereafter the only remaining task would be to round off some uncomfortable provinces on the fringe of the inhabited world. In essence there would already be validity to the statement: everything dwells. And where? In the inevitable West End of history. When Michel Houellebecq, at the end of his novel, *Elementary Particles*, has his hero, the depressed inventor of biological immortality, seek death in the Irish Atlantic under a "shifting, gentle light," this is nothing more than an appropriate commentary on Hegel. When all is achieved, one should sink into the ocean. In this twilight of the world, astrayness seems to come to an end.

Heidegger, however, had he had narrative intentions, would have had his hero build a hut in

the hills and there wait to see how the story goes on. To him it was evident that astrayness continues. A total coming-to-oneself does not take place. Rather everything suggests that the revelation of man through history and technology is about to enter into an age of even greater tensions and blindings. In Heidegger's view Hegel was right when he provided truth with a history, but he was not right in having it run from Ionia to Jena, just as he was not right in depicting it as a solar process from rising to setting. But have we also, by correcting these things, overcome the furor teleologicus? Heidegger, confronted with the state of affairs in 1946 does not consider the history of truth to be the course of the sun, but rather the burning of a conceptual fuse running from Athens to Hiroshima - and, as we see, yet further into the laboratories of current gene technology and beyond to who knows where. In this advancing increase of technological knowledge and ability, man reveals himself to himself as the maker of suns and the maker of life, thus forcing himself into a position in which he must address the question, whether that which he does and can do is actually himself and whether in this activity he is together-with-himself.

In the face of its results, there is no denying that this history, insofar as it is a success-story of able knowledge and knowing ability, must also be read as a history of truth and its mastery by man. However, this is only as a partial history of truth, a truth that is always only fragmentarily grasped by man and operations. When over the desert of New Mexico the atomic explosion flashes, there is no human coming-to-oneself involved. At any rate, Oppenheimer had enough chutzpah to call the first nuclear test Trinity; when Dolly bleats, the spirit is not together-with-itself familiarly, but when its producers think of their own, it's in the form of patents.

Since history makes no preparations to close the circle, both they and the technological society remain caught up in a movement which Heidegger has labeled with the term "astrayness". Going astray characterizes the historical form in which an existence moves that is not together with itself and that is working its way through the not-owned, be it with the aim of coming home or in the mode of the never-ending journey without arrival. Both in directed and undirected astrayness, homelessness is the fundamental state; misapprehensions in the apprehension of the self are the rule. However since astrayness is presented here as an epochal constant, the question is unavoidable, whether it too, seeming to be linked by fate to metaphysics, would not have to undergo a profound change following the subsiding and "decomposition" of metaphysics. The enormous increases in knowledge and ability of modern mankind force the question, whether the diagnosis of astrayness can apply to them in the same manner as to the times before the development of the modern potential. After twenty-five-hundred years of European metaphysics and technology, a thinker of Heidegger's eminence still believes he sees reasons for interpreting the course of the world as lasting and fateful astrayness. In the face of that fact, the suspicion is unavoidable that this could be due to an optical illusion - a suspicion that becomes all the more plausible when one considers that after his failed effort with the "national revolution" to take a turn into the own and the authentic, Heidegger makes no more suggestions about how a return from the astrayness could be conceived philosophically - his resort to the poetics of being is, even from a sympathetic point of view, an interim solution at best.

It is possible to consolidate the supposition that the theory of astrayness, be it with or without aim, evolves out of a description of the relation between man and being that is both wrong and in need of revision. Even Heidegger, undeniable though his significance as a destroyer of metaphysics may be, remains partly caught up in a philosophical grammar that starts from a simply untenable ontology and a deficient logic. We owe to Gotthard Günther the proof that classical metaphysics, that was based on a combination of monovalent ontology (being is, not being is not) and bivalent logic (what is true is not false, what is false is not true; tertium non datur) leads to the absolute inability to describe in an ontologically

adequate manner cultural phenomena such as tools, signs, artworks, machines, laws, customs, books, and all other artifices. The reason for this is that the fundamental differentiation of soul and thing, spirit and matter, subject and object, freedom and mechanism cannot cope with entities of this sort: they are by their very constitution hybrids with a spiritual and material "component", and any effort to say what they are "authentically" in the framework of a bivalent logic and a monovalent ontology leads inevitably to hopeless reduction and shortening. If one follows Plato in taking the Forms as the authentic being, then matter can only be understood as some sort of not-being; if one substantializes matter, the Forms are lost as inauthentic and not-being. Self-evidently those faults are not the misconceptions of persons, but rather show the limits of a grammar. They are in this sense fallacies as fates and epochs. From this perspective, astrayness would be nothing but the world-historical trace of the Platonic-Aristotelian (in broader terms, of the highly civilized metaphysical) program of dominating the wholeness of being by means of bivalence.

Now in Hegel's work for the first time a logic has been created that allows the ontological status of artifices to be defined under the title of "objective spirit." This impulse has remained a dead-end because of the mostly intellectual- and cultural-theoretical orientation of Hegelian analysis. This only changed when cybernetics, as the theory and practice of intelligent machines, and modern biology, as the study of system-environment-units forced these questions to be posed anew, this time, from the perspective of systems- and organism-theory. Here, the concept of objective spirit turns into the principle of information. This steps between thoughts and things as a third value, between the pole of reflection and the pole of the thing, between spirit and matter. Intelligent machines - like all artifices that are culturally created - eventually also compel thought to recognize on a broader front the fact of the matter that here, quite obviously, "spirit" or reflection or thought is infused into matter and remains there ready to be re-found and further cultivated. Machines and artifices are thus real-existing negations of the conditions before the imprinting of the information into the medium. They are in this sense memories or reflections turned objective. In order to conceive of this, one needs an ontology that is at least bivalent as well as a trivalent logic, which is to say a cognitive toolkit capable of articulating that there are real-existing affirmed negations and negated affirmations, that there are nothings in a state of being, and beings in a state of nothingness. In the end, the statement, "there is information," says nothing else. It is to make this statement possible and to consolidate it that Hegel and Heidegger engage in an intellectual battle of giants the intellectual battle of giants, into which authors such as Günther, Deleuze, Derrida and Luhmann have entered with considerable effect. They all work to conquer the tertium datur.

The statement "there is information" implies certain statements: there are systems; there are memories; there are cultures; there is artificial intelligence. Even the sentence "there are genes" can only be understood as the product of the new situation - it shows how the principle of information is successfully transferred into the sphere of nature. These gains in concepts that can powerfully tackle reality diminish the interest in traditional figures of theory, such as subject/object/relation. Even the constellation of I and world loses much of its luster, not to mention the worn out polarity of individual and society. But above all, along with the idea of real-existing memories or self-organizing systems, withers the metaphysical distinction between nature and culture. This is because both sides of the distinction are only regional states of information and its processing. One must anticipate that the comprehension of this insight will be particularly hard for those intellectuals who have made their living on the antithesis of culture and nature, and who now find themselves in a reactive position.

One of the deeper motivations behind the so-called astrayness of humankind through history

can be detected in the fact that the agents of the metaphysical age have obviously approached being with a false description. They divide being into the subjective and the objective, and they put the soul, the self and the human on one side, and the thing, the mechanism and the inhuman on the other. The practical application of this distinction is called domination. In the course of technological enlightenment - and this in fact takes place by means of mechanical engineering and prosthetics - it turns out that this classification is untenable, because it ascribes to the subject and the soul, as Günther stresses, a superabundance of characteristics and capabilities, that in fact belong on the other side. At the same time it denies to things and materials an abundance of characteristics, that upon closer look they in fact do possess. If these traditional errors are corrected respectively, a radically new view of cultural and natural objects comes about. One begins to understand that "informed material," or the higher mechanism, performs parasubjectively, and why it does so. These performances can include the appearance of planning intelligence, capability of dialog, spontaneity and freedom.

One is not saying too much, when one calls the revising of the false metaphysical classification of being a clash of the titans that thoroughly affects deeply-rooted relationships of the human self. Many have the suspicion that this revision implies the expropriation of the self and they reject it as technological devilry. The uncanniness of the process cannot be denied, precisely because it impresses by means of results which cannot be rejected. Also the observer finds himself strikingly fascinated with this process, because everything happening on the technological front has consequences for human self-understanding. In the process, the citadel of subjectivity, the thinking and experiencing I is also encroached upon, and that is not only by means of deconstructions on the level of the symbol. Such deconstructions have by the way been prefigured multifariously in world cultures. Think only of the mystical in yogic systems, negative theology, and romantic irony. The citadel has also been touched by material modifications, such as the alteration of the mind with the help of psychotropic substances (a method that has been used in drug-cultures for millennia, and in psychiatry for decades). Also the foreseeable future promises the induction of ideas through nootropic substances. The most spectacular encroachment of the mechanical into the subjective reveals itself in genetic technologies, for they draw a broad expanse of physical preconditions of the self into the span of artificial manipulations. This evokes the popular, more or less fantastic image of a foreseeable future in which whole "humans" can be "made." In such fantasies, primitive biologisms compete with helpless humanisms and theologisms, and it is impossible to detect in the proponents of such opinions a trace of insight into the evolutionary conditions of anthropogenesis. This invasion into the imaginary field of the "subject" or the "person" is beset with fears. The basis for this is to be sought in the fact that even on the side of the so-called object, in the fundamental material structure of life, as represented by the genes, nothing material in the sense of the old ontology of matter is to be found any more. Rather one finds the purest form of informed and informing information - for genes are nothing but "commands" for the synthesis of protein molecules. It is clear that the traditionally conceived personal subject no longer recovers in these processes any of that to which it was ontologically accustomed - neither the side of the self, as it traditionally presented itself, nor the side of the thing, as it was known. Therefore it seems to the subject as if it were confronted with the anti-humanism's hour of truth: it appears to the subject, as if this stood in the most pointed opposition to the humanistic and olympic program; the program of making the world the subject's or spirit-person's own home and integrating its external into the self. On the contrary it now looks as if the self should be completely sunk into the material and the external, where it would be lost.

But naturally this horrifying vision is also only an hysterical illusion, and as such, the negative of the false fundamental metaphysical classification of being. Man, as a reflecting and constructing power is not in a position where he would have to choose between

completely-being-together-with-itself and completely-being-outside-oneself. He can just as little decide between a total grasp of the self and a total loss of the self as between total distraction and collection. He is a regional possibility of clearing and a local possibility of collection. Man is a relatively intense port for the collection of power and truth, but he doesn't collect all: from that develops the post-metaphysical concept of Logos and poetry, which may one day well be understood as Heidegger's most seminal idea. From here Deleuze's teaching of multiplicities comes into view. This is what the thinker of "Seyn" has carved out in his extensive fight to resist Hegel's ideology of absolute spirit and its humanistic copies. The letter "On Humanism" says:

"Thinking does not overcome metaphysics by climbing still higher, surmounting it, transcending it somehow or other; thinking overcomes metaphysics by climbing back down into the nearness of the nearest ... The descent leads to the poverty of the ek-sistence of homo humanus."

The passage is remarkable, not only because it shows that those who would inform on Heidegger are wrong in their insatiable denunciation of his supposed "anti-humanism." It is the point of departure for an understanding of human existence as a noble weakness and a local poetic power. Being-there is a passion of the monstrous. The poverty of ek-sistence is not only the world-poverty of the animal, but the simple exposedness to the monstrous. Here we come across a Heidegger who is closer to Augustine and Pascal than to Hegel and Husserl. By the way, this fact can also be expressed in a rather Nietzschean language, in which one might say that man is a power-vector or a concentration or a chance for composition.

The anti-technological hysteria that holds large parts of the western world in its grip is a product of the decomposition of metaphysics, for it clings to false classifications of being in order to revolt against processes in which these classifications are overcome. It is reactionary in the essential sense of the word, because it expresses the resentment of outdated bivalence as contrasted with a polyvalence that it cannot understand. This applies above all to the habits of the critique of power, which are still unconsciously motivated by metaphysics. In the metaphysical schema, the division of being into subject and object is mirrored in the difference between master and slave, as well as that between worker and material. Thus within this disposition, critique of power can only be articulated as resistance of the suppressed object-slave-material-side against the subject-master-worker-side. But since the statement "there is information", alias "there are systems," is in power, this opposition no longer makes sense, and is developing ever more into a phantom of conflict. This hysteria is indeed the search for a master to stand up against: it cannot be excluded that the master as an effect is in the process of dissolving, and more than anything else lives on as the postulate of the slave fixated on rebellion - as the historicized Left or a humanism that is ready for the museum. In contrast a living left-wing principle would need to constantly reinvent itself through creative dissidence. Likewise, the thought of homo humanus can only maintain itself in poetic resistance against metaphysical reflexes of humanolatry.

As has been shown, to think homo humanus means to give a straightforward account of the level on which the equation of being human and clearing works. As we now know, however, the clearing cannot be thought of without its technological origin. Man does not stand in the clearing with his hands empty - not as an alert shepherd without means near the herd, as Heidegger's pastoral metaphors suggest. He holds stones and the successors of stones in his hands. The more powerful he becomes, the sooner he drops the tools that still have handles to replace them with tools that have keys. In the age of the second machines, "acting" withdraws and is replaced by operations of the fingertips. The incubator for man and mankind is produced by technologies of the hard means and its climate is determined by technologies of the soft means. Nous sommes sur un plan où il y a principalement la

technique. If there is man, then that is because a technology has made him evolve out of the pre-human. It is that which authentically brings about humans, or the plan on which there can be humans. Therefore humans encounter nothing strange when they expose themselves to further creation and manipulation, and they do nothing perverse, when they change themselves autotechnologically, given that such interventions and assistance happen on such a high level of insight into the biological and social nature of man, that they become effective as authentic, intelligent and successful coproductions with evolutionary potential.

Karl Rahner articulates this knowledge in a Christian language, when he stresses that "the man of today's autopraxis" makes use of a liberty of "categorical self-manipulation," which allegedly springs from the Christian liberation from the numinous compulsion of nature. According to the Jesuit Rahner's statement, it is part of the ethos of the responsible man that he wants to and ought to shape and manipulate himself:

"He must want to be the operable man, even if the dimension and just mode of such self-manipulation are still largely obscure ... but it is true: the future of man's self-manipulation has already begun."

One can express the same insight in the language of a radicalized historical anthropology, by interpreting the human condition through its emergence out of an autoplasmic development towards luxury. In this, plasticity remains a fundamental reality and an inevitable task. But one now has to take care not to further gaze through the lens of false metaphysical classifications at these newly possible anthropoplastic operations, from the transplantation of organs to gene therapy - somewhat as if a subjective master still wanted to enslave an objectual matter - or, even worse, to develop himself into a super-master, commanding over a yet more deeply subjugated matter. The schema of the master-subject that exerts power over a serving matter was undeniably plausible in the age of classical metaphysics and its simple bivalent politics and technologies. For this age it tended to be true that the subjectual master, when using tools, would enslave the objects and hardly recognize their proper nature, especially when these themselves were humans who themselves could make a claim to subjectivity or the freedom of the master. Out of this arises an image of technology that is modeled on simple tools and classical machines: all of them are essentially allotechnological means insofar as they execute violent and counternatural restructurings of whatever they encounter, and insofar as they use matter to ends that are indifferent or alien to the matter itself. In the old concept of matter, it is always already prefigured that such matter will be used heteronomously by virtue of its minimal, ultimately reluctant aptitudes. This obsolete technology puts the world of things into a state of ontological slavery against which intelligence has ever since rebelled, whenever it was capable of taking sides with the otherness of those things that were only externally used and twisted. From this springs the emancipatory "materialistic" option in the age of forced idealism. At best there are clues in the spheres of old crafts that the wisdom of master craftsmen lies in not forcing the things. Of the masters of thought, it must have been Spinoza who pointed out most lucidly how the employment of the potential of things by power should take place without madness or force: "When for example I say that I can do with this table whatever I want, it is quite evident that I do not claim the right to turn the table into a thing that eats grass." In allotechnological space, the most extreme cases are always of the kind in which struggles for preferred access to means of rape and destruction take place. The consciousness of extremes here arises from insight into the struggles between rapists and their victims.

On the level of the statement "there is information," the old image of technology as heteronomy and the enslavement of matter and persons loses its plausibility. We are witnessing that with intelligent technologies a non-dominant form of operativity is emerging, for which we suggest the name homeotechnology. By its very nature homeotechnology cannot desire anything utterly different from what the "things themselves" are or can

become of their own accord. The "materials" are now conceived in accordance with their own stubbornness, and are integrated into operations with respect to their maximum aptitude. With this they stop being what is traditionally referred to as "raw material." Raw materials can only be found where raw subjects - call them humanists and other egoists - apply raw technologies to them. Homeotechnology, having to deal with real-existing information, only gets ahead on the path of the not-rape of being; it acquires intelligence intelligently, thus creating new states of intelligence; it is successful not-ignoring embodied qualities. It must rely on co-intelligent, co-informative strategies, even where it is applied egoistically and regionally as every conventional technology is. It is characterized rather by cooperation than by domination, even in asymmetrical relationships. Outstanding scientists of the present express similar ideas with the metaphor of a "dialog with nature." For humanities, Foucault has stated that one never escapes from the compulsion and the chance to be powerful - by this means Foucault unties the metaphysically bound knot of the critique of power. Here a way of thinking germinates which is prefigured in modern philosophies of art, particularly in that of Adorno - albeit under such misleading titles as "The Primacy of the Object," - and which now awaits to be emulated by the philosophy of technology, and above all by social theory and those who popularize it. To develop technologies will mean in the future: to read the scores of embodied intelligences and to pave the way for further performances of their own pieces. The most extreme states of homeotechnology are the hours of truth for co-intelligence. In them, it is revealed that the subject of the bivalent age, the former master, has become a phantom. Before this has been broadly understood, disinformed populations will partake in distorted debates led by lascivious journalists about threats that they do not understand.

Technology, Heidegger has taught us, is a form of uncovering. It digs out results which by themselves would not have come to light in this way. Technology could therefore also be called a form of accelerating success. Where technologies shape the conflict between cultures and enterprises, there arise those competitions which make history. History sets the pace in which humans increasingly work with anticipation and bring themselves into situations in which they can no longer wait for things to happen by themselves. Therefore, there is a characteristic correspondence between the technology of production and economic enterprise on the one hand, and on the other, between ethno-technology and war. It is important both for entrepreneurs and military commanders to seek their own advantage in the struggle for success with competitors and enemies. They are condemned to want to become intelligent earlier than others. However, as a rule, they only make themselves more intelligent to a degree that is in accordance with the current state of enlightened egoism. They cannot escape from the relation between raw-subject and raw-material.

As long as this applies, homeotechnology - the acceleration of intelligence par excellence - is also touched by the problem of evil. This however no longer presents itself so much as the will to enslave things and humans, but as the will to disadvantage the other in cognitive competition. It is not a coincidental observation that classical allotechnology was linked with mistrust as a form of thought and with cryptological rationality; consequently its psychological sediment is paranoia. Indeed, the emergence of a post-paranoid culture of reason is on the evolutionary agenda of civilizations that are highly advanced both technologically and communicatively, but it is delayed by the powerful inertia of the bivalent age and its custom of rape in dealing with beings as such. The assumption that the suspicious mood will remain the realistic one in the future is most strongly confirmed by the actions of US strategists, who in August of 1945 did not refrain from employing the most extreme allotechnological weapon, the atom bomb, directly against humans. In doing this, they provided an epochal argument for the suspicion against the alliance between the highest technology and the most lowly subjectivity. Due to Hiroshima, humans have reason to believe that the most advanced technologies are uninhibited and reason to distrust the

Oppenheimers and Trumans of genetics. These proper names sum up the fact that for an age raw-subjects and allotechnologies have fit together. The fear of this constellation also dictates the discourse which prophesies that genes will play the same role in the bio-tech century that coal played in the industrial revolution. Such talk starts from the insinuation that the relation between humans, as well as the relation between humans and things, would have to follow at all times the historical pattern of bivalent domination or the primitive-subjective command of alienated matter.

The soundness and appropriateness for the future of the rooted dread needs to be tested. From the complexity of the issues themselves rises the supposition that allotechnological habits will no longer do in the realm of homeotechnology. The genetic scores will not cooperate with rapists, just as little as the open markets succumb to the caprice of masters. One may even ask whether or not homeotechnological thought - which has so far been anticipated by titles such as ecology and the science of complexity - has the potential to unleash an ethics of relationships devoid of enmity and domination. Undoubtedly such thinking virtually carries in itself this tendency, as by its very nature it fosters not so much reification of the other as insight into the internal conditions of fellow-beings. While in the allotechnological world master-subjects could still control raw-materials, it is becoming increasingly impossible within the homeotechnological world for the raw-masters to exert power over the finest materials. Also the strongly condensed contexts of the net-world no longer favorably receive master input - here only that can successfully spread which makes countless others the co-beneficiaries of innovations. Were these civilizing potentials to establish themselves, then the homeotechnological age would distinguish itself by narrowing the scope of astrayness, while the scopes for satisfaction and positive linkage would grow. Biotechnologies and nootechnologies nurture by their very nature a subject that is refined, cooperative, and prone to playing with itself. This subject shapes itself through intercourse with complex texts and hypercomplex contexts. Domination must advance towards its very end, because in its rawness it makes itself impossible. In the inter-intelligently condensed net-world, masters and rapists have hardly any long term chances of success left, while cooperators, promoters, and enrichers fit into more numerous and more adequate slots. After the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century, it becomes thinkable that the relics of domination will be abolished in the twenty-first or twenty-second century - but nobody would believe that this can happen without intense conflicts; it cannot be ruled out that the master as reactionary might once more join forces with mass resentments to form a new kind of fascism. But the failure of such revolutionary reactions is just as predictable as their rise.

Plato says, "All that is is good; evil is merely the absence of the good." In a world in which the condensation of contexts is still proceeding, it cannot be ruled out that the bottom line of Platonic ontology, which has often been ridiculed by critical minds, comes to be true in a surprisingly altered way and with a displaced meaning. That is unless Adorno maintains the upper hand with doctrine that the whole or the context is the untrue. All that needs to be done is to transpose these Platonic principles into the following principles regarding the ecology of intelligence: that which is mainly evil eliminates itself; that which is mainly good spreads itself and continues itself; that which is mainly neutral creates enough redundancy to secure continuity.

What stands against such a brightened view of things is the mentioned predicament that the inheritance of bivalence and of the strategic polemological paranoia casts its shadow far on to that which is to come. The habits of and compulsions to rape through the classification of complex relationships have grown in the course of an age and will not dissolve overnight; the cultures in which suspicion and resentment rule continue to flourish regionally, even in places where their successes are still yet chimerical. Constructs of identity, both the old- and

the new-egoistic, play their part in blocking the generous potentials that could be born from the thought of polyvalence, multiplicities, and homeotechnology. As long as this applies, vulgarity remains capable of fitting into more slots than its entitled to. It still makes raw subjects struggle for command of raw materials - although both can yet still exist in reactionary positions. Therefore the reactionary remains a world power. Is there any need to stress that it is up to creative intelligence to prove the reactionary wrong?

Under such premisses, it is no coincidence that the current race for the genome and its economic exploitation is described as a cognitive war. In the most extreme case, it would again be nothing but the exertion of power by raw humans over raw materials - that is to say the protracting of astrayness and clinging to the false classification of beings. It is to be expected that this habit will prove itself false through failures in the time to come. Like in all wars, the strategic, egoistical and raw use of intelligence strengthens the concealment of knowledge. It provides new nourishment to the suspicious attitude. But highly condensed contexts based on suspicion and concealment, such as advanced technological cultures, cannot be kept in continuous operation. For the metaphysical era, Pascal's statement that man infinitely overreaches man is true in principle - in that epoch, nothing is as intense as the feeling that man is not yet what he can become, and the scale of his sublimation is open to the sky. In the post-metaphysical period the image is rather that man constantly underreaches man - he does this with an air of legitimacy, as long as other underreachers force him to enter into competitions of underreaching with them. So far only a minority is aware that with post-classical technology - as with the authentic arts - the better competition has already begun.

When capital and empire grab for information, the course of the world turns increasingly into a kind of divine judgment that antagonistic intelligences pass upon themselves. It is not the first time that men find themselves faced with the fact that to use intelligence is inevitably to make decisions. A key word of the bivalent age says:

"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live..." How can one repeat the choice of life in an epoch in which the antithesis of life and death has been deconstructed? How could a blessing be conceived that could overcome the simplified confrontation of curse and blessing? How could a new covenant under conditions of complexity be formulated? Such questions as these are inspired by the insight that modern thought begets no ethics as long as its logic and ontology remain obscure.

Translation by Joel Westerdale and Günter Sautter