

LA VOLONTE DU LIEU /THE WILL OF THE PLACE

(ISH – Hebrew: Man; English: Institute of Social Hypocrisy [curatorship: leaving up to the public to determine which parts are being faked]).

1. In British anthropologist Edmund Leach words: (Leach, 1964: xiv) – «'Ritual' is a term which anthropology uses in diverse senses. My own view is that while we only run into paradox if we try to apply this term to some distinct class of behaviours, we can very usefully think of 'ritual' as an aspect of all behaviour, namely the communicative aspect.»

2. To Leach ritual is not connected to solemn occasions, but is part of the practice of everyday life – indeed, he sees ritual as the communicative aspect of behaviour. If I begin this talk by analysing this statement in particular, it is because I – as an anthropologist – am interested in action theory, and – as an ethnographer – I am interested more specifically in how Jewish ritual pervades everyday life.

Whoever lives a Jewish life asks the three following questions in the performance, or in the wake of ritual performance, and thereby engages a process of perpetual learning:

- A. Am I doing things right?
- B. Am I doing the right things?
- C. With which right am I doing these things?

3. When set in a Jewish religious setting, we may understand this line of questioning as a form of self-searching and brooding ethos. However, if we place those very same questions in the context of business management, they serve to pitch a variety of learning styles in the corporate sector, based on single, double and triple loop learning. The questions are identical.

4. But, you may rightly object, a religious Jew is performing his rituals before G-d¹ and fellow Jews rather than before the corporate bottom-line. To speak of a religious Jew – outside the context of Judaism – one must therefore also speak about G-d. One of the epithets of G-d in Hebrew is Meylekh Ha-Olam, which means G-d of the world, but also G-d of the hidden (Elem). So, even if a religious Jew can be quite visible by his/her attire, the dealings with G-d in everyday life are invisible. In this aspect, Jewish religious existence is clandestine. Which means to be in business, but not in the ordinary sense of the term (.

5. Of course, attempting to comprehend the clandestine can bring us into trouble. Bringing clandestinity out in the open cannot be our approach if we wish to comprehend the clandestine on its own terms. If we insist that the clandestine should be public, then we will – at the same occasion – assume that the clandestine either has something to hide (and therefore is a hypocrite), or that s/he is an occultist.

6. But are there other ways? – I will try to tease out a foundation for alternatives to the hypocrite and the occultist in Jewish religious thought, by drawing an outline of its basic philosophical tenets. Which entails drawing out some of the profane aspects of Jewish life – with a bearing on the subjectivation process that makes a Jew – in the words of Giorgio Agamben, in a little book called *Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif?* – What is a device (p. 50):

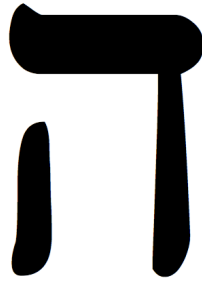
«Le problème de la profanation des dispositifs (c'est-à-dire de la restitution de l'usage commun de ce qui a été saisi et séparé en eux) n'est est que plus urgent. Ce problème ne sera posé correctement tant que ceux qui s'en empareront ne seront pas capables d'intervenir aussi bien sur les processus de subjectivation que sur les dispositifs pour amener à la lumière cet Ingouvernable qui est tout à la fois le point d'origine et le point de fuite de toute politique.»

JUDAISM

1. During his campaigns Alexander the Great called the Jews the Philosophers of the East. For a moment, I would like to ask you – like Alexandre – to consider Jews as Eastern philosophers, and ask: if, indeed, Jews are philosophers what is their philosophical problem? I will argue that the philosophical problem of Judaism is action. And that the thesis of Jewish thinkers – of late or recent – is that the unity of knowledge cannot be upheld by man alone. Today, in the wake of networked devices such as the Internet, or cell phones, this statement seems to be fairly obvious.

¹ G-d is used to convey the sense of the unreadability of the Divine name which is discussed in this talk.

2. Let us return to action: what is it in a universally understandable model of action that warrants a thesis that connects action to knowledge? Consider that within an action there is an ongoing transition from the virtual to the actual: as action is still ongoing it is defined by a) its being partly achieved – or, materialised – while the remainder is yet b) a window of possibility. Action materialises through this Window, as it were, till it is consummated. That is, till the mixed regime of action – the necessary and random elements that define it – eventually are resolved.



Hey

3. In this sense – passing from the virtual to the actual – something is created from nothing: this is the mystery of action. This mystery is symbolised by the Hebrew letter Hey. Etymologically, the name of the letter – Hey – means Window. Which philologists sometimes link to the hieroglyphic antecedents of Hebrew script (e.g., James Février, 1995 - Payot). In common religious pedagogy – as conveyed for instance by Rabbis – it is the current shape of the letter that directly features the metaphor of the window (cf., the opening of the letter at the top left).

4. The connection to action in mainstream Jewish pedagogy is – typically – conveyed by an interdiction²: namely, the interdiction of handing something from inside a house, through a window to someone outside, on Shabbat (it is now the Sabbath, the day of rest, and it lasts till tomorrow evening). All work is forbidden on Shabbat – carrying within a defined private space is not defined as work, while carrying in public space is defined as work. Thus, action is defined as the pass through a window: action has a ritual component – which is not work – and an economic component (which is work).

5. In Jewish thought the letter Hey is central on several accounts: in the Genesis (18:1 - 22:24, Vayera) it became part of Abraham name after his circumcision (Abram → Abraham), and of Sarah – the matriarch's – name after it was announced that her pregnancy was imminent (Sarai → Sarah). So, the letter Hey – the window through which action materialises – is associated with the physical transformation – or, mark – that defines Jewish personhood. I too, carry this mark.

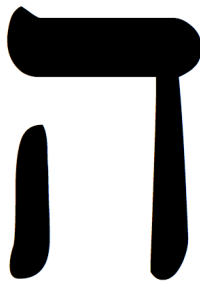
6. The letter Hey also occurs twice in G-d's name. Which brings us to the next aspect of our philosophical problem: we have looked at action at its inception, but we have not yet looked at the corollary – how action is consummated. Indeed, how do we bring action to an end? How do we determine, or decide, that an action is complete? Just as that a performance of an ongoing action is given to random events, the decision of when the action is completed – and has come to an end – would seem to be arbitrary. If I add details to my work, I can go on for ever. If it is Shabbat I not only have to stop my work, but I also have to find temporary way of completing it.

7. Once more, the Shabbat is the chief reference in defining action. Before Shabbat a certain number of items – amongst which food – is set aside for the Shabbat. These items are, according to the vernacular, Mukhan: that is, set aside – or, designated – for later use. When Shabbat is there, these items are received from across that boundary that separates the Shabbat from everyday. The hot meals eaten during Shabbat are handed over from the weekday to the holiday, and should not be eaten during the weekday. But there are also items belonging to a Jewish household that are unavailable during the Shabbat: these are termed Muktzeh.

8. So, in a religious Jewish household there is a distinction upheld between items that are designated for later use (Mukhan) and items that are separated from current use (Muktzeh). My point is of course, to show that these distinctions are not only interesting for a Jew and an anthropologist. The Window between Shabbat and the Shavuah (the week) is an invention of the window that we have already seen exists within the act, that marks the body physically and alters being. The second window is an invention in the sense that it applies to cosmic cycles: the days, the weeks, the months and seasons. There is a Shabbat for the week, there is a

² Interdire s'écrit également inter-dire.

Shabbat for the year – which is Yom Kipur (the Day of Atonement) – traditionally: Shemittah (Sabbatical Year 7th), Yovel (Jubily 7X7).



Hey

9. Consequently, in Jewish life and thought, action does not end by itself – or, on its own account – but ends at the occurrence of certain events; be they a) regular and time-bound, or b) emergent and unique. So, there are two windows within G-d's name that symbolise the inception and consummation of action: the first Hey has to do with the materialisation of an idea, while the second Hey has to do with comprehending the idea of this materialisation – in this sense, a form of dialectical materialism, if you will, of knowledge in action. But there are two other letters in the G-d's name: which is Yud and Vav. And in some aspects, their relationship is similar to the one between the two Heys, or Windows.

10. The Yud and the Vav – the Arm and the Hook – feature the same principle, but above and below. The Yud is frequently used to feature knowledge because it shows the transition from primeval emptiness (AK - Adam Kadmon – the tip of the letter) to the realm of mind and thought (Atsiluth – the body of the letter). It is the arm – Yad – of G-d. I earlier used becoming to define action in a general fashion, but now it defines a certain level of action: Knowledge as becoming – from emptiness to mind. As in many other cosmologies, human being can seek the primeval emptiness to witness knowledge in becoming, from emptiness to mind. This sounds rather mystical, and in some sense it is, but mainstream Judaism – as featured by standard scholarly or daily references – is full of this, in the sense that it is disseminated in Jewish prayer-books (or, Siddur), which are public and standard.



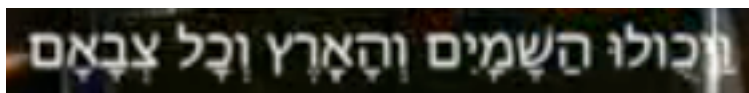
Vav



Yud

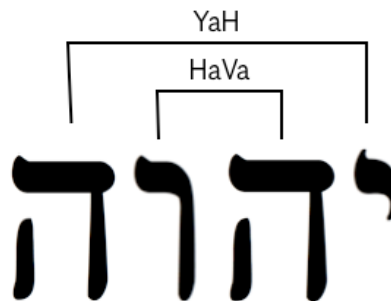
11. The teaching – or, Torah – ceases to be mystical and/or occult, when it is everywhere present: if only kept in mind by a few, it still is shared and public. And it also ceases to be mystical and/or occult when pervasively placed in the context of everyday life, in which the principle of higher creation is conjoined with the principle of lower creation: comprehending the idea of materialisation (which is the Yud the Arm)), while materialising an idea (which is the Vav). The Vav is the Hook. In the ritual that marks the passage to the Shabbat, a passage of the Genesis is read in which the letter Vav appears thrice, which in Judaism – like in many other traditions – is the equivalence of a contract, when said orally in the presence of witnesses:

Vay'khulu hashamayim V'haaretz V'khol z'vaam – «thus the heavens and the earth were finished in all their array.»



12. This is said after 'And there was evening and there was morning' is read silently, and 'sixth day' is read sotto voce. So, if the Yud is the procedure, the Vav makes it effective. All this is developed in considerable detail in Jewish esotericism, or Kabbalah. I am only interested in the mainstream aspects of these teachings. Particularly those that connect action to writing before language. Which is my anthropological stake in this: I am interested in action rather than linguistics in the study of the philosophical aspects of Judaism that I have outlined here. The rationale for this should by now be clear: if we start and end with language – which I believe to be at the core of Derrida's critique – there are a number of issues we will be passing over, simply by virtue of focussing on the wrong device: we easily pass over devices as writing, the experimental subjectivity of action, and the testimonial function of language itself.

13. In Maimonides commentary (Laws of T'shuva/Return) to the passage of the Deuteronomy (18:13) «you shall be sincere with HaVaYaH your G-d» it is claimed that the passage is inclusive of all the other commandments. Since it speaks of sincerity – the dialectical counterpoint to hypocrisy – this passage is bound to be of key address to the Institute: temim tiheyeh im HaVaYaH elohekha. Temim determines 'sincerity', 'completeness', 'simplicity'. Reading this quote I read the tetragrammaton as HaVaYaH – the merciful – which literally means Being (Ginsburgh). Humans, in this sense, are not beings, but – reduced to existence – are coming to being. In this reading of G-d's name – HaVaYaH – the letters in the name no longer serve as reminders, but instead operates as a template which is performed rather than simply read: it goes inside out, from materialisation to comprehension. It is one in concept (Ehad) and practice³.



14. This is one of many performances of G-d's name in Kabbalah, but is the only one which is mainstream, and the corresponds with a philosophical concept. Namely, Being. Calling HaVaYaH out of the tetragramme not read the Name, but shows the name – which is Being – the remainder, the unreadable, is completely hidden. So, in one aspect G-d is manifest – Being – in another aspect G-d is hidden. This is why Judaism is difficult to grasp from the outside: because it in one aspect is philosophical – it can easily be discussed as a form of existentialism – while in the other aspect it is religious. It is not possible to discuss Judaism either as a philosophy or a religion. It is both a philosophy and a religion. There are many words for prayer in Hebrew: one is Mitpallel/Hitpallel which is prayer in its reflexive mode, another is Davening which is service.

[Hazak Hazak v'nit Hazek!]

CONTRACTING

1. Since it is Shabbat I have decided that I will try to address my topic – also the one imposed on me by ISH – without going into the catastrophes of recent history (nor by anti-Semitism in its contemporary forms) in order to see whether it is possible to bring out an other Jewish identity from its clandestine recesses, than the one that expresses itself through everything that runs against it. Which entails that I have to look beyond what – in every sense – are the realities the Jews have had to face. There is no denial in this, it is – on the contrary – quite difficult to avoid, and I have had to rewrite this talk a number of times before I found a way to go about it. So, to tease out the aspects of Jewish ethos whereby Jews are with the others – though not being as the others – I will start with a quote of Maurice Blanchot (1993: 124-125):

³ The number of interdictions that regulate the Shabbat are 39 in all – which is the numerical value of the statement 'G-d is One' in Hebrew (in Hebrew all letters have a numerical value, which associates words – or expressions of the present kind – with numbers [these numbers are not a priori mystic, but are also mnemonic devices that help to connect concepts and practices]).

«It is certainly true that anti-Semitism has modified Jewish existence (if only by threatening it, making it more scarce, and at times exterminating it); and perhaps it has affected the idea that particular Jews have of themselves – but this on the ground of a prior ‘historical’ reality and authenticity one has to call Judaism, and that defines in an implicit manner the relation of every man to himself. Being Jewish, therefore, cannot be the simple reverse of anti-Jewish provocation; nor is it a break with the incognito into which the Jew must vanish, not only to be secure but in some sense to be himself – absence thus being at the same time his refuge and his definition. Being Jewish signifies more, and doubtless something it is essential to bring to light.»

2. What is the nature of this clandestinity that Blanchot writes about in this passage? It is perhaps not so mysterious. Not if seen in the light of what Michel de Certeau has called tactics: in counter-distinction to strategy, tactics is the kind of drill that soldiers can use in open-field situations – there needs be no functional relation between the drill and the situation, since the purpose of the drill is to confuse the enemy and come up with ideas in that situation. In other words, tactics are tools for the unknown. In the words, of Certeau (p. 37): the space of of tactics is the space of the other.

3. Some social scientists have been using Certeau's conceptual apparatus to understand slangs as Verlan – L'envers spelled backwards (in other words, backward spelled backward – drawkcab). They have used it, for instance, to show how youth milieus on edge with society, have used language to avoid the forms of subjection at work in the established discourse, and thereby to the array of power devices to which they are connected. In this way, Certeau has tried to show a way past Michel Foucault.

4. I will not meddle in this debate. What does concern me is rather what happens when we connect Certeau with Leach, whom I quoted at the beginning of the talk. That what happens, when we consider ritual – already defined as the communicative aspect of behaviour – in terms of tactics, or as a form of tactics. In other words, a drill that dissolves expectations and generates ideas, under conditions of pressure in open-field situations. I have studied Jewish ritual under conditions like these in Sarajevo, in the immediate aftermath of the war on Bosnia 1992-95.

5. These were military conditions under which the local Jewish community – and their friends in Sarajevo and abroad – organised humanitarian aid and refugee transportation in and out of the city. The Jewish Community – fronted by its humanitarian aid organisation La Benevolencija – operated under military conditions, but did not itself operate as a military unit. As the President of the organisation expressed: «We wanted to show the world that not all Jews are Israeli soldiers». Or, in more direct terms: the Jews were not party to the local conflicts, but sided with the party of the other featuring in the text of the referendum in 1992 (1. March):

‘Are you in favour of a sovereign and independent BiH [Bosnia and Hercegovina], a state of equal citizens and nations of Moslems, Serbs, Croats and others who live in it?’

A number of Sarajevans who didn't want to be defined in terms of national-ethnic epithets, sided with the Jews.

6. In this setting, where a fledgling organisation whose activities was growing to unexpected proportions from its base on the Southern Banks of the Milacka River. A soup kitchen, a home care service, two pharmacies, a mail service, refugee transportation convoys grew out a place which – as people use to say – was 1 of 10 locations where they used to go to drink coffee and play chess before the war. During the war, the policy that the JCC had for its humanitarian aid earned it the name of Sarajevo in miniature among the population at large.

7. The mission statement, language and symbolism was taken from Pesah – the Passover festival – and in 1995, Sarajevans of all walks and ranks – including the President – were invited to celebrate the festival. For the Pesah ritual (the Seder meal) a prayer book for that occasion – a Haggadah from Mediaeval Spain that came to Sarajevo with the Sephardic Jews. – was brought from the National Museum of Ethnology to the community: the road-map of the festive Seder meal that commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. In spite of all this, or because it, the Jews represented the category of others – Serbs, Bosniacs or Croats – who wanted no part of the war.

8. This story is full of paradoxes. It was universally recognised that the Jews had no part in the war. And as a consequence, the Jews had a neutrality comparable to the Swiss in the war on Bosnia in 1992-95. At the same time all warring parties represented themselves as the Jews of this war, based on the model of suffering and genocide of the Jews during WWII. Jews were granted neutrality because everyone was banking on making Jewish suffering their own. Essentially, they needed the Jews.

9. It also belongs to this story that the number of Jews in Sarajevo grew during the war: the population of Jews grew from 1100 at the outbreak of the war in 1992, to about 2800 in 1996. People of which the JC knew nothing, who turned up with certificates that they were indeed of Jewish descent. Not to obtain favours or

advantages, since the humanitarian aid organisation treated everyone equal, but out sympathy or pride. I will try to convey an idea of what this pride/sympathy might be about.

9. In my experience of doing fieldwork in Sarajevo/Bosnia, in the aftermath of the war in 1996, was that the way of access to people in post-traumatic stress situations had to be right in all its details: passing through the right contact points, drawing up a careful contract to manage mutual expectations of what could be achieved, and so forth. Given these preconditions I found that people's accounts were full of detail – more than a normal human conversation can handle – and that they knew little or nothing of each other's narrative: I was a passing stranger and they confided in me. Taken together their versions of events and acts from the war were cohesive – while the gaps I filled in with further discoveries.

10. However, I did come to make a careful distinction between narratives and testimonials. Narratives are accounts in which the narrators voice is concealed by narrative elements – or, cultural units – that are pre-circulated, and re-circulated. Testimonies are unique: they spring from events that have marked people's bodies, and altered their way of being. Their presence takes other people out of their 'comfort zone'. Not in the sense of passing on their trauma, but rather in a sense of requiring others – to whom they may talk – to be, like them, in the contact zone. This is a zone of marked bodies and altered beings: whatever you bring into that zone is who you are to those who have been brought there, by this odd mix between fate and choice (that we call contingencies).

11. Personally, I think that the people that confided in me, while I was in Sarajevo on two occasions, did so because I gave them little hope. Little hope that I could actually fathom what they had been through. And little hope that more than a trickle of what they gave me would eventually seep through to my readers. They found this realistic, and therefore trusted me. Coming to them through the right contacts, describing the exchange as I saw it, their settling for terms they saw as realistic are elements of what I consider as a base-line for ethical reflection. I think that paying attention to the exchange and the terms, is what I mean by ethical reflection.

12. I am bringing this to your attention, because I believe that – in this situation – ethical reflection was what expanded my horizon, the human spaces and realms into which I could enter, rather than narrowing them down (as is often attributed to ethics when confused moral guidelines, that serve gentrification and allow people in the comfort zone). Ethical reflection, in the above definition, occurred in a conversation between people coming from different walks in life, and with a very different baggage of embodied experience and survivor skills. The conversation allowed me to give my own walk a direction, and walk with my informants for a stretch.

13. I would not have been able to assess these realms of human experience by the help of thought power alone, equipped with my mind and language alone. And this is what I meant in the preceding section when setting action before language, in the process of comprehending human existence as a walk towards being, or coming to being (which, Jewishly speaking, is a process of creation). Conversation – dialogue – between humans is not boundless, it is part of an exchange and the terms of this exchange – in which they come together for a while and then part – sometimes has to be made clear. Perhaps more often than we think, and more often than we like.

14. Of course, this – once more – has a bearing on my talk at the Institute. And the second part of the talk, which I am about to close, does not come to illustrate the first part on Judaism but to contract it: bringing Jewish thought down to size. As a tactical drill in open fields, ritual bridges the stretch from doing things right, doing the right things and asking with which right one is choosing a course of action (such as interviewing survivors in a post-traumatic situation), under conditions where the next step is unknown, but nevertheless part of a line of action to which one must respond, and take responsibility, retrospectively. Under such conditions it is not I or you talking: each one of us has to take responsibility ourselves, and turn our language to achieve a third voice.

THE THIRD VOICE

1. I would like to conclude by expanding the topic of the third voice – the testimonial function of language, which is not spoken by you and me in dialogue, or conversation. I have written and re-written this talk several times. I tried to write in an auto-biographical style, which upon a second reading struck me as tedious and boring, veering unto a confession (Foucault). I also tried to write in a witty theoretical style; which, upon second reading, struck me as pompous and cynical. I am going through these to-and-fros quite often when I write. But this time, my qualms were particularly strong since ISH had enjoined me to say something personal about my topic, in this talk. I do not think this ever is easy for an anthropologist.

2. Claude Lévi-Strauss once said that he rarely read the books he had authored, once they were finished and published. I think the reason he gave was rather odd: he said that his books appeared to him as though they

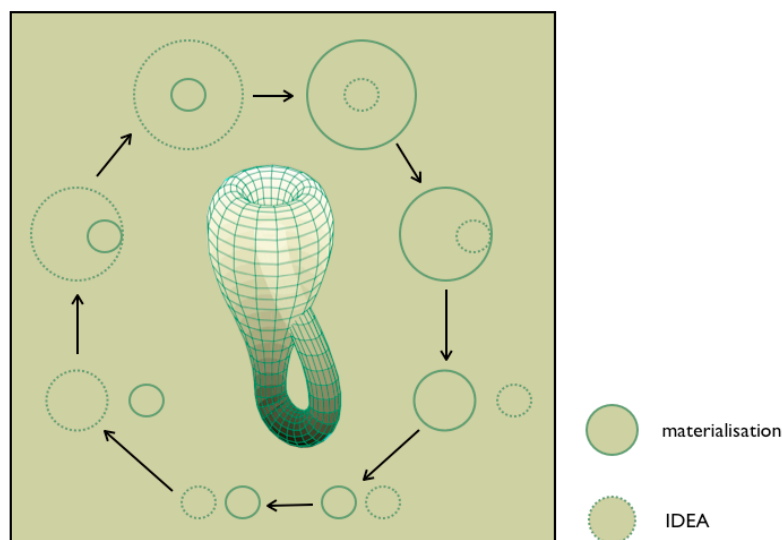
were written by someone else. If that truly was the case, he should have no trouble reading it – since he was an assiduous reader of the works of others. One reason being that after *Tristes tropiques* he abandoned field-work and wrote on the basis of his vast ethnographic readings. My interpretation of what he said, concerning his own authorship, is that reading his own books – as though they had been written by someone else – caused him some discomfort. And I think this phenomenon is rather common: reading oneself after some time has passed is a dreaded moment.

3. I once experienced this moment in a particularly dramatic way, which caused me to ponder. I had written a text on some anti-Semitic events in Norway that nearly cost me my life, in the form of a letter. I had addressed my letter to the Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Oslo (Michael Melchior) and found – upon second reading – that I could not read my own letter. The letters dissolved before my eyes, and what I could see was a disorganised pattern of unreadable blotches. I kept pondering on the reason why an event that had shaken my faith in the other had manifested itself in the unreadability of my own writing. My journey among Jews and in Judaism has been about re-establishing readability on new grounds.

4. One of the turning points is that I could – or, would – not read fiction novels anymore. I could/would read ethnography, philosophical essays and allegorical literature (such as the Torah I discussed in the first section). In retrospect, I understand that would not read texts in which the terms and scope of the exchange were not specified, or I myself could elaborate. To establish a relationship to author such that we could be the other to one another. This mutuality in otherness is what I conceive as thirdness, and to have a voice in relationship to an author I correspondingly define as a third voice.

5. The crisis in my faith in the other – instigated by Nazi acts of violence and denial – manifested itself, somehow, in my radical disbelief in what I myself had written. Though my life had been in danger – and the Nazis denied my existence as an other while making it very difficult not to take them into account as my others – I somehow did not give credit to my own written testimony. Hence the question: can a testimony be written? Or, does writing, somehow, make the testimonial come through as invented? And, if so, what is the nature of this invention? In other words, what was it that escaped me or was removed from what I had lived, through the act of writing it down? The facts of a crisis seemed to extend – by contagion – to a crisis of facts.

6. In retrospect, it is quite obvious to me that I – in the unreadable letter I addressed to the Rabbi – had no clarity in the scope and terms of the exchange: the interesting thing is that I was told by my body – the sensory apparatus went on strike. The scope and terms came about in time, by learning what I would call the steps of the walk. Each step of the road is a chapter on sensuous knowledge. The materialisation of an idea and the comprehension of that materialisation with the idea that emerges from it (*supra*) – the dialectical materialism of Judaism – also applies to me: a) I materialise an idea and b) I comprehend each materialisation of me, as an idea, c) step by step. I am coming to being. I am not.



7. Which is why I say – I am not: a Jew (I exist). I am not a Jew. I exist – I am coming to being – Jewishly. Which means that the marks on my body – inwardly and outwardly – are Jewish. The ritual tactics and the seasons that define me on that way are Jewish. I know that what ISH wants is particularly interested in – and keenly wants to know something about – is the alteration that occurred in me at some point, and made me effectively belong to the Jewish world: a threshold of forwards looking practices and references. I think that

this coming into being, which follows the steps of the unpredictable consequence of action in existentialist thinking can be reflected in what Nicolas Bourriaud recently has said about the radicant tactics of what he calls altermodernity – the other modernity, or the modernity of the other:

In French:

«L'enjeu central aujourd'hui, dans le champ de l'art, consiste donc à sortir de la postmodernité, en revenant stratégiquement l'émergence d'une nouvelle forme de modernité prenant en compte les phénomènes spécifiques de notre époque : globalisation, immigration, invisibilité du pouvoir et du capital, déculturation des populations... Cette négociation globale prend, dans ma langue, le nom d'altermodernité : un appareillage de conduites et de pratiques permettant de lutter à la fois contre la tradition et contre la standardisation/globalisation du monde, toutes deux également subies et imposées du dehors. J'emploie, pour décrire le point central de cette altermodernité, l'adjectif « radicant », terme botanique signifiant : 'qui fait pousser ses racines au fur et à mesure qu'il avance'... Si le modernisme du vingtième fut radical, le nôtre sera radicant, dissolvant les identités stables ou figées du théâtre postmoderne. Nous sommes sortis depuis longtemps déjà de ce monde moderniste obsédé par l'histoire, caractérisé par sa conception linéaire du temps sous la forme du progrès. Après la marche en avant, l'originnaire est devenu notre point d'horizon. Aujourd'hui, l'errance s'est imposée comme la seule démarche possible. La modernité radicante erre à la fois dans l'espace géographique, le temps historique et les signes culturels. Mais cette errance diffère à la fois de l'éclectisme postmoderne, dans le sens où elle constitue un constructivisme, et de l'autoroute du progrès moderniste : l'altermoderne, c'est la modernité du labyrinthe, une modernité non-linéaire, hétérochronique, qui assume le vagabondage spatio-temporel.»

My Norwegian translation (forthcoming, 2009):

«Den sentrale utfordringen i dagens kunstfelt er altså å komme ut av postmodernismen. I stedet må man strategisk gjøre krav på en ny form for modernitet som tar høyde for de fenomenene som er spesifikke for vår tid: globalisering, innvandring, maktens og kapitalens usynlighet, befolkningens dekkulturer... Denne globale forhandlingsprosessen har i mitt språk navnet altermodernitet: et forråd av fremgangsmåter og praksiser som gjør det mulig på en og samme tid å kjempe mot tradisjonen og mot verdens standardisering/globalisering – begge prosesser vi er underkastet og som blir pålagt oss utenfra. Jeg bruker adjektivet «radikant» for å beskrive det sentrale punktet ved altermodernitet. Det er opprinnelig en botanisk term, som helt presist betyr noe slik som '(det) som gror røtter etterhvert som det sprer seg'... Hvis det 20. århundrets modernisme var radikal, vil vår modernisme være radikant, og oppløse de stabile eller fastfrosne identitetene i det postmoderne teatret. Det er allerede lenge siden vi forlot denne modernistiske verden, besatt av historien, kjennetegnet ved sin oppfatning av tiden som lineært fremskritt. Etter fremskrittet ble det opprinnelige vårt siktemerket. I dag har omstreifingen tvunget seg på som den eneste mulige tilnærming. Den radikante moderniteten vandrer på samme tid om i det geografiske rommet, i historien og blant de kulturelle tegnene. Men denne vandringen skiller seg samtidig både fra den postmoderne eklektismen – i den grad den utgjør en konstruktivisme – og fra det moderne fremskrittets motorvei: det altermoderne er en labyrintisk modernitet, en ikke-lineær, heterokron modernitet som flakker i rom og tid.»

In English:

«The important issue today, in the field of art, consists therefore of departing from postmodernity, while strategically demanding the emergence of a new form of modernity that takes into account the specific phenomena of our era: globalisation, immigration, invisibility of power and capital, deculturalisation of populations... This global negotiation is denoted, in my coining, as altermodernity: a system of conduct and practices permitting one to combat both tradition and standardisation/globalisation, both of these subjected and imposed from the outside. To describe the core issue in this altermodernity, I use the adjective «radicant», a biological term meaning: 'taking root while advancing'... If the modernism of the 20th century was radical, ours will be radicant, dissolving the stable or static identities of postmodern theatre. We have long since abandoned this modernist world obsessed with history, characterised by a linear conception of time in the form of progress. After the advance, the point of origin has become our point on the horizon. Today, wandering has been established as the only possible alternative. Radicant modernity wanders at the same time through geographical space, historical time and cultural signs. But this roving differs from both postmodern eclecticism, in the sense that the former constitutes a constructivism, and from the modernist motorway towards progress: The altermodern is a labyrinthal modernity, one that is non-linear, heterochronic, characterised by spatial and temporal vagrancy»

8. In this sense the alteration in my way of being – which has stirred the curiosity of ISH – cannot be subsumed as my having been something/something, and having turned into something/someone else. I rather think of it as the kind of alteration that comes out of falling from grace. That is, falling from my own grace – the grace of a logocentric self-defined being – into existence and coming to being. Why this processes has evolved in a recess belonging to the vast array of possibilities in Jewish living, I have no idea. It is, frankly speaking unexplicable to me: I do not speak from a planned space (ISH has been very careful not to reveal itself to me in the process), nor from the space of plans – I am a radicant entity with an array of Jewish ritual

tactics that allow me to live that way. ISH has curated a time-space in which this walk is presented as an art work, and thereby to make you wonder which parts of it might be faked. For my part, I do not know which will be my next step: not because I am compliant – or, having a peek of the emerging consensus before I take a position – but because I do not what my will hatches in this place.

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