FUCK OFF, GOOGLE

Invisible Committee

1. *There are no "Facebook revolutions", but there is a new science of government, cybernetics.* **2.** *War against all things* **smart***!* **3.** *The Poverty of Cybernetics.* **4.** *Techniques against Technology.*

1. The genealogy is not well known, and it deserves to be**.** Twitter descends from a program named TXTMob, invented by American activists as a way to coordinate via cellphones during protests against the Republican National Convention in 2004. The application was used by some 5000 people to share real-time information about the different actions and movements of the police. Twitter, launched two years later, was used for similar purposes, in Moldova for example, and the Iranian demonstrations of 2009 popularized the idea that it was the tool for coordinating insurgents, particularly against the dictatorships. In 2011, when rioting reached an England thought to be definitively impassive, some journalists were sure that tweeting had helped spread the disturbances from their epicenter, Tottenham. Logical, but it turned out that for their communication needs the rioters had gone with BlackBerry, whose secure telephones had been designed for the upper management of banks and multinationals, and the British secret service didn't even have the decryption keys for them. Moreover, a group of hackers hacked into BlackBerry's site to dissuade the company from cooperating with the police in the aftermath. If Twitter enabled a self-organization on this occasion it was more that of the citizen sweepers who volunteered to sweep up and repair the damage caused by the confrontations and looting. That effort was relayed and coordinated by CrisisCommons, a "global network of volunteers working together to build and use tecnology tools to help respond to disasters and improve resiliency and response before a crisis." At the time, a French left-wing rag compared this undertaking to the organization of the Puerta del Sol during the Indignants Movement, as it's called. The comparison between an initiative aimed at a quick return to order and the fact of several thousand people organizing to live on an occupied plaza, in the face of repeated assaults by the police, may look absurd. Unless we see in them just two *spontaneous, connected, civic gestures*. From 15-M on, the Spanish "indignados," a good number of them at least, called attention to their faith in a citizens' utopia. For them the digital social networks had not only accelerated the spread of the 2011 movement, but also and more importantly had set the terms of a new type of political organization, for the struggle and for society: a connected, participatory, transparent democracy. It's bound to be upsetting for "revolutionaries" to share such an idea with Jared Cohen, the American government's anti-terrorism adviser who contacted Twitter during the "Iranian revolution" of 2009 and urged them to maintain it's functioning despite censorship. Jared Cohen has recently cowritten with Google's former CEO, Eric Schmidt, a creepy political book, *The New Digital Age*. On its first page one reads this misleading sentence: "The Internet is the largest experiment involving anarchy in history."

"In Tripoli, Tottenham or Wall Street people have been protesting failed policies and the meager possibilities afforded by the electoral system… They have lost faith in government and other centralized institutions of power… There is no viable justification for a democratic system in which public participation is limited to voting. We live in a world in which ordinary people write Wikipedia; spend their evenings moving a telescope via the Internet and making discoveries half a world away; get online to help organize a protest in cyberspace and in the physical world, such as the revolutions in Egypt or Tunisia or the demonstrations of the the 'indignados' throughout Spain; or pore over the cables revealed by WikiLeaks. The same technologies enabling us to work together at a distance are creating the expectation to do better at governing ourselves." This is not an "*indignada*"speaking, or if so, she's one who camped for a long time in an office of the White House: Beth Noveck directed the "Open Government Initiative" of the Obama administration. That program starts from the premise that the governmental function should consist in linking up citizens and making available information that's now held inside the bureaucratic machine. Thus, according to New York's city hall, "the hierarchical structure based on the notion that the government knows what's good for you is outdated. The new model for this century depends on co-creation and collaboration."

Unsurprisingly, the concept of Open Government Data was formulated not by politicians but by computer programmers – fervent defenders of open source software development, moreover – who invoked the U.S. founding fathers' conviction that "every citizen should take part in government." Here the government is reduced to the role of team leader or facilitator, ultimately to that of a "platform for coordinating citizen action." The parallel

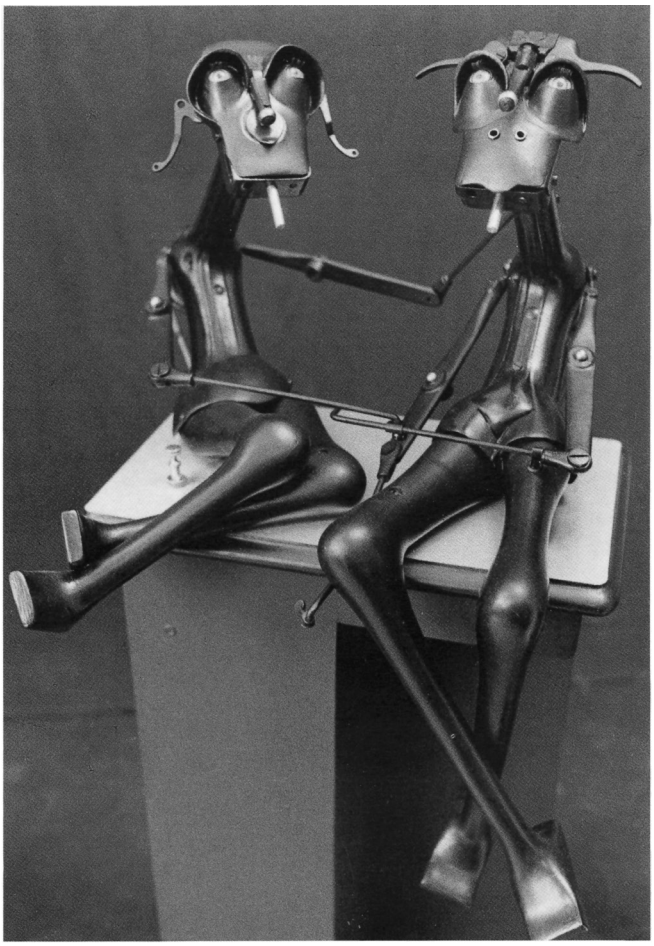
with social networks is fully embraced. "How can the city think of itself in the same way Facebook has an API ecosystem or Twitter does?" is the question on their minds at the New York mayor's office. "This can enable us to produce a more user-centric experience of government. It's not just the consumption but the co-production of government services and democracy." Even if these declarations are seen as fanciful cogitations, as products of the somewhat overheated brains of Silicon Valley, they still confirm that the practice of government is less and less identified with state sovereignty. In the era of networks, governing means ensuring the interconnection of people, objects, and machines as well as the free – i.e., transparent and controllable—circulation of information that is generated in this manner. This is an activity already conducted largely outside the state apparatuses, even if the latter try by every means to maintain control of it. It's becoming clear that Facebook is not so much the model of a new form of government as its reality already in operation. The fact that revolutionaries employed it and still employ it to link up in the street en masse only proves that it's possible, in some places, to use Facebook against itself, against its essential function, which is policing.

When computer scientists gain entry, as they're doing, into the presidential palaces and mayors' offices of the world's largest cities, it's not so much to set up shop as it is to explain the new rules of the game: government administrations are now competing with alternative providers of the same services who, unfortunately for them, are several steps ahead. Suggesting their cloud as a way to shelter government services from revolutions –services like the land registry, soon to be available as a smartphone application– the authors of *The New Digital Age* inform us and them: "In the future, people won't just back up their data; they'll back up their government." And in case it's not quite clear who the boss is now, it concludes: "Governments may collapse and wars can destroy physical infrastructure but virtual institutions will survive." With Google, what is concealed beneath the exterior of an innocent interface and a very effective search engine, is an explicitly political project. An enterprise that maps the planet Earth, sending its teams into every street of every one of its towns, cannot have purely commercial aims. One never maps a territory that one doesn't contemplate appropriating. "Don't be evil!": let yourself go.

It's a little troubling to note that under the tents that covered Zucotti Park and in the offices of planning –a little higher in the New York sky—the response to disaster is conceived in the same terms: connection, networking, self-organization. This is a sign that at the same time that the new communication technologies were put into place that would not only weave their web over the Earth but form the very texture of the world in which we live, a certain way of thinking and of governing was in the process of winning. Now, the basic principles of this new science of government were framed by the same ones, engineers and scientists, who invented the technical means of its application. The history is as follows. In the 1940's, while he was finishing his work for the American army, the mathematician Norbert Wiener undertook to establish both a new science and a new definition of man, of his relationship with the world and with himself. Claude Shannon, an engineer at Bell and M.I.T., whose work on sampling theory contributed to the development of telecommunications, took part in this project. As did the amazing Gregory Bateson, a Harvard anthropologist, employed by the American secret service in Southeast Asia during the Second World War, a sophisticated fan of LSD and founder of the Palo Alto School. And there was the truculent John von Neumann, writer of the *First Draft of a Report on the EDVAC*, regarded as the founding text of computer science – the inventor of game theory, a decisive contribution to neoliberal economics – a proponent of a preventive nuclear strike against the U.S.S.R., and who, after having determined the optimal points for releasing the Bomb on Japan, never tired of rendering various services to the American army and the budding C.I.A. Hence the very persons who made substantial contributions to the new means of communication and to data processing after the Second World War also laid the basis of that "science" that Wiener called "cybernetics." A term that Ampère, a century before, had had the good idea of defining as the "science of government." So we're talking about an art of governing whose formative moments are almost forgotten but whose concepts branched their way underground, feeding into information technology as much as biology, artificial intelligence, management, or the cognitive sciences, at the same time as the cables were strung one after the other over the whole surface of the globe.

We're not undergoing, since 2008, an abrupt and unexpected "economic crisis," we're only witnessing the slow collapse of political economy *as an art of governing.* Economics has never been a reality or a science; from its inception in the 17th century, it's never been anything but an art of governing populations. Scarcity had to be avoided if riots were to be avoided – hence the importance of "grains" – and wealth was to be produced to increase the power of the sovereign. "The surest way for all government is to rely on the interests of men," said Hamilton. Once the "natural" laws of economy were elucidated, governing meant letting its harmonious mechanism operate freely and moving men by manipulating their interests. Harmony, the predictability of behaviors, a radiant future, an assumed rationality of the actors: all this implied a certain trust, the ability to "give credit." Now, it's precisely these tenets of the old governmental practice which management through permanent crisis is pulverizing. We're not experiencing a "crisis of trust" but the *end* of trust, which has become superfluous to government. Where control and transparency reign, where the subjects' behavior is anticipated in real time through the algorithmic processing of a mass of available data about them, there's no more need to trust them or for them to trust. It's sufficient that they be sufficiently monitored. As Lenin said, "Trust is good, control is better."

The West's crisis of trust in itself, in its knowledge, in its language, in its reason, in its liberalism, in its subject and the world, actually dates back to the end of the 19th century; it breaks forth in every domain with and around the First World War. Cybernetics developed on that open wound of modernity. It asserted itself as a remedy for the existential and thus governmental crisis of the West. As Norbert Wiener saw it, "We are shipwrecked passengers on a doomed planet. Yet even in a shipwreck, human decencies and human values do not necessarily vanish, and we must make the most of them. We shall go down, but let it be in a manner to which we may look forward as worthy of our dignity". Cybernetic government is inherently apocalyptic. Its purpose is to locally impede the spontaneously entropic, chaotic movement of the world and to ensure "enclaves of order," of stability, and – who knows? – the perpetual self-regulation of systems, through the unrestrained, transparent, and controllable circulation of information. "Communication is the cement of society and those whose work consists in keeping the channels of communication open are the ones on whom the continuance or downfall of our civilization largely depends," declared Wiener, believing he knew. As in every period of transition, the changeover from the old economic governmentality to cybernetics includes a phase of instability, a historical opening where governmentality *as such* can be put in check.



2. In the 1980's, Terry Winograd, the mentor of Larry Page, one of the founders of Google, and Fernando Flores, the former finance minister of Salvador Allende, wrote concerning design in information technology that "the most important designing is ontological. It constitutes an intervention in the background of our heritage, growing out of our already existent ways of being in the world, and deeply affecting the kinds of beings that we are…It is necessarily reflective and political." The same can be said of cybernetics. Officially, we continue to be governed by the old dualistic Western paradigm where there is the subject and the world, the individual and society, men and machines, the mind and the body, the living and the nonliving. These are distinctions that are still generally taken to be valid. In reality, cybernetized capitalism does practice an ontology, and hence an anthropology, whose key elements are reserved for its initiates. The rational Western subject, aspiring to master the world and governable thereby, gives way to the cybernetic conception of a being without an interiority, of a selfless self, an emergent, climatic being, constituted by its exteriority, by its relations. A being which, armed with its Apple Watch, comes to understand itself entirely on the basis of external data, the statistics that each of its behaviors generates. A Quantified Self that is willing to monitor, measure, and desperately optimize every one of its gestures and each of its affects. For the most advanced cybernetics, there's already no longer man and his environment, but a system-being which is itself part of an ensemble of complex information systems, hubs of autonomic processes – a being that can be better explained by starting from the middle way of Indian Buddhism than from Descartes. "For man, being alive means the same thing as participating in a broad global system of communication", asserted Wiener in 1948.

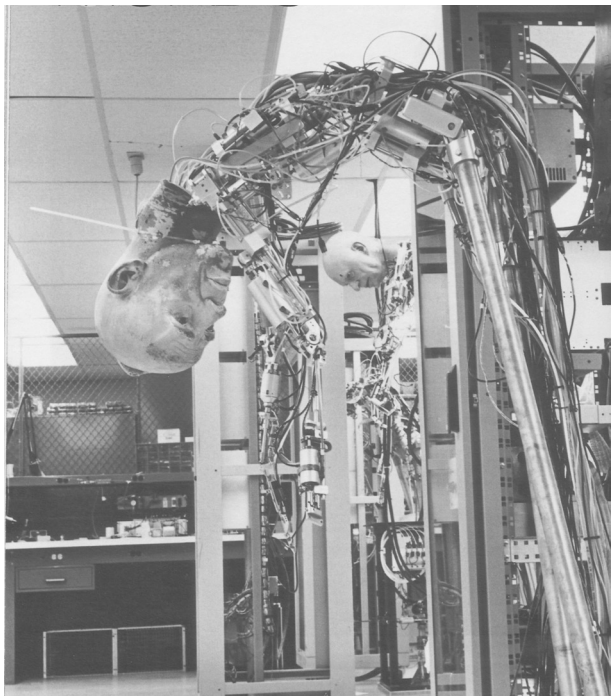
Just as political economy produced a *homo economicus* manageable in the framework of industrial States, cybernetics is producing its own humanity. A transparent humanity, emptied out by the very flows that traverse it, electrified by information, attached to the world by an ever-growing quantity of apparatuses. A humanity that's inseparable from its technological environment because it is constituted, and thus driven, by that. Such is the object of government now: no longer man or his interests, but his "social environment". An environment whose model is the smart city. Smart because by means of its sensors it produces information whose processing in real time makes self-management possible. And smart because it produces and is produced by smart inhabitants. Political economy reigned over beings by leaving them free to pursue their interest; cybernetics controls them by leaving them free

to communicate. "We need to reinvent the social systems in a controlled framework," according to M.I.T. professor Alex Pentland, in an article from 2011. The most petrifying and most realistic vision of the metropolis to come is not found in the brochures that IBM distributes to municipalities to sell them software for managing the flows of water, electricity, or road traffic. It's rather the one developed in principle "against" that Orwellian vision of the city: "smarter cities" coproduced by their residents themselves (in any case by the best connected among them). Another M.I.T. professor traveling in Catalonia is pleased to see its capital becoming little by little a "fab city": "Sitting here right in the heart of Barcelona I see a new city being invented where everyone will have access to the tools to make it completely autonomous" The citizens are thus no longer subalterns but *smart people*, "receivers and generators of ideas, services, and solutions," as one of them says. In this vision, the metropolis doesn't become smart through the decision-making and action of a central government, but appears, as a "spontaneous order", when its inhabitants "find new ways of producing, connecting, and giving meaning to their own data." The *resilient* metropolis thus emerges, one that can resist every disaster.

Behind the futuristic promise of a world of fully linked people and objects, when cars, fridges, watches, vacuums, and dildos are directly connected to each other and to the Internet, there is what is already here: the fact that the most polyvalent of sensors is already in operation: myself. "I" share my geolocation, my mood, my opinions, my account of what I saw today that was awesome or awesomely banal. I ran, so I immediately shared my route, my time, my performance numbers and their self-evaluation. I always post photos of my vacations, my evenings, my riots, my colleagues, of what I'm going to eat and who I'm going to fuck. I appear not to do much and yet I produce a steady stream of data. Whether I work or not, my everyday life, as a stock of information, remains fully valuable.

"Thanks to the widespread networks of sensors, we will have a God's eye view of ourselves. For the first time, we can precisely map the behavior of masses of people at the level of their daily lives," enthuses one of the professors. The great refrigerated storehouses of data are the pantry of current government. In its rummaging through the databases produced and continuously updated by the everyday life of connected humans, it looks for the correlations it can use to establish not universal laws nor even "whys," but rather "whens" and "whats," one-time, situated predictions, not to say oracles. The stated ambition of cybernetics is to manage the unforeseeable, and to govern the ungovernable instead of trying to destroy it. The question of cybernetic government is not only, as in the era of political economy, to anticipate in order to plan the action to take, but also to act directly upon the virtual, to structure the possibilities. A few years ago, the LAPD bought itself a new software program called PredPol. Based on a heap of crime statistics, it calculates the probabilities that a particular crime will be committed, neighborhood by neighborhood, street by street. Given these probabilities updated in real time, the program itself organizes the police patrols in the city. A founder cybernetician wrote in *Le Monde* in 1948: "We can dream of a time when the *machine à gouverner* will – for good or evil, who knows? – compensate for the shortcomings, obvious today, of the leaders and customary apparatuses of politics." Every epoch dreams the next one, even if the dream of the one may become the daily nightmare of the other.

The object of the great harvest of personal information is not an individualized tracking of the whole population. If the surveillants insinuate themselves into the intimate lives of each and every person, it's not so much to construct individual files as to assemble massive databases that make numerical sense. It is more efficient to correlate the shared characteristics of individuals in a multitude of "profiles," with the probable developments they suggest. One is not interested in the individual, present and entire, but only in what makes it possible to determine their potential lines of flight. The advantage of applying the surveillance to profiles, "events," and virtualities is that statistical entities don't take offense, and individuals can still claim they're not being monitored, at least not personally. While cybernetic governmentality already operates in terms of a completely new logic, its subjects continue to think of themselves according to the old paradigm. We believe that our "personal" data belong to us, like our car or our shoes, and that we're only exercising our "individual freedom" by deciding to let Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon or the police have access to them, without realizing that this has immediate effects on those who refuse to, and who will be treated from then on as suspects, as potential deviants. "To be sure," predicts *The New Digital Age*, "there will be people who resist adopting and using technology, people who want nothing to do with virtual profiles, online data systems or smart phones. Yet a government might suspect that people who opt out completely have something to hide and thus are more likely to break laws, and as a counterterrorism measure, that government will build the kind of 'hidden people' registry we described earlier. If you don't have any registered social-networking profiles or mobile subscriptions, and on-line references to you are unusually hard to find, you might be considered a candidate for such a registry. You might also be subjected to a strict set of new regulations that includes rigorous airport screening or even travel restrictions."



3. So the security services are coming to consider a Facebook profile more *credible* than the individual supposedly hiding behind it. This is some indication of the porousness between what was still called the virtual and the real. The accelerating datafication of the world does make it less and less pertinent to think of the online world and the real world, cyberspace and reality, as being separate. "Look at Android, Gmail, Google Maps, Google Search. That's what we do. We make products that people can't live without," is how they put it in Mountain View. In the past few years, however, the ubiquity of connected devices in the everyday lives of human beings has triggered some survival reflexes. Certain barkeepers decided to ban Google Glasses from their establishments – which became truly hip as a result, it should be said. Initiatives are blossoming that encourage people to disconnect occasionally (one day per week, for a weekend, a month) in order to take note of their dependence on technological objects and re-experience an "authentic" contact with reality. The attempt proves to be futile of course. The pleasant weekend at the seashore with one's family and without the smartphones is lived primarily *as an experience of disconnection*; that is, as something immediately thrown forward to the moment of reconnection, when it will be shared on the Internet.

Eventually, however, with Western man's abstract relation to the world becoming objectified in a whole complex of apparatuses, a whole universe of virtual reproductions, the path towards presence paradoxically reopens. By detaching ourselves from everything, we'll end up detaching ourselves even from our detachment. The technological beatdown will ultimately restore our capacity to be moved by the bare, pixelless existence of a honeysuckle vine. Every sort of screen coming between us and reality will have been required before we could reclaim the singular shimmer of the sensible world, and our amazement at what is there. It will have taken hundreds of "friends" who have nothing to do with us, "liking" us on Facebook the better to ridicule us afterwards, for us to rediscover the ancient taste for friendship.

Having failed to create computers capable of equaling human beings, they've set out to impoverish human experience to the point where life can be confused with its digital modeling. Can one picture the human desert that had to be created to make existence on the social media seem desirable? Just as the traveler had to be replaced by the tourist for it to be imagined that the latter might pay to go all over the world via hologram while remaining in their living room. But the slightest real experience will shatter the wretchedness of this kind of illusionism. *The poverty of cybernetics is what will bring it down in the end.* For a hyper-individualized generation whose primary sociality had been that of the *social media*, the Quebec student strike of 2012 was first of all a stunning revelation of the insurrectionary power of simply being together and starting to move. Evidently, this was a meet-up like no other before, such that the insurgent friendships were able to rush the police lines. The control traps were useless against that; in fact, they had become another way for people to test themselves, together. "The end of the Self will be the genesis of presence," envisioned Giorgio Cesarano in his *Survival Manual*.

The virtue of the hackers has been to base themselves on the materiality of the supposedly virtual world. In the words of a member of Telecomix, a group of hackers famous for helping the Syrians get around the state control of Internet communications, if the hacker is ahead of his time it's because he "didn't think of this tool [the Internet] as a separate virtual world but as an extension of physical reality." This is all the more obvious now that the hacker movement is extending itself outside the screens by opening hackerspaces where people can analyze, tinker with, and piece together digital software and tech objects. The expansion and networking of Do It Yourself has produced a gamut of purposes: it's a matter of fooling with things, with the street, the city, the society, life itself. Some pathological progressives have been quick to see the beginnings of a new economy in it, even a new civilization, based this time on "sharing." Never mind that the present capitalist economy already values "creation," beyond the old industrial constraints. Managers are urged to facilitate free initiative, to encourage innovative projects, creativity, genius, even deviance – "the company of the future must protect the deviant, for it's the deviant who will innovate and who is capable of creating rationality in the unknown," they say. Today value is not sought in the new features of a product, nor even in its desirability or its meaning, but in the experience it offers to the consumer. So why not offer that consumer the ultimate experience of going over to the other side of the creation process? From this perspective, the hackerspaces or "fablabs" become spaces where the "projects" of "consumer-innovators" can be undertaken and "new marketplaces" can emerge. In San Francisco, the TechShop firm is developing a new type of fitness club

where, for a yearly membership fee, "one goes every week to make things, to create and develop one's projects."

The fact that the American army finances similar places under the Cyber Fast Track program of DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Project Agency) doesn't discredit the hackerspaces as such. Any more than they're condemned to participate in yet another restructuring of the capitalist production process when they're captured in the "Maker" movement with its spaces where people working together can build and repair industrial objects or divert them from their original uses. Village construction sets, like that of Open Source Ecology with its fifty modular machines – tractor, milling machine, cement mixer, etc. – and DIY dwelling modules could also have a different destiny than serving to found a "small civilization with all the modern comforts," or creating "entire new economies" or a "financial system" or a "new governance," as its current guru fantasizes. Urban farming which is being established on building roofs or vacant industrial lots, like the 1300 community gardens of Detroit, could have other ambitions than participating in economic recovery or bolstering the "resilience of disaster zones." Attacks like those conducted by Anonymous/LulzSec against banking firms, security multinationals, or telecommunications could very well go beyond cyberspace. As a Ukrainian hacker says, "When you have to attend to your life, you stop printing stuff in 3D rather quickly. You find a different plan."

4. The famous "question concerning technology," still a blind spot for revolutionary movements, comes in here**.** A wit whose name can be forgotten described the French tragedy thus: "a generally technophobic country dominated by a generally technophilic elite." While the observation may not apply to the country, it does apply in any case to the radical milieus. The majority of Marxists and post-Marxists supplement their atavistic inclination to hegemony with a definite attachment to technology-that-emancipates-man, whereas a large percentage of anarchists and post-anarchists are down with being a minority, even an oppressed minority, and adopt positions generally hostile to "technology." Each tendency even has its caricature: corresponding to the Negriist devotees of the cyborg, the electronic revolution by connected multitudes, there are the anti-industrials who've turned the critique of progress and the "disaster of technological civilization" into a profitable literary genre on the whole, and a niche ideology where one can stay warm at least, having envisaged no revolutionary possibility whatsoever. Technophilia and technophobia form a diabolical pair joined together by a central untruth: that such a thing as the technical exists. It would be possible, apparently, to divide between what is technical and what is not, in human existence. Well, no, in fact. One only has to look at the state of incompletion in which the human offspring is born, and the time it takes for it to move about in the world and to talk, to realize that its relation to the world is not given in the least, but rather the result of a whole elaboration. Since it's not due to a natural compatibility, man's relation to the world is essentially artificial, *technical*, to speak Greek. Each human world is a certain configuration of techniques, of culinary, architectural, musical, spiritual, informational, agricultural, erotic, martial, etc., techniques. And it's for this reason that there's no generic human essence: because there are only particular techniques, and because every technique configures a world, materializing in this way a certain relationship with the latter, a certain *form of life*. So one doesn't "construct" a form of life; one only incorporates techniques, through example, exercise, or apprenticeship. This is also why our familiar world rarely appears to us as "technical": because the set of artifices that structure it are already part of us. It's rather those we're not familiar with that seem to have a strange artificiality. Hence the technical character of our world only stands out in two circumstances: invention and "breakdown." It's only when we're present at a discovery or when a familiar element is lacking, or breaks, or stops functioning, that the illusion of living in a natural world gives way in the face of contrary evidence.

Techniques can't be reduced to a collection of equivalent instruments any one of which Man, that generic being, could take up and use without his essence being affected. Every tool configures and embodies a particular relation with the world, and the worlds formed in this way are not equivalent, any more than the humans who inhabit them are. And by the same token these worlds are not hierarchizable either. There is nothing that would establish some as more "advanced" than others. They are merely distinct, each one having its own potential and its own history. In order to hierarchize worlds a criterion has to be introduced, an implicit criterion making it possible to classify the different techniques. In the case of progress, this criterion is simply the quantifiable productivity of the techniques, considered apart from what each technique might involve ethically, without regard to the sensible world it engenders. This is why there's no progress but capitalist progress, and why capitalism is the uninterrupted destruction of worlds. Moreover, the fact that techniques produce worlds and forms of life doesn't mean that man's essence is production, as Marx believed. So this is what technophiles and technophobes alike fail to grasp: the *ethical* nature of every technique.

It should be added that the nightmare of this epoch is not in its being the "age of technics" but in its being the age of technology. Technology is not the consummation of technical development, but on the contrary the expropriation of humans' different constitutive techniques. Technology is the *systematizing* of the most *effective* techniques, and consequently the leveling of the worlds and the relations with the world that everyone deploys. Techno-logy is *a discourse about techniques that is constantly being projected into material reality*. Just as the ideology of the festival is the death of the real festival, and the ideology of the encounter is the actual impossibility of coming together, technology is the neutralization of all the particular techniques. In this sense capitalism is essentially technological; it is the profitable organization of the most productive techniques into a system. Its cardinal figure is not the economist but the engineer. The engineer is the specialist in techniques and thus the chief expropriator of them, one who doesn't let himself be affected by any of them, and spreads his own absence from the world everywhere he can. He's a sad and servile figure. The solidarity between capitalism and socialism is confirmed there: in the cult of the engineer. It was engineers who drew up most of the models of the neoclassical economy like pieces of contemporary trading software. Recall in this regard that Brezhnev's claim to fame was to have been an engineer in the metallurgical industry in Ukraine.

The figure of the hacker contrasts point by point with the figure of the engineer, whatever the artistic, police-directed, or entrepreneurial efforts to neutralize him may be. Whereas the engineer would capture everything that functions, in such a way that everything functions better in service to the system, the hacker asks himself "How does that work?" in order to find its flaws, but also to invent other uses, to experiment. Experimenting then means exploring what such and such a technique implies *ethically*. The hacker pulls techniques out of the technological system in order to free them. If we are slaves of technology, this is precisely because there is a whole ensemble of artifacts of our everyday existence that we take to be specifically "technical" and that we will always regard simply as black boxes of which we are the innocent users. The use of computers to attack the CIA attests rather clearly that cybernetics is no more the science of computers than astronomy is the science of telescopes. Understanding how the devices around us work brings an immediate increase in power, giving us a purchase on what will then no longer appear as an environment, but as a world arranged in a certain way and one that we can shape. This is the hacker's perspective on the world.

These past few years, the hacker milieu has gained some sophistication politically, managing to identify friends and enemies more clearly. Several substantial obstacles stand in the way of its becoming-revolutionary, however. In 1986, "Doctor Crash" wrote: "Whether you know it or not, if you are a hacker you are a revolutionary. Don't worry, you're on the right side." It's not certain that this sort of innocence is still possible. In the hacker milieu there's an originary illusion according to which "freedom of information," "freedom of the Internet," or "freedom of the individual" can be set against those who are bent on controlling them. This is a serious misunderstanding. *Freedom and surveillance, freedom and the panopticon belong to the same paradigm of government.* Historically, the endless expansion of control procedures is the corollary of a form of power that is realized *through* the freedom of individuals. Liberal government is not one that is exercised directly on the bodies of its subjects or that expects a filial obedience from them. It's a background power, which prefers to manage space and rule over interests rather than bodies. A power that oversees, monitors, and acts minimally, intervening only where the framework is threatened, against that which *goes too far*. Only free subjects, taken en masse, are governed. Individual freedom is not something that can be brandished against the government, for it is the very mechanism on which government depends, the one it regulates as closely as possible in order to obtain, from the amalgamation of all these freedoms, the anticipated mass effect. *Ordo ab chao.* Government is that order which one obeys "like one eats when hungry and covers oneself when cold," that servitude which I co-produce at the same time that I pursue my happiness, that I exercise my "freedom of expression." "Market freedom requires an active and extremely vigilant politics," explained one of the founders of neoliberalism. *For the individual, monitored freedom is the only kind there is.* This is what libertarians, in their infantilism, will never understand, and it's this incomprehension that makes the libertarian idiocy attractive to some hackers. A genuinely free being is not even said to be free. It simply *is*, it exists, deploys its powers according to its being. We say of an animal that it is *en liberté,* "roaming free," only when it lives in an environment that's already

completely controlled, fenced, civilized: in the park with human rules, where one indulges in a safari. "Friend" and "free" in English, and "Freund" and "frei" in German come from the same Indo-European root, which conveys the idea of a shared power that grows. Being free and having ties was one and the same thing. I am free *because I have ties*, because I am linked to a reality greater than me. In ancient Rome, the children of citizens were *liberi* : through them, it was Rome that was growing. Which goes to show how ridiculous and what a scam the individual freedom of "I do what I feel like doing" is. If they truly want to fight the government, the hackers have to give up this fetish. The cause of individual freedom is what prevents them from forming strong groups capable of laying down a real strategy, beyond a series of attacks; it's also what explains their inability to form ties beyond themselves, their incapacity for becoming a historical force. A member of Telecomix alerts his colleagues in these terms: "What is certain is that the territory you're living in is defended by persons you would do well to meet. Because they're changing the world and they won't wait for you."

Another obstacle for the hacker movement, as every new meeting of the Chaos Computer Club demonstrates, is in managing to draw a front line in its own ranks between those working for a better government, or even *the* government, and those working for its destitution. The time has come for *taking sides*. It's this basic question that eludes Julian Assange when he says: "We high-tech workers are a class and it's time we recognize ourselves as such." France has recently exploited the defect to the point of opening a university for molding "ethical hackers". Under DCRI supervision, it will train people to fight against the real hackers, those who haven't abandoned the *hacker ethic*.

These two problems merged in a case affecting us. After so many attacks that so many of us applauded, Anonymous/LulzSec hackers found themselves, like Jeremy Hammond, nearly alone facing repression upon getting arrested. On Christmas day, 2011, LulzSec defaced the site of Strafor, a "private intelligence" multinational. By way of a homepage, there was now the scrolling text of *The Coming Insurrection* in English, and $700,000 was transferred from the accounts of Stratfor customers to a set of charitable associations – a Christmas present. And we weren't able to do anything, either before or after their arrest. Of course, it's safer to operate alone or in a small group – which obviously won't protect you from infiltrators – when one goes after such targets, but it's disastrous for attacks that are so political, and so clearly within the purview of global action by our party, to be reduced by the police to some private crime, punishable by decades of prison or used as a lever for pressuring this or that "Internet pirate" to turn into a government snitch.

Invisible Committee,
October 2014

Excerpt from «*To Our Friends*», translations coming soon.
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