THE AGONY OF EROS

BYUNG-CHUL HAN

FOREWORD BY ALAIN BADIOU

TRANSLATED BY ERIK BUTLER

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UNTIMELY MEDITATIONS

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Foreword: The Reinvention of Love

In this book, Byung-Chul Han bears witness to how love—in the strong sense that a long historical tradition has granted it—is threatened. Perhaps it is already dead—at any rate, it is gravely ill. Hence the title, *The Agony of Eros.*

But whose blows have struck true love so low? The perpetrators are contemporary individualism, the effort to determine the market value of everything, and the set of monetary interests that now govern all conduct. In truth, love refuses to accept all such norms of the contemporary world—the world of globalized capitalism—because it is not a simple pact of pleasant coexistence between two individuals; rather it is the radical experience, perhaps to the outermost point, of the existence of the Other.

To demonstrate as much, the author offers a kind of phenomenology of true love—including sexual love—and tracks down, in their many forms, the threats it faces. On the one hand, this involves describing what occurs in the *absolute* experience of alterity; on the other, it means indicting, on an array of different registers, all that draws us away from such experience—and even prevents us from seeing that it exists at all, or the consequences this circumstance brings.

Implacably, Han argues that the minimum condition for true love is possessing sufficient courage to accept self-negation for the sake of discovering the Other. At the same time, he provides an intensive survey of all the traps set for, and attacks perpetrated on, the very possibility of eros in a world that, as it stands, cares only for agreement, agreeability, and narcissistic gratification.

This work proves utterly absorbing precisely because of its unlikely combination of philosophical rigor (it concludes with a striking quotation from Deleuze and Guattari) and a wealth of far-ranging sources.

The first chapter enlists Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*, as well as Bruegel's *The Hunters in the Snow* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (both of which are featured in von Trier's film), to show how the disastrous irruption of pure exteriority—the *wholly Other*—represents a catastrophe for the ordinary balance of the subject. By the same token, however, apparent disaster offers the good fortune of escape and absence from oneself—and ultimately shows the way to redemption.

After a severe critique of Foucault—who is faulted for valorizing ability, "power" (in opposition to the passivity of knowledge), and therefore performance—the second chapter features a measured appreciation of Levinas and Buber, who discerned that, as Han puts it, "Eros is a relationship to the Other situated beyond achievement, performance, and *Can.*" What escapes Foucault entirely, and Levinas merely touches on, is, in fact, a central argument of the book: "The negativity of Otherness—that is, the atopia of the Other, which eludes all ability—is constitutive of erotic experience." This striking formulation represents, as it were, the matrix of the work as a whole: "Only by way of *being able not to be able* does the Other appear." The experience of love, then, is shot through with powerlessness—the price to be paid for all revelation of the Other.

By way of a striking reading of Hegel, the third chapter identifies the power of love as a new measure of the Absolute. There can be no Absolute without absolute negativity. Only in love can Spirit assume the experience of its own annihilation—that is, as Hegel puts it, "preserve itself even in death"—because, for the Other to arrive, one must no longer be anything at all. In declaring as much, Hegel made Bataille possible. Han quotes with delight the latter's terrible words: "Eroticism, it may be said, is assenting to life up to the point of death."

The fourth chapter revisits the classic opposition between eroticism and pornography. Taking up Agamben and Baudrillard—and not without ample criticism—Han shows how pornography is nothing other than the *profanation* of eros. These pages include a brilliant appraisal of the culture and value of exhibition: "Capitalism is aggravating the pornographication of society by making everything a commodity and putting it on display. Knowing no other use for sexuality, it profanes eros—into porn." Love alone permits eroticism, or sex, to be ritualized—instead of being put on show. Thereby is the mystery of the Other—which contemporary exhibitionism is degrading into a dull article for consumption—preserved, even in nakedness.

The fifth chapter takes the reader on a journey in the company of Eva Illouz (*Why Love Hurts*), Flaubert, Barthes, and others to explore how love—so rich in varied fantasies about the Other—lies in the throes of agony because the contemporary universe of normalization and capitalization presents “the inferno of the same” at every turn. Han’s profound analysis shows how the barriers, borders, and exclusions that capitalism produces, especially between rich and poor, derive not so much from difference as from the identical: “Money, as a matter of principle, makes everything the *same.* It levels essential differences. As configurations for shutting-out and excluding, such borders abolish *fantasies of the Other*.”

The sixth chapter reveals the connection between love and politics. Via a subtle discussion of Plato and his dynamic conception of the soul—which love steers toward the Idea—a marked contrast emerges to what Han calls “burnout society,” a remarkable coinage extremely well-suited to our world today. The author offers a strong reading of my own thesis that “love is a Two scene”—a dual perspective—and, by virtue of this fact, represents a kind of basic political matrix. The chapter concludes with love’s transformative power: “Eros manifests itself as the revolutionary yearning for an entirely different way of loving and another kind of society. Thereby, it maintains *fidelity* to what is yet to come.”

The final chapter affirms that love is necessary for thought to exist at all. “To be able to think, one must first have been a friend, a lover.” So concludes an encomium of love joined to a radical critique of a world that refuses it: to be dead to love is to be dead to thought.

Though slim, this book is rich and rewarding—as sublime in its praise of alterity as it is unsparing in its critique of the modern subject’s “depressive narcissism,” exhaustion, and individualism. Needless to say, it provokes further debate. To open just one avenue of discussion: Is it absolutely certain that the only way to oppose a consumerist and contractual conception of alterity is to abolish the self, on a sublime and all-but-impossible scale, in order to encounter the Other? Must absolute negativity be mustered to counter the crass positivity of repetitive, self-serving gratification? After all, the notion of amorous oblativity—the vanishing of the self in the Other—has a long and glorious history: the mystical love of God, for example, as passionately described in the poems of Saint John of the Cross.

Yet now, after the death of God, is it even necessary to continue down this path? Perhaps this leg of the journey has lasted long enough. Another road may stretch ahead, along the lines of a world beginning with the Two of love. This world—whose foundations lie in "we two," singular—would belong neither to me nor to the Other but would exist for all. Isn't there, metaphorically, a kind of ultra-leftism hiding in the unlimited and absolute assumption of the negative and alterity? Perhaps, in material terms, fidelity in love amounts to two combined instances of forgetting that come to work together—in a way that admits universal validation—for the sake of a shared reality.

Whatever the case, this remarkable essay, an intellectual experience of the first order, affords one of the best ways to gain full awareness of and join in one of the most pressing struggles of our day: the defense, that is to say—as Rimbaud desired it—the "reinvention," of love.

Alain Badiou

THE AGONY OF EROS

Melancholia

In recent years, the end of love has been announced many times. Love, the claim goes, is foundering because of endless freedom of choice, the overabundance of options, and the compulsion for perfection. In a world of unlimited possibilities, love itself represents an impossibility. Passion, too, is said to have grown cold. Eva Illouz has traced this state of affairs back to the rationalization of love and expanding technologies of choice. However, this sociological theory fails to recognize that another influence is now underway, which is corroding love far more than endless freedom or unlimited possibilities. The crisis of love does not derive from too many *others* so much as from the erosion of the *Other*. This erosion is occurring in all spheres of life; its corollary is the mounting narcissification of the Self. In fact, *the vanishing of the Other* is a dramatic process—even though, fatefully enough, it largely escapes notice.

Eros concerns the Other in the strong sense, namely, what cannot be encompassed by the regime of the ego. Therefore, in the *inferno of the same*, which contemporary society is increasingly becoming, erotic experience does not exist. Erotic experience presumes the asymmetry and exteriority of the Other. It is not by chance that Socrates the lover is called *atopos.* The Other, whom I desire and who fascinates me, is *placeless.* He or she is removed from the language of sameness: "Being atopic, the Other makes language indecisive: one cannot speak *of* the Other, *about* the Other; every attribute is false, painful, erroneous, awkward."[1] Our contemporary culture of constant comparison (*Ver-Gleichen*) leaves no room for the negativity of what is *atopos.* We are constantly comparing one thing to another, thereby flattening them into the *Same*, precisely because we no longer experience the atopia of the Other. The negativity of the atopic Other refuses consumption. Therefore, the society of the consumer endeavors to eliminate atopic otherness in favor of consumable—*heterotopic*—differences. In contrast to otherness, difference is positive. Yet today, negativity is disappearing everywhere. Everything is being flattened out into an object of consumption.

Today, we live in an increasingly narcissistic society. Libido is primarily invested in one's own subjectivity. Narcissism is not the same as self-love. The subject of self-love draws a negative boundary between him- or herself and the Other. The narcissistic subject, on the other hand, never manages to set any clear boundaries. In consequence, the border between the narcissist and the Other becomes blurry. The world appears only as adumbrations of the narcissist's self, which is incapable of recognizing the Other in his or her otherness—much less acknowledging this otherness for what it is. Meaning can exist for the narcissistic self only when it somehow catches sight of itself. It wallows in its own shadow everywhere until it drowns—in itself.

Depression is a narcissistic malady. It derives from overwrought, pathologically distorted self-reference. The narcissistic-depressive subject has exhausted itself and worn itself down. Without a world to inhabit, it has been abandoned by the *Other*. Eros and depression are opposites. Eros pulls the subject out of itself, toward the Other. Depression, in contrast, plunges the subject into itself. Today's narcissistic "achievement-subject" seeks out success above all. Finding success validates the One through the Other. Thereby, the Other is robbed of otherness and degrades into a mirror of the One—a mirror affirming the latter's image. This logic of recognition ensnares the narcissistic achievement-subject more deeply in the ego. The corollary is success-induced depression: the depressive achievement-subject sinks into, and suffocates in, itself. Eros, in contrast, makes possible experience of the *Other's* otherness, which leads the One out of a narcissistic inferno. It sets into motion freely willed *self-renunciation*, freely willed *self-evacuation*. A singular process of *weakening* lays hold of the subject of love—which, however, is accompanied by a feeling of strength. This feeling is not the *achievement* of the One, but the *gift of the Other*.

In the inferno of the same, the arrival of the atopic Other can assume apocalyptic form. In other words: today, only an apocalypse can liberate—indeed, redeem—us from the inferno of the same, and lead us toward the Other. Thus, Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* begins with the announcement of an apocalyptic, disastrous event. "Disaster" literally means "unlucky star" (*desastrum*, in Latin). On her sister's estate, Justine stares into the night sky and sees a reddish glow, which later proves to be a starless planet headed for earth. This heavenly body, “Melancholia,” is a *desastrum*, which sets fatality in motion. At the same time, however, it is a *negative*, emanating a healing, cleansing effect. The name “Melancholia” is paradoxical insofar as this planet heals the depression that has taken the shape of a particular form of melancholy. It manifests itself as the atopic Other, which tears Justine out of the swamp of narcissism. She experiences a veritable blossoming under the influence of the death-bringing planet.

Eros conquers depression. The tense relationship between love and depression commands the cinematic discourse of *Melancholia* from the film’s inception. The prelude from *Tristan und Isolde*, which frames the film musically, invokes the power of love. Depression represents the impossibility of love. Alternatively, it is the impossibility of love that has led to depression. Only the planet Melancholia, the atopic Other breaking into the inferno of the same, arouses erotic desire in Justine. The nude scene, at the rocks on the river’s edge, presents the body of a lover, aglow with sensuality. Eagerly, Justine writhes in the blue light of the heavenly body that is bringing death. The scene intimates that Justine in fact desires deadly collision with the atopic, wandering planet. She awaits approaching catastrophe as joyous union with her beloved. Inevitably, Isolde’s *Liebestod* comes to mind. As death draws near, Isolde also yields lustfully to “the World-breath’s wafting universe” (*des Welt-Atems wehendem All*).[2] It is no coincidence that precisely this scene—the only erotic sequence in the entire film—features the prelude from *Tristan und Isolde* again. Magically, it invokes the proximity of eros and death, apocalypse and deliverance.

Paradoxically, the approach of death animates Justine. It opens her to the Other. Liberated from narcissistic captivity, Justine also devotes caring attention to her sister and her sister's son. The film's real magic lies in Justine's miraculous transformation from a depressive into a lover. Thus the atopia of the Other turns out to be the utopia of eros. Cannily, the director uses well-known classical paintings to steer the film discursively and reinforce a particular symbolism. Thus, in the surrealistic opening sequence, he fades in Pieter Bruegel's *The Hunters in the Snow* to induce deep, wintry melancholy in the viewer. In the background, the landscape borders the water—like Claire's estate, which blends into Bruegel's painting. Both scenes display a similar topology, as the wintry melancholy of *Hunters in the Snow* extends to the world of the characters. The hunters trudge homeward, downcast and in dark attire. The blackbirds in the trees make the winter landscape even gloomier. The sign of the inn, displaying the image of a saint, hangs at an angle and is almost falling down. Then, black flakes fall slowly from the sky, consuming the picture like a fire. This melancholy winter landscape is followed by a scene that resembles a painting; here, Justine is presented in the style of John Everett Millais: with a wreath of flowers in hand, she floats on the water like the lovely Ophelia.

After an argument with Claire, Justine succumbs to despair once more; her helpless gaze wanders over abstract paintings by Malevich in books lying open on a shelf. In a fit of rage, she tears the books down, then replaces them with other pictures portraying unfathomable human passions. Just at this moment, the prelude from *Tristan und Isolde* sounds forth again. Once more, it is a matter of love, desire, and death. The first image Justine reaches for is Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow*. Then she grabs a volume of Millais with the painting of Ophelia—followed by Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath*, Bruegel's *The Land of Cockaigne*, and, finally, a drawing by Carl Fredrik Hill depicting a forlorn, baying stag.

The lovely Ophelia drifting in the water with her mouth half open—her gaze lost in the beyond, like a saint or a lover—points to the proximity of eros and death yet again. Hamlet's beloved dies surrounded by fallen flowers, singing like a siren, Shakespeare writes. Ophelia dies a beautiful death, a *Liebestod*. Millais's painting shows a flower that Shakespeare does not mention: a red poppy, which signifies eros, dreams, and intoxication. Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath* is also an image of death and desire. In contrast, Bruegel's *Land of Cockaigne* depicts an overstuffed society of positivity—an inferno of the same. Here, the swollen figures lie about apathetically, exhausted by satiety: even the cactus has no thorns; it is made of bread. Everything is positive inasmuch as it is edible and consumable. This gorged company resembles the morbid wedding party earlier in the film. Tellingly, Justine places Bruegel's *Land of*

Cockaigne next to an illustration by William Blake, which depicts a slave suspended by the ribs, but still alive. Here, the invisible violence of positivity stands opposed to the brutal power of negativity, which exploits and robs. Justine leaves the library immediately after opening a book to Hill's picture of the stag and placing it on the shelf; the image stands for the erotic desire, or yearning for love, that she feels. Clearly, Lars von Trier knew that Carl Fredrik Hill suffered from psychosis and depression. This sequence of images illustrates the discourse of the film as a whole. Eros—erotic desire—conquers depression. It delivers us from the inferno of the same to the atopia, indeed the utopia, of the wholly Other.

In *Melancholia*, the apocalyptic sky resembles the empty firmament that Maurice Blanchot makes the primal scene of his childhood. It reveals the atopia of the wholly Other by suddenly interrupting the Same:

> Suppose this: the child—is he seven years old, or eight perhaps?—standing by the window, drawing the curtain and, through the pane, looking. …
>
> What happens then: the sky, the same sky suddenly open, absolutely black and absolutely empty, revealing … such an absence that all has since always and forevermore been lost …—… the vertiginous knowledge that nothing is what there is, and first of all nothing beyond. The unexpected … is the feeling of happiness that straightaway submerges the child, the ravaging joy to which he can bear witness only by tears, and endless flood of tears. … He says nothing. He will live henceforth in the secret. He will weep no more.[3]

The child Blanchot describes is enraptured by the infinity of the barren sky, torn out of himself and emptied (*entinnerlicht*) into an atopic Outside, dissolved and drained. The disastrous event (*Ereignis*)—this invasion of the Exterior and wholly Other—unfolds as dispossession (*Ent-Eignis*), an annulment and voiding of the Own; that is, it unfolds as death: "the sky's emptiness: *the disaster as withdrawal outside the sidereal abode.*"[4] And yet, disaster fills the child with "ravaging joy"—indeed, with the happiness of absence. Herein lies the dialectic of the disaster, which also structures *Melancholia.* Catastrophic fatality abruptly switches over into salvation.

Being Able Not to Be Able

Achievement society is wholly dominated by the modal verb *can*—in contrast to disciplinary society, which issues prohibitions and deploys *should.* After a certain point of productivity, *should* reaches a limit. To increase productivity, it is replaced by *can.* The call for motivation, initiative, and projects exploits more effectively than whips and commands. As an entrepreneur of the self, the achievement-subject is free insofar as he or she is not subjugated to a commanding and exploiting Other. However, the subject is still not really free because he or she now engages in self-exploitation—and does so of his or her own free will. The exploiter is the exploited. The achievement-subject is perpetrator and victim in one. Auto-exploitation proves much more efficient than allo-exploitation because it is accompanied by a feeling of liberty. This makes possible exploitation without domination.

Foucault observes that neoliberal *Homo oeconomicus* does not inhabit disciplinary society—an entrepreneur of the self is no longer a disciplinary subject[1]—but he fails to notice that this entrepreneur of the self is not truly free: *Homo oeconomicus* only thinks himself free when in fact he is exploiting himself. Foucault adopts a positive attitude toward neoliberalism. Uncritically, he assumes that the neoliberal regime—the system of "the least state" or "frugal government," which stands for the "management of freedom"[2]—enables civil liberty (*bürgerliche Freiheit*). Foucault fails to notice the structure of violence and coercion underwriting the neoliberal dictum of freedom. Consequently, he interprets it as the freedom to be free: "I am going to produce what you need to be free. I am going to see to it that you are free to be free."[3] The neoliberal dictum of freedom finds expression in the paradoxical imperative, *Be free.* But this plunges the achievement-subject into depression and exhaustion. Even though Foucault's "ethics of the self" stands opposed to political repression and allo-exploitation in general, it is blind to the violence of the freedom that underlies auto-exploitation.

You can produces massive compulsion, on which the achievement-subject dashes him- or herself to pieces. Because it appears as freedom, self-generated compulsion is not recognized as such. *You can* exercises even greater constraint than *You should.* Auto-compulsion proves more fatal than allo-compulsion, because there is no way to resist oneself. The neoliberal regime conceals its compulsive structure behind the seeming freedom of the single individual, who no longer understands him- or herself as a subjugated subject ("subject to"), but as a project in the process of realizing itself (*entwerfendes Projekt*). That is its ruse: now, whoever fails is at fault and personally bears the guilt. No one else can be made responsible for failure. Nor is there any possibility for pardon, relief, or atonement. In this way, not only a crisis of debt occurs—a crisis of gratification does, as well.

Relief from debt, financial and psychological, and gratification both presume the Other. Lack of a binding connection to the Other is the transcendental condition for crises of gratification and debt. Such crises make it plain that capitalism—counter to widespread belief (e.g., Benjamin)—is not a religion. Every religion operates with both debt (guilt) *and* relief (pardon). But capitalism *only works with debt and default*. It offers no possibility for atonement, which would free the debtor from liability. The impossibility of mitigation and atonement also accounts for the achievement-subject's depression. Together with burnout, depression represents an unredeemable failure of ability—that is, it amounts to *psychic insolvency*. Literally, "insolvency" (from the Latin *solvere*) signifies the impossibility of paying off a debt.

Eros is a relationship to the Other situated beyond achievement, performance, and ability. *Being able not to be able* (*Nicht-Können-Können*) represents its negative counterpart. The negativity of otherness—that is, the atopia of the Other, which eludes all ability—is constitutive of erotic experience: "The other bears alterity as an essence. And this is why [we] have sought this alterity in the absolutely original relationship of eros, a relationship that is impossible to translate into powers."[4] Absolutizing ability is precisely what annihilates the Other. A successful relationship with the Other finds expression as a kind of *failure.* Only by way of *being able not to be able* does the Other appear:

> Can this relationship with the other through Eros be characterized as a failure? Once again, the answer is

> yes, if one adopts the terminology of current descriptions, if one wants to characterize the erotic by "grasping," "possessing," or "knowing." But there is nothing of all this, or the failure of all this, in eros. If one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other. Possessing, knowing, and grasping are synonyms of power.[5]

Today, love is being positivized into sexuality, and, by the same token, subjected to a commandment to perform. Sex means achievement and performance. And sexiness represents capital to be increased. The body—with its display value—has become a commodity. At the same time, the Other is being sexualized into an object for procuring arousal. When otherness is stripped from the Other, one cannot love—one can only consume. To this extent, the Other is no longer a person; instead, he or she has been fragmented into sexual part-objects. There is no such thing as a sexual personality.

When the Other is perceived as a sexual object, "primal distance" (*Urdistanz*) erodes; Martin Buber claims that such distance serves as the very "principle of being-human" and constitutes the transcendental condition for any *alterity* existing at all.[6] "Primal distantiation" prevents the Other from being reified into an object, an "it." The Other as sexual object is no longer a "Thou." It is impossible to have a relationship with it. Primal distance brings forth the transcendental *dignity* and *propriety* that frees—that is, *distances*—the Other into his or her otherness. Precisely this is what makes it possible to *address* the Other properly. One can call up, or out to, a sex object, but one cannot *address* it. A sex object also has no "countenance," which is what constitutes alterity: the otherness of the Other commands distance.

Today, more and more, dignity, decency, and propriety—matters of maintaining distance—are disappearing. That is, the ability to experience the Other in terms of his or her otherness is being lost. By means of social media, we seek to bring the Other as near as possible, to close any distance between ourselves and him or her, to create proximity. But this does not mean that we have more of the Other; instead, we are making the Other disappear. Nearness is negative insofar as remoteness is inscribed within it. But now, a total abolition of remoteness is underway. This does not produce nearness so much as it abolishes it. Instead of closeness, it entails crowding. Nearness acts negatively. Therefore, it is inhabited by *tension*. In contrast, crowding acts positively. The power of negativity lies in the fact that things are enlivened precisely by their opposite. Mere positivity lacks any such power to animate.

Today, love is being positivized into a formula for enjoyment. Above all, love is supposed to generate pleasant feelings. It no longer represents plot, narration, or drama—only inconsequential emotion and arousal. It is free from the negativity of injury, assault, or crashing. To fall (in love) would already be too negative. Yet it is precisely such negativity that constitutes love: "Love is not a possibility, is not due to our initiative, is without reason; it invades and wounds us."[7] Achievement society—which is dominated by ability, and where everything is possible and everything occurs as an initiative and a project—has no access to love as something that wounds or incites passion.

The performance principle that dominates all spheres of life today also encompasses love and sexuality. Thus, the heroine of the bestselling novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* is surprised when her partner construes their relationship as "a job offer. It has set hours, a job description, and a rather harsh grievance procedure."[8] The performance principle cannot accommodate the negativity of excess and transgression. Accordingly, the "agreements" the "submissive" pledges to observe include plenty of exercise, healthy meals, and ample rest. She is not allowed to eat anything other than fruit between meals. She must avoid immoderate consumption of alcohol and may not smoke or use drugs. Even sexuality bows to the commandment of health. Every form of negativity is prohibited. The list of forbidden activities includes using excrement, as well. Even the negativity of real or symbolic dirt is eliminated. Thus, the heroine signs on to "keep herself clean and shaved and/or waxed at all times."[9] The sadomasochistic practices the novel describes amount to nothing more than sexual diversions. They lack the negativity of overstepping—such as occurs in Georges Bataille's erotics of transgression. Thus, the partners determine in advance that they will not exceed "hard limits." So-called safewords guarantee that activities do not go beyond certain boundaries. The overuse of the adjective "delicious" throughout the novel points to the dictate of positivity, which transforms everything into a formula for enjoyment and consumption. Even torture can be "delicious" in *Fifty Shades* *of Grey.* This world of positivity admits only things that can be consumed. Pain itself is supposed to be enjoyable. Here, negativity—which manifests itself as pain in Hegel—no longer exists at all.

The present that stands at one's disposal is the temporality of the *Same*. In contrast, the future lies open to the event, which is absolutely surprising. Our relationship to futurity concerns the atopic Other, which cannot be assimilated into the language of the Same. Today, the future is shedding the negativity of the Other and positivizing itself into an *optimized present* that excludes all disaster. And the musealization of what has been is destroying the past. As a *repeatable present*, this museum casts off the negativity of the irretrievable. Memory is not an organ of simple restitution, by means of which one makes the past present again. In memory, what has been is constantly changing. It is a progressive, living, narrative process.[10] In this, it differs from data storage. Technological data storage strips all life from what has been. It is *without time*. Thus, a total present prevails today. It is abolishing the irretrievable moment. Time without moments is merely additive and no longer situative. As the temporality of the click, it lacks decision and resolve. The blink of an eye is yielding to pointing-and-clicking.

Erotic desire is tied to a particular absence of the Other—not the absence of nothingness, but rather "absence in a horizon of the future."[11] The future is the *time of the Other*. The totalization of the present as the *time of the Same* eliminates the absence that otherwise makes the Other unattainable. Levinas interprets the caress and pleasure as figures of erotic desire. The negativity of absence is essential to both. The caress is a “game with something slipping away.”[12] It reaches for what is vanishing into the future without end. Its desire is nourished by what doesn’t yet exist. The absence of the Other in the midst of shared sensuality is also what constitutes the depth and intensity of pleasure. Today, love—which now means nothing more than need, satisfaction, and enjoyment—is incompatible with the withdrawal and delay of the Other. Society, as a *search engine*, *a machine for consumption*, is abolishing the desire for what is absent—what cannot be found, seized, and consumed. Yet eros awakens only in view of the “countenance” that “at once gives and conceals the Other.”[13] The “countenance” stands diametrically opposed to the “face” that holds no secrets, which exhibits itself in pornographic nakedness and hands itself over to total visibility and consumption.

Although Levinas does not glimpse the erotic abysses that find expression as excess and madness, his ethics of eros points unambiguously to the negativity of the Other: sacrosanct, atopic otherness, which, in today’s increasingly narcissistic society, is vanishing. Moreover, Levinas’s ethics of eros can be reformulated as resistance to the economic reification of the Other. Otherness is not consumable difference. Capitalism is eliminating otherness wholesale in order to subordinate everything to consumption. Eros, however, represents an *asymmetrical* relationship to the Other. As such, it interrupts the exchange rate. Otherness admits no bookkeeping. It does not appear in the balance of debt and credit.

Bare Life

The boar whose tusks killed Adonis embodies eroticism, which finds expression as madness and excess. After Adonis's death, the boar is said to have protested that it had not meant to injure the beautiful youth with its "eroticized teeth" (*erotikous odontas*)—only to caress him. In his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, Marsilio Ficino describes the "eroticized eye" (*erotikon omma*) of lovers.[1] Like the boar's tusks, such a gaze is commanded by a deadly passion: "For those eyes of yours, gliding through my eyes to the depths of my heart, stir the hottest fire in my marrow. Therefore, have mercy on me, who die because of you."[2] Here, blood serves as the medium of erotic communication. A kind of transfusion occurs between the eyes of the lover and the beloved:

> Put before your eyes, I pray, Phaedrus the Myrrhinusian and that Theban who was captivated by love for him, the orator Lysias. Lysias stares open-mouthed at the face of Phaedrus. Phaedrus sends into the eyes of Lysias the sparks of his own eyes, and with the sparks sends along a spirit. The light of Phaedrus is easily joined by the light of Lysias, and the spirit also easily joins his spirit. The vapor of this sort springing from the heart of Phaedrus immediately seeks the heart of Lysias. By the hardness of this heart it is made denser and returns to its former state, as the blood of

> Phaedrus, so that the blood of Phaedrus is not in the heart of Lysias—a truly remarkable phenomenon.[3]

As conceived in antiquity, erotic communication is anything but contented. According to Ficino, love is the "most serious disease of all"; a "change," it "takes away from a man that which is his own and changes him into the nature of another."[4] Such injury and transformation constitute its negativity. Today, through the increasing positivization and domestication of love, it is disappearing entirely. One stays the same and seeks only the confirmation of oneself in the Other.

In *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, Eva Illouz claims that love is now becoming "feminized." Adjectives used to describe romantic love-scenes—"nice," "intimate," "quiet," "peaceful," "comfortable," "sweet," "gentle," and so on—are extremely "feminine." The prevailing image of romantic love makes men and women alike occupy a female sphere of sentiment.[5] But counter to Illouz's diagnosis, love is not simply being "feminized." Rather, in the course of a positivization of all spheres of life, it is being domesticated into a consumer formula devoid of risk and daring, without excess or madness. All negativity, all negative feeling, is avoided. Passion and pain are giving way to pleasant feelings and inconsequential arousal. In the age of the "quickie," the casual encounter, and sex as stress-relief, sexuality is losing all negativity, too. The wholesale absence of negativity is degrading love into an object of consumption, a matter of hedonistic calculation. The desire for the Other is giving way to the comfort of the Same. The aim is to procure the comfortable and, ultimately, dull immanence of the wholly identical. Modern love lacks all transcendence and transgression.

Hegel's dialectic of master and slave describes the battle for life and death. The party who emerges as master does not fear death. The desire for freedom, recognition, and sovereignty raises the master above concern for *bare life*. It is fear of dying that induces the future slave to subordinate himself to the Other. Preferring servitude to the threat of death, the slave clings to *bare life*. Physical superiority does not determine the outcome of the struggle. Instead, what proves decisive is the "ability to die,"[6] or a capacity for death. Those who do not have freedom unto death (*Freiheit zum Tod*) do not risk their life. Instead of "following through to the point of death" (*mit sich selbst bis auf den Tod zu gehen*), they remain "standing alone within death" (*an sich selbst innerhalb des Todes stehen*).[7] The slave does not venture as far as death, and therefore becomes a *vassal* who *labors.*

Work and bare life are closely related. Both constitute reactions to the negativity of death. Today, the defense of bare life is intensifying into the absolutization and fetishization of health. The modern-day slave prefers it to sovereignty and freedom. He or she resembles the "last human beings" Nietzsche describes, for whom health per se represents an absolute value. It is exalted and made the "great goddess": "one honors health. 'We invented happiness,' say the last human beings, and they blink."[8] Where bare life is hallowed, theology gives way to therapy. Or therapy becomes theological. Death has no place in the chronicle of bare life's achievements. So long as one remains a slave and clings to bare life, one remains subordinate to the master: "But your grinning death, the one that creeps up like a thief and yet comes as master—it is hated as much by the fighter as by the victor."[9]

Eros as excess and transgression denies both work and bare life. Thus the slave, who holds fast to life and labors, proves incapable of erotic experience—of erotic desire. Today's achievement-subject is equal to the Hegelian slave in all respects except for the fact that he does not work for the master, but rather exploits himself of his own volition. As an entrepreneur of the self, he is master and slave at once. The issue here concerns a fateful unity that Hegel did not consider in his dialectic of master and slave. The subject of auto-exploitation is just as unfree as the subject of allo-exploitation. If we understand the dialectic of master and slave as the history of freedom, there can be no talk of the "end of history," for we are still far from being truly *free*. Following this logic, we are witnessing a stage of history when slave and master form a unit. It means that we are enslaved masters or slaves who think themselves masters, not free human beings who will achieve reality at the end of history. History, understood as the history of freedom, is not over, then. It would only be over if we were really free—if we were neither master nor slave: neither enslaved masters nor slaves who think themselves masters.

Capitalism absolutizes bare life. Its telos is not the *good* life. Capitalism's compulsive accumulation and growth is specifically aimed against death, which counts as absolute loss. For Aristotle, merely accumulating capital merits scorn because it has no concern for the *good* life—only for *bare* life:

> So some people believe that this is the task of household management, and go on thinking that they should maintain their store of money or increase it without limit. The reason they are so disposed, however, is that they are preoccupied with living, not with living well.[10]

The process of capitalization and production is assuming infinite dimensions by doing away with the teleology of the good life. Its motion forward is speeding up more and more by losing all sense of direction. This is how capitalism becomes *obscene*.

Hegel is receptive to the Other like no other thinker. Such a sensibility cannot be dismissed as an idiosyncrasy. One should read Hegel differently than, say, Derrida, Deleuze, or even Bataille have done. According to their mode of reading, the "Absolute" points to violence and totality. But for Hegel it represents love, above all: "In love … those phases are present, in its *content*, which we [have] cited as the fundamental essence of the absolute Spirit: the reconciled return out of another into self."[11] *Absolute* means unrestricted. It is precisely the restricted spirit (or mind, *Geist*) that wants immediacy with itself and turns away from the Other. In contrast, acknowledging the negativity of the

Other is what distinguishes absolute Spirit. According to Hegel, the "life of Spirit" is not bare life, which merely "shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation"; rather, it is "life that endures [devastation] and maintains itself in it." Spirit owes its liveliness specifically to the capacity for death. The Absolute is not "something positive, which closes its eyes." Rather, "Spirit ... [looks] the negative in the face and [tarries] with it."[12] It is absolute because it dares to venture into outermost negativity—which it incorporates, or, more precisely, *encloses within itself*. Where the purely positive—positivity to excess—prevails, no Spirit exists.

The "definition of the Absolute," according to Hegel, is "that it is the syllogistic inference."[13] The word for inference in German, *Schluss*, also means "conclusion" (from *schliessen*, "to close"—cf. *con-cludere*, in Latin). *Schluss* is not a category of formal logic in this context. Hegel would call life itself a conclusion, in the sense of an "end." It would amount to violence, the violent ex-clusion of the Other, if it were restricted: bypassing the end, it would yield a short-circuit (*Kurzschluss*). However, the absolute conclusion is long and slow; it is preceded by tarrying: abiding or dwelling. The dialectic itself is a movement of closing, opening, and closing again. The Spirit would bleed to death from the wounds inflicted by the Other's negativity, were it not capable of reaching a conclusion. Not every end amounts to violence. Peace is *concluded*. Friendship is an end unto itself. Love is an absolute end unto itself. It is absolute because it presupposes death, the surrender of the self. The "true essence of love consists in giving up the consciousness of oneself, forgetting oneself in another self."[14] The consciousness of the Hegelian slave is restricted; the slave is incapable of admitting an absolute end because he cannot relinquish self-consciousness—that is, he has no ability to die, no capacity for death. As an absolute end, love passes through death. Although one dies in the Other, this death is followed by a return to oneself. The reconciled return to oneself out of the Other means anything but violent appropriation of the Other; wrongly, this has been declared the main figure of Hegelian thought. Rather it is the *gift of the Other*—preceded by the surrender, the giving up, of one's own self.

The depressive-narcissistic subject has no capacity for conclusion. Yet without a conclusion, everything dissolves and becomes a blur. It is not by chance that indecision, or inconclusiveness (*Unentschlossenheit*)—the inability to arrive at a decision or finish anything (*die Unfähigkeit zum Ent-Schluss*)—constitutes a symptom of depression. Depression characterizes our age; thanks to *excessive openness and unlimitedness*, the capacity to close and conclude has disappeared. The ability to die is vanishing, too, because no one can conclude his or her life. The achievement-subject has no capacity for bringing things to an end—for concluding, even provisionally. The subject breaks down under the compulsion to perform and produce accomplishments over and over.

Love means *dying in the Other* for Marsilio Ficino, too: “When you love me ... and as I love you ... I recover myself, lost in the first place by my own neglect of myself, in you, who preserve me.”[15] When Ficino writes that the lover loses himself in another self—and yet, in this same waning and oblivion, “recovers” and even “possesses” himself—this possession is the *gift* of the Other. The priority of the Other distinguishes the power of Eros from the violence of Ares. When power is a relation of domination, I assert myself against and oppose the Other by subjugating him or her to myself. In contrast, the power (*Macht*) of eros implies powerlessness and unconsciousness (*Ohn-Macht*); instead of affirming myself, I lose myself in (or for) the Other, who then rights me again: “The ruler possesses others through himself, but the lover takes possession of himself through another, and the farther each of the lovers is from himself, the nearer he is to the other, and though he is dead in himself, he comes to life again in the other.”[16] Bataille begins his discussion of eroticism as follows: “Eroticism, it may be said, is assenting to life up to the point of death.”[17] What is affirmed here is not bare life—which flees the negativity of death. Instead, the impulse to live, heightened to the utmost and affirmed, approaches the impulse to die. Eros is the medium for intensifying life to the point of death: “Indeed, although erotic activity is in the first place an exuberance of life, the object of this psychological quest, independent ... of any concern to reproduce life, is not alien to death.” To give this paradox “some semblance of justification,” Bataille refers to Sade: “There is no better way to know death than to link it with some licentious image.”[18]

The negativity of death is essential to erotic experience: "If love exists at all it is ... *like death* ... within us."[19] Above all, death concerns the ego, the *I*. Erotic life-impulses overwhelm and dissolve its narcissistic and imaginary identity. Because of their negativity, they express themselves as death-impulses. Death that puts an end to *bare life* is not the only death. Relinquishing the imaginary identity of the ego and suspending the symbolic order to which it owes its societal and social existence represents a weightier *death* than the end of bare life:

> The transition from the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes a partial dissolution of the person as he exists in the realm of discontinuity. ... Eroticism always entails a breaking down of established patterns, the patterns, I repeat, of the regulated social order basic to our discontinuous mode of existence as defined and separate individuals.[20]

Everyday life consists of discontinuities. Erotic experience opens the way to "continuity of being"—which only death, as the end of "the discontinuity of beings," can provide.[21]

In a society where everyone is an entrepreneur of the self, the economy of survival reigns. It stands diametrically opposed to the non-economy of eros and death. Neoliberalism, with its uninhibited ego- and achievement-impulses, constitutes a social order from which eros has vanished entirely. The society of positivity, from which negativity has disappeared, is a society of *bare life*, which is dominated exclusively by the concern "to make sure of survival"[22] in the face of discontinuity. This is a slave's life. Concern for bare life, for survival alone, strips life of all vitality, which is in fact a very complex phenomenon. Whatever is merely positive is lifeless. Negativity is essential to vitality: "Something is alive ... only to the extent that it contains contradiction within itself: indeed, [its] force is this, to hold and endure contradiction within."[23] Thus, vitality differs from the vigor or fitness of bare life, which lacks all negativity. A *survivor* is like the undead: too dead to *live*, and too alive to *die*.

The Flying Dutchman's ship—manned by the undead, according to legend—offers an analogy to contemporary burnout society. The Dutchman, "flying like an arrow without aim, without rest, without peace,"[24] is like today's exhausted and depressive achievement-subject, whose freedom amounts to being condemned to perpetual self-exploitation. Capitalist production is aimless, too. It no longer has any concern for the *good* life. The Dutchman is undead, unable either to live or to die. Damned to journey eternally in the inferno of the same, he yearns for an apocalypse that would set him free from torment:

> Great day of judgment, nearing slow
> When wilt thou dawn and chase my night?
> When comes it, that o'erwhelming blow,
> Which strikes the world with crushing might?
> When all the dead are rais'd again
> Destruction I shall then attain,
> Ye worlds, your course continue not![25]

Likewise, the society of blind production and performance at whose mercy Senta stands is without eros or happiness:

> Hum, hum, hum—good wheel be whirling!
> Gaily, gaily turn thee round!
> Spin, spin, spin—the threads be twirling!
> Turn, good wheel, with humming sound![26]

Eros follows a wholly different logic. Senta's suicide, which is also a *Liebestod*, stands diametrically opposed to the capitalist economy of production and performance. Her declaration of love is a promise—a form of decision and conclusion (*Schlussform*). It is absolute and, indeed, sublime, transcending the purely additive and accumulative operations of the capitalist economy. It brings forth a duration—a "clearing," Heidegger would say—in time. Faithfulness is a form of decision and conclusion that introduces an eternity into time. It encloses the former within the latter: "But love, the essence of which is fidelity ..., demonstrates how eternity can exist within the time span of life itself. Happiness, in a word! Yes, happiness is the proof that time can accommodate eternity."[27]

Porn

Porn is a matter of *bare life on display*. The antagonist of eros, it annihilates even sexuality. In this respect, it is more effective than morality: "Sexuality does not fade into sublimation, repression and morality, but fades much more surely into the more sexual than sex: porn."[1] Pornography derives its appeal from the "anticipation of dead sex in living sexuality."[2] What is obscene about pornography is not an excess of sex, but the fact that it contains no sex at all. Today, sexuality is not threatened by that "pure reason" which puritanically avoids sex as something "dirty,"[3] but by pornography. Porn is not sex in virtual space. Today, even real sex is turning into porn.

The pornographication of the world is unfolding as the profanation of the world. Porn profanes the erotic. Agamben's "In Praise of Profanation" fails to recognize this social process. "Profanation" means using things that have been set aside for the gods through consecration (*sacrare*) and stand removed from regular contact. It involves practicing "a special form of negligence"[4] with respect to what has been set apart in this manner. Hereby, Agamben adopts the thesis of secularization, assuming that every instance of setting-apart has an authentically religious core. In this light, the museum represents a secularized form of the temple—here, too, objects are placed at a remove and made unavailable for use. Likewise, Agamben considers tourism a secularized version of pilgrimage: pious journeys from holy site to holy site correspond, today, to sightseers' restless trips through a world that has become one big museum.

Agamben places profanation alongside secularization. What has been made to stand apart should be made available for use again. However, the examples of profanation he provides range from the tenuous to the outlandish:

> What could it mean to "profane defecation"? Certainly not to regain a supposed naturalness, or simply to enjoy it as a perverse transgression (which is still better than nothing). Rather, it is a matter of archaeologically arriving at defecation as a field of polar tensions between nature and culture, private and public, singular and common. That is: to learn a new use for feces, just as babies tried to do in their way, before repression and separation intervened.[5]

Sade's libertine consuming a woman's excrement practices eroticism as transgression, in Bataille's sense. But how can defecation be profaned beyond the threshold of transgression and renaturalization? Agamben's "profanation" is meant to suspend the repression that a theological (or moral) dispositive has cast over things. The example he finds in nature is a cat playing:

> The cat who plays with a ball of yarn as if it were a mouse—just as the child plays with ancient religious symbols or objects that once belonged to the economic sphere—knowingly uses the characteristic behaviors

> of predatory activity … in vain. These behaviors are not effaced, but, thanks to the substitution of the yarn for the mouse …, deactivated and thus opened up for a new, possible use.[6]

Agamben sees compulsion or constraint behind every purpose; the profanation he proposes would liberate things into “means without ends.”

Agamben’s thesis of secularization blinds him to the particularity of a phenomenon that can no longer be traced back to religious practice and even stands opposed to it. It may well be that in a museum objects stand “at a remove,” as they do in a temple. However, musealization and exhibition are precisely what destroy their cult value and replace it with exhibition value. Likewise, tourism and pilgrimage stand in opposition to each other. Tourism creates “non-sites,” whereas pilgrimage is tied to *places*. According to Heidegger, the quality that makes human dwelling (*Wohnen*) possible is the “divine.” Such sites are constituted by history, memory, and identity. These same features are missing in the “non-sites” of tourism, where people *pass by* instead of *lingering* and *spending time*. Likewise, Agamben seeks to understand nakedness beyond the dispositive of theology—that is, “beyond the prestige of grace and the chimeras of corrupt nature.”[7] He claims that exhibition offers an excellent opportunity to profane nudity:

> It is this brazen-faced indifference that fashion models, porn stars, and others whose profession it is to show themselves must learn to acquire: they show nothing

> but the showing itself (that is, one's own absolute mediality). In this way, the face is loaded until it bursts with exhibition-value. Yet, precisely through this nullification of expressivity, eroticism penetrates where it could have no place: the human face. [...] Shown as a pure means beyond any concrete expressivity, it becomes available for a new use, a new form of erotic communication.[8]

However, nudity that is displayed without secrecy or expression approaches pornographic bareness. What is more, the pornographic face says nothing. It has no expressivity or mystery: "From one figure to the other, from seduction to love, then to desire, sexuality, finally to pure and simple porno; the farther you go, the closer you come to the lesser secret, the smaller enigma."[9] In contrast, the erotic is never free of secrecy. *Contra* Agamben, a face loaded with exhibition-value to the point of bursting promises no "new collective use of sexuality."[10] Indeed, exhibition destroys any and all possibilities for erotic communication. A naked face without mystery or expression—reduced simply to being on display—is obscene and pornographic. Capitalism is aggravating the pornographication of society by making everything a commodity and putting it on display. Knowing no other use for sexuality, it profanes eros—into porn. On this score, Agamben's "profanation" amounts to just so much profanity.

This profanation is unfolding as deritualization and desacralization. Today, ritual spaces and actions are disappearing. The world is becoming more naked and more obscene. Bataille's conception of "holy eroticism" still included ritualized communication: festivals and ceremonial games providing *particularized* sites, places at a remove. Today, love—inasmuch as it is supposed to amount only to warmth, intimacy, and pleasant arousal—points to the destruction of sacred eros. By the same token, pornography is eliminating erotic seduction, which toys with scenic illusion and deceptive appearances. Indeed, Baudrillard sets seduction in opposition to love: "Ritual is in the realm of seduction. Love is born from the destruction of ritual forms, from their liberation. Its energy is an energy of the dissolution of these forms."[11] Pornography completes the deritualization of love. Agamben's profanation even promotes the deritualization and pornographication of the world in that it suspects ritual spaces of constituting compulsive forms of sequestration.

Fantasy

In *Why Love Hurts*, Eva Illouz refers to the premodern imagination as "information-thin." Lack of information, she argues, leads to "overvaluing" one's love-interest—to "idealizing" him or her and granting "surplus value." Today, in contrast, the images we have are charged with information, because of digital communications technology:

> Prospective imagination mediated by the Internet … can be said to stand in contrast to an information-thin imagination. … Internet imagination … is based on an accretion of attributes, rather than being holistic. In this particular configuration, people have too much information and seem less able to idealize.[1]

Illouz also assumes that increasing choice entails the "rationalization" of desire. Desire, she argues, is no longer determined by the unconscious mind so much as by conscious selection. The subject of desire is "made incessantly aware of and responsible for choice, for spelling out rationally desirable criteria in another."[2] Moreover, heightened imagination is supposed to have "raised the thresholds of women's and men's expectations about the desirable attributes of a partner and/or about the prospects of shared life."[3] In consequence, one is now "disappointed" more often. And disappointment is a "notorious handmaid of imagination."[4]

Illouz also examines connections between consumer culture, desire, and fantasy. Consumer culture is said to stimulate desire and the imagination. Images compete aggressively to be "used"; one gets lost in reverie as a result. Already in *Madame Bovary*, according to Illouz, one can observe how consumerist and romantic desire reinforce each other. She points out just how much Emma's fantasy fuels her compulsion to consume. Today, in like fashion, the Internet is "position[ing] the modern individual as a desiring subject, longing for experiences, daydreaming about objects or forms of life, and living experiences in an imaginary and virtual mode."[5] Increasingly, the modern self realizes its wishes and feelings in imaginary ways, through commodities and media images. Its imaginative faculty is determined by the market and mass culture.

Illouz traces Emma's dissipation to early consumer culture in nineteenth-century France:

> Indeed, less customarily remarked in Emma Bovary's story are the ways in which her imagination is the engine driving the debts she incurs with Lheureux, a wily merchant who sells her fabrics and trinkets. Emma's imagination feeds directly into the early consumer culture in nineteenth-century precisely through the mediation of romantic desire.[6]

Counter to Illouz's assumption, however, Emma's behavior cannot be explained by the socioeconomic structure of nineteenth-century France. Instead, it finds expression as excess and expenditure, which represents a shift from what Bataille would call "*restrictive* economy to … *general* economy."[7]

Bataille sets "unproductive expenditure" in opposition to forms of consumption that serve "the means of production."[8] Lheureux, who is said previously to have exercised the profession of money changer, stands for the bourgeois economy that Emma's unproductive, wasteful spending negates. Emma's behavior contradicts the "economic principle of balanced accounts":[9] the logic of production and consumption. As the "principle of loss," it renounces petty bourgeois happiness—which is precisely what the name *Lheureux* means. Absolute loss is death. Thus, Emma's death represents a due consequence of the logic of expenditure and loss.

Counter to what Illouz assumes, desire is not "rationalized" today by increasing opportunities for, and criteria of, choice. Instead, unchecked freedom of choice is threatening to bring about the *end of desire.* Desire is always desire for the *Other.* The negativity of privation and absence nourishes it. As the object of desire, the *Other* escapes the positivity of choice. Today's ego, with its "endless capacity to enunciate and refine criteria in mate selection,"[10] does not *desire.* To be sure, consumer culture is constantly producing new wants and needs by means of media images and narratives. But desire is something different from both wanting and needing. Illouz does not take the libido-economical particularity of desire into account.

Today's computerized *high-definition* imagery eliminates vagueness and ambiguity. Yet fantasy inhabits space that is undefined. Information and fantasy are opposing forces. Consequently, there is no such thing as an "information-thick" imagination incapable of "idealizing" the Other. The *construction of the Other* does not depend on whether more or less information is available. Only the negativity of *withdrawal* brings forth the Other in its atopic otherness. It lends the Other a higher plane of being beyond "idealization" or "overvaluation." Information, as such, is *positivity* that leads to a dismantling of the Other's negativity.

It is not heightened fantasy, but—if anything—higher expectations that are responsible for the mounting disappointment experienced in contemporary society. Problematically, however, Illouz does not distinguish between fantasy and expectation in her sociology of disappointment. New communications media do not give flight to fantasy. Their high information density, especially in visual terms, does precisely the opposite: it stifles fantasy. Hypervisibility is not conducive to imagination. As such, pornography—which maximizes visual information, as it were—destroys erotic fantasy.

Flaubert exploits the negativity of visual privation in order to rouse erotic fantasy. In a seeming paradox, the most erotic scene in *Madame Bovary* offers practically nothing to see. Léon seduces Emma to take a coach ride. The carriage drives aimlessly, without stopping, through the city; behind the curtains, the couple indulges their passions. In elaborate detail, Flaubert names all the squares, bridges, and boulevards where the carriage wanders, the places it passes: Quatre-Mares, Sotteville, the botanical gardens, and so on. But none of the lovers' activities is depicted. At the end of the drifting, erotic journey Emma stretches her hand out the carriage window and scatters scraps of paper, which flutter like white butterflies in the wind and fall on a field of clover.

In J. G. Ballard's short story "The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon," the protagonist retreats to a house by the sea to recover his sight after falling ill. His temporary blindness heightens his other senses. From within, dream images well up. Soon, they seem more real to him than reality; obsessively, he gives himself over to them. Time and again, he summons forth the mysterious coastal landscape with its blue cliffs. In his mind's eye, he clambers down rock stairs to a cave. There he meets a mysterious sorceress, the embodiment of his desire. After a beam of light strikes his eye as his bandages are being changed, he comes to believe that it has burned away his fantastic visions. His sight returns, but the dream images do not. Filled with despair, he resolves to destroy his eyes in order to see more. His scream of pain is also a joyous ejaculation:

> Quickly Maitland pushed back the branches of the willows and walked down on to the bank. A moment later, Judith heard his shout above the cries of the gulls. The sound came half in pain and half in triumph, and she ran down to the trees uncertain whether he had injured himself or discovered something pleasing. Then she saw him standing on the bank, his head raised to the sunlight, the bright carmine on his cheeks and hands, an eager, unrepentant Oedipus.[11]

In his reading, Slavoj Žižek assumes that Maitland's actions unfold in an idealist, Platonic dispositive: "how are we to pass from ever-changing 'false' material phenomenal reality to the true reality of Ideas?" What does it mean to go "from the cave in which we can perceive only shadows to the daylight in which we can catch a glimpse of the sun?"[12] Žižek mistakenly claims that Maitland stares into the sun hoping "to view the scene in its entirety."[13] In truth, however, Maitland is following an anti-Platonic dispositive. By destroying his eyes, he has made bold to withdraw from the world of truth and hypervisibility, to retreat into the cave—a twilight space of dreams and desire.

The inner music of things sounds only when you close your eyes. Roland Barthes quotes Kafka in this context: "We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds. My stories are a way of shutting my eyes."[14] Today, faced with the sheer volume of hypervisible images, we can no longer *shut our eyes*. The rapid succession of images leaves no time to do so, either. Shutting your eyes is *negativity*, which does not pair well with the positivity and hyperactivity of contemporary acceleration society. Compulsive hypervigilance makes it hard to close your eyes. This also accounts for the achievement-subject's nervous exhaustion. Lingering in contemplation is a form of closure (*ist eine Schlussform*). Indeed, *closing* your eyes *visibly signifies* as much. Perception can arrive at a conclusion only by way of peaceful contemplation.

The corollary of hypervisibility is the dismantling of thresholds and borders. Hypervisibility is the telos of the society of transparency. Space becomes transparent when it is smoothed out and leveled. Thresholds and transitions are zones of mystery and riddle—here, the atopic *Other* begins. When borders and thresholds vanish, *fantasies of the Other* disappear too. Without the negativity of thresholds or threshold-experiences, fantasy withers. The contemporary crisis in literature and the arts stems from a crisis of fantasy: the *disappearance of the Other.* This is the *agony of eros.*

The fences, or walls, that are being built today no longer stimulate fantasy, or fantasies, because they do not generate the *Other*. Instead, they extend through the inferno of the same, which obeys only economic laws. As such, they separate the rich from the poor. Capital is what is drawing these new frontiers. Yet money, as a matter of principle, makes everything the *same.* It levels essential differences. As configurations for shutting out and excluding, such borders abolish *fantasies of the Other.* They no longer constitute *thresholds* or *transitions* leading *somewhere else.*

The Politics of Eros

“Something universal”[1] inhabits eros. When I contemplate a beautiful body, I am already on the way to beauty-in-itself. Eros rouses and spurs the soul, “engendering and bringing to birth in the beautiful.”[2] It emanates spiritual buoyancy. The *eros-driven* soul produces beautiful things and, above all, beautiful actions, which have a universal value. That is Plato’s doctrine of eros. It is not simply, as commonly assumed, hostile to the senses or to pleasure. But if love is profaned into sexuality, as is happening today, the universal quality of eros vanishes.

Eros guides the soul, according to Plato. It holds sway over all its parts: pleasure-based desire (*epithumia*), spiritedness or courage (*thumos*), and reason (*logos*). Each spiritual component has its own mode of enjoyment and interprets the beautiful in its own way.[3] Today, it seems that desire (*epithumia*) dominates the soul’s experience of pleasure. For this reason, actions are rarely *thumos* driven. *Rage* is thumotic: it radically breaks with convention and inaugurates a *new* state of affairs. But now it is increasingly yielding to annoyance, or dissatisfaction, which lacks the negativity of rupture and instead allows circumstances to persist. Moreover, without eros, logos is deteriorating into data-driven calculation, which is incapable of reckoning the event, the incalculable. Eros must not be confused with fleshly desire (*epithumia*).[4] It stands above both desire and *thumos.* Eros makes *thumos* bring forth beautiful deeds. *Thumos*, then, would be where eros and politics touch. However, contemporary politics—which lacks not only *thumos*, but eros as well—has degraded into mere work. Neoliberalism is depoliticizing society in general—and not least of all, by replacing eros with sexuality and pornography. It is based on *epithumia*. In a burnout society of isolated, self-alienated achievement-subjects, *thumos* is also withering away. Communal action—a *we*—now proves impossible.

To be sure, a politics of love will never exist. Politics remains antagonistic. However, political action occurs in a sphere that intersects with eros on manifold levels. Eros can be transformed politically. Love stories that unfold against the backdrop of political events point to this hidden connection. Even though Alain Badiou rejects a direct link between politics and love, he presumes a "kind of secret resonance" that arises between life lived wholly under the sign of a political idea and the intensity of love. They are "like two musical instruments that are completely different in tone and volume, but which mysteriously converge when unified by a great musician in the same work."[5] Political action is mutual desire for another way of living—a more just world aligned with eros on every register. Eros represents a source of energy for political revolt and engagement.

Love is a "Two scene," a theater meant for a duo, to paraphrase Badiou.[6] Interrupting the isolated perspective of the One, it makes the world arise anew from the vantage point of the *Other*, or *Difference*. Love, as an experience and an encounter, is marked by the negativity of upheaval: “It is clear that under the effect of a loving encounter, if I want to be *really* faithful to it, I must completely rework my ordinary way of ‘living’ [*habiter*] my situation.”[7] The “event” is a moment of “truth”; it introduces a new and entirely different way of being into the habit of *habiter*, the situation at hand. It gives rise to something that circumstances cannot account for. It interrupts the Same in favor of the Other. The essence of the event is the negativity of rupture, which allows something wholly Other to begin. Eventfulness connects love with politics and art. They all command “fidelity” to the event. This *transcendental fidelity* may be understood as a universal quality of eros.

The negativity of transformation or the wholly Other is foreign to sexuality. The sexual object always remains self-identical. No *event* occurs for it, since a sexual object that can be consumed is not the *Other.* It never calls me into question. Sexuality belongs to the order of the *habitual*, which reproduces the *Same.* It is the love of the *One* for another *One*. It wholly lacks the negativity of the otherness that occupies the “Two scene.” Pornography reinforces habituation, for it erases otherness altogether. Its consumer does not even have a sexual *counterpart.* As such, it occupies the *One scene*. The pornographic image emanates no *resistance* of the Other or the Real. It is neither upstanding nor distanced. What is pornographic is precisely the lack of contact and encounter with the Other. Instead, autoerotic contact and auto-affection protect the ego from being touched or seized by the Other. Consequently, pornography intensifies narcissification. In contrast, love as an event—as a “Two scene”—is *dehabitualizing* and *denarcissifying.* It generates a “rupture,” a “hole” in the order of the Habitual and the Same.

A central concern of surrealism is the reinvention of love. The new definition of love represents an artistic, existential, and political gesture. Thus, André Breton ascribes a universal power to eros: “The only art worthy of man and of space, the only one capable of leading him further than the stars … is eroticism.”[8] For the surrealists, eros is the medium of a poetic revolution in language and existence.[9] It is exalted as the energetic source of renewal, which also feeds political action. Through its universal power, it combines the artistic, the existential, and the political. Eros manifests itself as the revolutionary yearning for an entirely different way of loving and another kind of society. Thereby, it remains faithful to what is yet to come.

The End of Theory

In a letter to his wife, Martin Heidegger wrote:

> The other thing, inseparable in a different way from my love for you and from my thinking, is difficult to say. I call it Eros, the oldest of the gods according to Parmenides. …
>
> The beat of that god's wings moves me every time I take a substantial step in my thinking and venture onto untrodden paths. It moves me perhaps more powerfully and uncannily [*stärker und unheimlicher*] than others when something long intuited is to be led across into the realm of the sayable and when what has been said must after all be left in solitude for a long time to come. To live up to *this* purely and yet retain what is ours, to follow the flight and yet return home safely, to accomplish both things as equally essential and pertinent, this is where I fail too easily and then either stray into pure sensuality [*bloße Sinnlichkeit*] or try to force the unforceable through sheer work [*bloßes Arbeiten*].[1]

Without seduction by the atopic Other, which sparks erotic desire, thinking withers into mere *work*, which always reproduces the *Same*. Calculating thought lacks the negativity of atopia. It is *work* on the positive. No negativity inspires disquiet or unrest in it. Heidegger speaks of the “sheer” or “mere” work into which thinking degrades when it is not driven by eros to venture down “untrodden paths,” into the incalculable. Thinking grows “more powerful” and “uncannier” when moved by the beating wings of Eros, as it seeks to translate the wordless, atopic Other into language. Calculating, data-driven thought utterly lacks the resistance offered by the atopic Other. Without eros, thinking is merely repetitive and additive. Likewise, love without eros and the spiritual lift it provides deteriorates into mere “sensuality.” Sensuality and work belong to the same order. They both lack spirit and desire.

Not long ago, Chris Anderson—the editor-in-chief of *Wired*—published a provocative article entitled “The End of Theory.” In it, he claimed that the inconceivably large volumes of data now available have made theoretical models entirely superfluous: “Today companies like Google, which have grown up in an era of massively abundant data, don’t have to settle for wrong models. Indeed, they don’t have to settle for models at all.”[2] Instead, they analyze data for patterns of affinity or dependency. The hypothetical models of theory are to be replaced with the direct comparison of data. Correlation is more important than causality:

> Out with every theory of human behavior, from linguistics to sociology. Forget taxonomy, ontology, and psychology. Who knows why people do what they do? The point is they do it, and we can track and measure it with unprecedented fidelity. With enough data, the numbers speak for themselves.[3]

Anderson's thesis rests on a weak and simplistic conception of theory. Theory offers more than a model or a hypothesis to be proven or disproven by means of experimentation. *Strong theories* such as Plato's doctrine of Ideas or Hegel's phenomenology of Spirit are not models that could be replaced by data analysis. They are founded on thinking in the emphatic sense. Theory represents an essential decision that causes the world to appear wholly different—in a wholly different light. Theory is a primary, primordial decision, which determines what counts and what does not—what *is* or *should* be, and what does not matter. As highly selective *narration*, it cuts a clearing of differentiation through untrodden terrain.

There is no such thing as *data-driven* thinking. Only calculation is data driven. The negativity of the incalculable is inscribed in thinking. As such, it is prior and superordinate to "data," which means "things given." Indeed, for thought, negativity is preexisting and *prescribed*. The theory underlying thinking is a precept, guide, and parameter. It transcends the positivity of given facts and makes them suddenly appear in a new light. This is not romanticism, but the logic of thinking itself, and it has been from the very beginning. Today, the volume of data and information, proliferating without end, is pulling science away from thought on a massive scale. Information is inherently positive. Data-based, positive science ("Google science"), which amounts to merely balancing out and comparing data, is putting an end to theory of the emphatic sort. It is *additive* or *detective*—not *narrative* or *hermeneutic*. No narrative tension animates it. As such, it *falls apart* into mere information. In view of the pullulating mass of information and data, theories are now more necessary than ever. Theories keep things from running together and sprawling. That is, they reduce entropy. Theory clarifies the world before it elucidates it. Consider that theories and ceremonies (i.e., rituals) share an origin. They confer *form* on the world. They shape the course of things, framing them so that they do not overflow. In contrast, today's mass of information is exercising a deformative effect.

Massive information massively heightens the entropy of the world; it raises the level of noise. Thinking demands calm. Thinking is an expedition into quietness. The crisis in theory corresponds to a crisis in literature and art. Michel Butor, the representative of the *nouveau roman* in France, sees it as a spiritual crisis: "We're not just living in an economic crisis, we're also living in a literary crisis. European literature is threatened. What we're now experiencing in Europe is a crisis of the spirit."[4] When asked how one may recognize as much, Butor responds:

> For the last ten or twenty years, almost nothing has been happening in literature. There's a tide of publications, but an intellectual standstill. The reason is a crisis of communication. The new means of communication are remarkable, but they cause tremendous noise.[5]

Rampant, massive information—an *excess of positivity*—makes a racket. Today's society of transparency and information has an extremely high noise level. But without *negativity*, only the Same exists. Spirit—which originally meant unrest—owes its spiritedness, its animacy, to negativity.

Data-driven, positive science produces neither insight nor truth. Information is only *cognized*. But cognition is not yet *re-cognition*—that is, insight. Because of its positivity, it is additive and cumulative. As positivity, information changes nothing and announces nothing. It is utterly *inconsequential*. In contrast, insight is a negativity. It is exclusive, exquisite, and executive. An insight preceded by *experience* is capable of shaking up the status quo in its entirety and allowing something *wholly Other* to begin. But excessive cognition prevents recognition from taking place. Our information society is a society of *experience*. Experiencing (*Erlebnis*) is also additive and cumulative. That is what distinguishes it from transformative experience (*Erfahrung*), which often occurs *only once*. Thus, information society has no access to the wholly Other. It lacks eros—which *transforms*. Sexuality also represents a positive formula for experiencing love. Therefore it, too, is additive and cumulative.

In Plato's dialogues, Socrates takes the stage as a seducer, beloved, and lover; because of his singularity, he is called *atopos.* His speech (*logos*) unfurls as *erotic seduction*, too. That is why he is compared to the satyr Marsyas. As is well known, satyrs and silenoi numbered among the companions of Dionysos. Socrates is said to be more admirable than the flute-player Marsyas, because he seduces and intoxicates by means of words alone. Anyone who listens to him goes wild. Alcibiades says that when he listens to Socrates, his heart beats even more violently than the hearts of people seized by the corybants' dance. He is wounded by his "speeches of wisdom" (*philosophia logon*) as if a snake had bitten him. Socrates's discourses bring forth tears. Until now, attention has hardly been paid to the remarkable fact that at the very beginning of philosophy and theory, logos and eros entered into such an intimate relation. Logos is powerless without the force of eros. Alcibiades says that Pericles and other orators, in contrast to Socrates, say nothing that grips or unsettles him. Their words lack the erotic power of seduction.

Eros leads and seduces (*führt und verführt*) thinking down untrodden paths, through the atopic Other. The daimonic nature of Socratic discourse derives from the *negativity of atopia.* Yet it does not end in *aporia.* Counter to tradition, Plato made *Poros* the father of Eros. *Poros* means "way." Although thinking ventures onto uncharted terrain, it does not get lost there. Because of his parentage, Eros shows the *way.* Philosophy is the translation of eros into logos. Heidegger follows Plato's theory of eros when he remarks that the beat of the god's wing touches him as soon as he makes a substantial step in his thinking and ventures onto untrodden paths.

Eros is called *philosophos*, the "friend of wisdom," in Plato.[6] The philosopher is a friend, a lover. Here, the lover is not an outward personality—an empirical circumstance—but "a presence that is intrinsic to thought, a condition of possibility of thought itself, a living category, a transcendental lived reality."[7] Thinking, in the strong sense, begins with eros. To be able to think, one must first have been a friend, a lover. Without eros, thinking loses all vitality and turmoil, and becomes repetitive and reactive. Eros infuses thinking with desire for the atopic *Other.* In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari extol eros as the transcendental condition for the possibility of thinking: "What does *friend* mean when it becomes ... a condition for the exercise of thought? Or rather, are we not talking of the lover? Does not the friend reintroduce into thought a vital relationship with the Other that was supposed to have been excluded from pure thought?"[8]

Notes

MELANCHOLIA

1. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 2010), 35; capitalization modified.
2. As translated in Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, ed. Arthur Groos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 51.
3. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 72.
4. Ibid., 133.

BEING ABLE NOT TO BE ABLE

1. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2010), 215.
2. Ibid., 47, 63.
3. Ibid., 63.
4. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 87–88.
5. Ibid., 90.
6. See Martin Buber, "Distance and Relation," in *Martin Buber on Psychology and Psychotherapy: Essays, Letters, and Dialogue*, ed. Judith Buber Agassi (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 3–16.
7. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 88–89.
8. E. L. James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* (New York: Vintage, 2012), 233.

9. Ibid., 104.
10. As Freud wrote to Wilhelm Fliess: “I am working on the assumption that our psychical mechanism has come about by a process of stratification: the material present in the shape of memory traces is from time to time subjected to a rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances—is, as it were, transcribed. Thus what is essentially new in my theory is the thesis that memory is present not once but several times over, that it is registered in various species of ‘signs.’” Sigmund Freud, *The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess*, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey (New York: Basic, 1954), 173.
11. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 90.
12. Ibid., 89.
13. Ibid., 78–79.

BARE LIFE

1. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 253e.
2. Marsilio Ficino, *Marsilio Ficino’s Commentary on Plato’s* Symposium, trans. Sears Reynolds Jane (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1944), 223.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 224.
5. Eva Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 104.
6. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Natural Law: The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, Its Place in Moral Philosophy, and Its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Law*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 91.
7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenenser Realphilosophie I*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Leipzig: Meiner, 1932), 229.

8. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10.
9. Ibid., 53.
10. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 17 (1257b).
11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 539.
12. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 19.
13. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part I: Science of Logic*, trans. Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 254.
14. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 539.
15. Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's* Symposium, 145.
16. Ibid.; translation slightly modified.
17. Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights, 1986), 11.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 239.
20. Ibid., 17–18.
21. Ibid., 13.
22. Ibid., 21.
23. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 382.
24. Richard Wagner, *The Flying Dutchman (Der Fliegende Holländer): A Romantic Opera in Three Acts*, ed. J. C. Macy and J. Troutbeck (New York: Oliver Ditson Company, 1895), 17; translation slightly modified.
25. Ibid., 5.

26. Ibid., 14.
27. Alain Badiou, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (New York: The New Press, 2012), 48.

PORN

1. Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, trans. Phil Beitchmann (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2008), 30.
2. Ibid., 53.
3. See Robert Pfaller, *Das schmutzige Heilige und die reine Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2008).
4. Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone, 2007), 75.
5. Ibid., 86.
6. Ibid., 85.
7. Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 57.
8. Agamben, *Profanations*, 90.
9. Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, 137–138.
10. Agamben, *Profanations*, 91.
11. Ibid., 133.

FANTASY

1. Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 230.
2. Ibid., 232.
3. Ibid., 215.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 208.
6. Ibid., 207–208.
7. Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1988), 25. (Cf. Patricia Reynaud, "Economics

and Counter-productivity in Flaubert's Madame Bovary," in *Literature and Money*, ed. Anthony Purdy [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993], 137–154, at 150: "Flaubert's process of narration is ... an instance of sovereignty, of creative overflow. ... Non-value characterizes a feminine economy, disparaged by basic economics. Non-value asserts itself through the non-inscription of women in circuits of exchange, by non-work.")

8. Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 25.
9. Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1985), 118.
10. Illouz, *Why Love Hurts*, 232.
11. J. G. Ballard, *The Complete Stories of J. G. Ballard* (New York: Norton, 2010), 656–657.
12. Slavoj Žižek, "Cyberspace, or The Unbearable Closure of Being," in *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories*, ed. Janet Bergstrom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 97.
13. Ibid., 96.
14. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 53.

THE POLITICS OF EROS

1. Alain Badiou, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (New York: The New Press, 2012), 39.
2. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 37 (206b).
3. See Thomas Alexander Szlezák, "'Seele' bei Platon," in *Der Begriff der Seele in der Philosophiegeschichte*, ed. Hans-Dieter Klein (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 65–86; here, 85.
4. Robert Pfaller, *Das schmutzige Heilige und die reine Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2008), 144: "In *The Republic,*

Plato elaborated a three-part topography of the human soul encompassing *logos* (reason), eros (*desire*), and *thumos* (pride)."

5. Badiou, *In Praise of Love*, 75.
6. Ibid., 38.
7. Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001), 42.
8. Quoted in Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938–1968* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 143.
9. Ibid., 65.

THE END OF THEORY

1. Martin Heidegger, *Letters to His Wife: 1915–1970* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 213; orthography modified.
2. Chris Anderson, "The End of Theory," *Wired*, July 16, 2008.
3. Ibid.
4. Michael Butor, quoted in *Die Zeit*, July 12, 2012.
5. Ibid.
6. Plato, *Symposium*, 203e.
7. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 3.
8. Ibid., 3–4.