

A few steps towards the anthropology of the iconoclastic gesture

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Prologue: an exemplary iconoclast

Here is the story of a courageous iconoclast who follows the model of the critique, his ideal-type.¹ His name is Jagannath and he has decided to break the spell of casts and untouchability by unveiling to the pariahs that the sacred *saligram* of his high-caste family is nothing they should be afraid of. When the pariahs are assembled in the courtyard of his family estate, the well meaning iconoclast, to the horror of his aunt, seizes the stones and, crossing the forbidden space, carrying the object to be desecrated by the poor slaves. Suddenly, in the middle of the court, in the blazing sun, Jagannath hesitates:

“Words stuck in his throat. This stone is nothing, but I have set my heart on it and I am reaching it for you: touch it; touch the vulnerable point of my mind; this is the time of evening prayer; touch; the *nandadeepa* is burning still. Those standing behind me [the aunt and the priest] are pulling me back by the many bonds of obligation. What are you waiting for? What have I brought? Perhaps it is like this: this has become a *saligram* because I have offered it as stone. If you touch it, then it would be a stone for them. This my importunity (sic) becomes a *saligram*. Because I have given it, because you have touched it, and because they have all witnessed this event, let this stone change into a *saligram*, in this darkening nightfall. And let the *saligram* change into a stone.” p.101

But then the pariahs recoil in horror:

“Jagannaht tried to soothe them. He said in his everyday tone of a teacher: ‘This is mere stone. Touch it and you will see. If you don’t, you will remain foolish forever’.
He did not know what had happened to them, but found the entire group recoiling suddenly. They winced under their wry faces, afraid to stand and

afraid to run away. He had desired and languished for this auspicious moment —this moment of the pariahs touching the image of God. He spoke in a voice choking with great rage: ‘Yes, touch it!’

He advance towards them. They shrank back. Some monstrous cruelty overtook the man in him. The pariahs looked like disgusting creatures crawling upon their bellies.

He bit his underlip and said in a firm low voice: ‘Pilla, touch it! Yes, touch it!’. Pilla [a pariah foreman] stood blinking. Jagannath felt spent and lost. Whatever he had been teaching them all these days had gone to waste. He rattled dreadfully: “Touch, touch, you TOUCH IT!” It was like the sound of some infuriated animal and it came tearing through him. He was sheer violence itself; he was conscious of nothing else. The pariahs found him more menacing than Bhutaraya [the demon-spirit of the local god]. The air was rent with his screams. “Touch, touch, touch”. The strain was too much for the pariahs. Mechanically they came forward, just touched what Jagannath was holding out to them, and immediately withdrew.

Exhausted by violence and distress Jagannath pitched aside the *saligram*. A heaving anguish had come to a grotesque end. Aunt could be human even when she treated the pariahs as untouchables. He had lost his humanity for a moment. The pariahs had been meaningless things to him. He hung his head. He did not know when the pariahs had gone. Darkness had fallen when he came to know that he was all by himself. Disgusted with his own person he began to walk about. He asked himself: when they touched it, we lost out humanity —they and me, didn’t we? And we died. Where is the flaw of it all, in me or in society? There was no answer. After a long walk he came home, feeling dazed.”

Fetishes+Facts=Factishes

We tend to take iconoclasm for a critical virtue which plays in politics, philosophy and the arts the role of the Sovereign Good, the role of what cannot possibly be discussed. What I want to do in this paper is to interrogate the wisdom of this position, not by breaking it apart -which would simply add another iconoclastic gesture to the long list of such endeavours- but by suspending the gesture and to explore its meaning, exactly as Jagannath and the novelist do. My contention is that we have used up the repertoire of critical methods available to us and that it is now time to retrace our steps. It seems that belief after belief, the critique has eaten up everything it could, including science and rationality. Hence the theme of this special issue.

So many things have been criticized, so many beliefs debunked, that some critical thinkers believe they have entered the postmodern realm of virtuality. Forgetting the cost, difficulty and technical know-how, necessary to produce any virtual image, postmodern critiques have built the final hall of mirrors of beliefs and make-believe. Only they, however, live in virtual reality. The rest of us, like the aunt and the pariahs of the anecdote above, live in another non-modern world from which belief is absent —and hence the modernist critique and the postmodern virtuality.

Another way of saying this, is to point out that in all their efforts at critique, the modernist and postmodernist have left belief untouched, the only real

untouchable of their courageous enterprises. They believe in belief. They believe that people naively believe. I will call agnosticism, not the doubt exerted on values, powers, ideas, truths, distinctions, constructions, but, on the contrary, the doubt exerted against this doubt itself, against the notion that belief could account in any way for what holds any of these forms of life together. If we do away with belief (in beliefs) then we can explore other models of critique, at least this is the argument I propose to discuss in this issue, the purpose of which, if I have understood it correctly, is to explore other resources than the critique to provide political leverage.

I will proceed in two moves. The first will delicately surround the critical model to turn it into a topic for enquiry, an interesting but now innocuous repertoire. The second, will, on the contrary, reactivate what the critique had made us blind to, thus offering to politics other models, that have always been present, but had become hard to hear and see. The tone of my article will not be analytical because I take analytical gestures -like those of deconstruction- to be like very fine and delicate iconoclastic gestures exerted not on idols and images but on fragments of fragments so small then end up in dust. I will use for this piece a different tone, a sort of “elegiac” one, since my aim here is simply to give space to a new figure of speech that I will call the factish, and that should allow me to open another language possibility where the question of constructivism or realism could be shortcut.

Before seeing what a non-critical, non-denunciatory, non-modern political fight would be, we have to rewind part of the tape and to understand how the critique ticks, so to speak, now that we can observe it as a sort of museum piece that has lost its activity, its activism, as have initiation masks in ethnography museums.

Iconoclasm, is an essential part of what it means to be a critique. But what is being broken by the hammer? An idol. A fetish. What is a fetish? Something that is nothing in itself, but only the screen on which we have projected, by mistake, our fancies, our labor, hopes and passions. A “mere stone” as Jagannath tries to convince himself and the pariahs. The difficulty, of course, is that it is hard to explain how a fetish could be at once everything —the source of all energy for the believers—, nothing —a simple piece of wood or a stone— and a little bit of something —what is able to reverse the origin of action and to make one believe that the maker is actually, through inversion, reification, objectification, made by the workings of one’s own hands. Somehow fetishes gain importance in the hands of the anti-fetichists. The more you want it to be nothing, the more action springs back from it. Hence the worry of the well-meaning iconoclast: “This has become a *saligram* because I have offered it as a stone.” As Michel Serres has beautifully shown, it is hard to pin point the exact difference between the hammer of a sculptor and the hammer of an iconoclast.²

What has been broken by the courageous iconoclasts? I contend that it is not the fetish, but that what has been broken is a way of arguing and acting that used to render action and argument possible? (“When they touched, we lost our humanity —they and me; didn’t we? And we died”). This is always the difficulty with anti-fetichism. It is an accusation. An accusation levelled at some persons accused of being taken in —or worse of cynically manipulating credulous believers— by someone who is sure of escaping from this illusion and wants to free the others as well —either from naïve belief or from being manipulative. But if

anti-fetishism is clearly an accusation, it is not a description of what happens to those who believe or are manipulated. Actually, as is beautifully illustrated by Jagannath's move, it is the critical thinker who invents the notion of belief and manipulation projected upon a situation where the fetish plays an entirely different role. Neither the aunt nor the priest ever considered the *saligram* as any thing other than a mere stone, never. By making it what should be touched by the pariahs, Jagannath transubstantiates the stone into a monstrous thing —and transubstantiates Jagannath himself in a cruel animal, while the pariahs are transmigrated into “crawling beasts” and mere “things”. What horrifies the “natives” in the iconoclastic move is not the gesture itself that would break their idols, but the extravagant belief that the iconoclast wishes to impute to them. How could the iconoclast demean himself to the point of believing that we, the natives, would so naively believe —or so cynically manipulate, or so stupidly dupe ourselves? Are we animals? Are we monsters? Are we mere things?

The hammer strikes sideways something else than that which the iconoclast wanted to break. Instead of freeing the pariahs from their abject condition, Jagannath breaks his and their humanity, and that of his aunt. Somehow, humanity was depending upon the presence of those “mere stones”. Iconoclasm does not break an idol but a way of arguing and acting that is anathema to the iconoclast. The only one who is projecting feelings onto the idol, is him, the iconoclast with a hammer, not those who should be freed, by his gesture, from their shackles. The only one who believes is him, the fighter of all beliefs. Why? Because he (I use a masculine marker and that serves him right!) believes in belief, a very strange feeling indeed, a feeling that might have no correspondence in any situation whatsoever. Belief, naïve belief, might be the way for the iconoclast to enter into contact, violent contact, with the others. Not a state of mind, not a way to grasp statements, but a mode of relations. It is only when the statue is hit by the violent shock of the iconoclast's hammer, that it becomes a potential idol, naively and wrongly endowed with powers that it does not possess —the proof being that it now lies in pieces and nothing happens, except the indignant puzzlement of the ones who had loved the statue, have been accused of being taken in by its power, and now remain “liberated” from its sway (but as we see in the Indian novel, what now lies in waste in the middle of the destructed family temple is the humanity of the icon-breaker).

Before being hit, the idol was something else, not a stone mistakenly taken for a spirit, or any such thing. What was it? Can we retrieve a meaning that would bring the broken pieces together, as if we could, like archaeologists, repair the damages of time, that greatest of all iconoclasts? We can in part by extracting the two broken halves of the words “fetish” and “fact”. The fetish is what is fabricated and what is not fabricated.³ The fact is what is fabricated and not fabricated.⁴ There is nothing hidden in this joint articulation. Everyone says it explicitly, constantly, obsessively, the scientists through their laboratory practice, the adepts of fetishist cults through their rites. Except that we use these words after the hammer has broken them into two: the fetish has become nothing but an empty stone on which meaning is mistakenly projected; the fact has become an absolute certainty which can be used as a hammer to break away all the delusions of beliefs.

Now, let us try to glue together again the two broken symbols and thus reconstitute the four quarters of our new repertoire.⁵ The fact that is used as a solid hammer, is also fabricated, in the laboratory, through a long and complex

negotiation. Does this addition of its second half, its hidden history, its laboratory setting, weaken the fact? Yes, because it is no longer solid and sturdy like a hammer. It is now, so to speak, filamentous, more fragile, more complex, richly vascularized. It can still be used, to be sure, but not by an iconoclast and not to shatter down a belief. A somewhat subtler hand is required to seize this quasi-object and a somewhat different program of action should be implemented with it.

What about the other side? What happens to the fetish? It is said, quite clearly to be fabricated, made, invented, devised.⁶ No one of its practitioners seems to need the belief in belief to account for its efficacy. Everyone seems to spell out quite frankly how it is made. Does the acknowledgement of this fabrication weaken in any way the claim that it is acting? Yes, because it is no longer a ventriloquous phenomenon, an inversion, a reification, an echo, whereby the maker would be taken in by what it has just created.⁷ It is no longer a naive belief in a retroprojection of human labor onto an object that is nothing in itself. It is not breakable and fragile like a belief waiting for the iconoclast's hammer. It is now more sturdy, much more reflexive, richly endowed with a collective practice, reticulated like blood vessels. Reality but no longer belief is entangled in it. If the hammer was still threatening it into destruction, it would bounce back on this plastic and resilient network.

If we add to the facts their fabrication in the laboratory, and if we add to the fetishes their explicit and reflexive fabrication by their makers, the two main resources of the critique disappear, the hammer as well as the anvil—I did not say the hammer and the sickle!⁸ What appears in their stead, is what had been broken by iconoclasm, what had always been there, what has always to be carved anew, what is necessarily present for acting and arguing, and that I will call “factish”. The factish is what is retrieved from the massacre of facts and fetishes, when the actions of their makers are explicitly recovered for both. The symmetry of the two broken symbols is put back into place. If the iconoclast could naively believe that there exist believers naive enough to endow a stone with spirit, it was because the iconoclast also naively believed that the very facts he was using to shatter the idol were themselves produced without the help of any human agency. But if human agencies are brought back in both cases, the belief to be shattered disappears with the shattering fact.⁹ We enter a world we had never left, except in dreams, the dreams of reason, a world where arguments and actions are everywhere facilitated, permitted, protected, allowed, afforded by factishes¹⁰.

The notion of factish is not an analytical category that could be added to the others through a clear and crisp discourse, since the clarity of discourse is obtained by provoking the deepest obscurity, that is a choice between constructivism and reality. Are scientific facts real or are they constructed? Are fetishes beliefs projected on idols or are these idols “really” acting? Although these questions are commonsense enough and seem necessary for any analytical clarity to take over, they are, in my view, what render all the associations of humans and non-humans totally opaque. If there is one thing that does not clarify the *saligram*'s function it is to ask whether or not it is a “mere” stone or a powerful object or a social construct. But there is a difficulty in saying that one does not answer the question: is it real or is it constructed? Because the refusal to answer, can be confused with a cynical acceptance of the falsity of all constructs. The solution of the factish is not to ignore the choice as so many postmoderns will do by saying “yes of course, construction and reality are the same thing; everything, we know that, is illusion

and make believe”¹¹. The factish says something else: it is because it is constructed that it is so exactly real, so autonomous, so independent of our own hands. As long as we don’t understand the synonymy between construction and autonomous reality, we misconstrue the factishes as another sort of social constructivism and not as what modifies the theory of what it is to construct anything¹².

The model of the critique

The breaking of factishes into facts and fetishes, had an enormous effect on the model of the critique. It is at the origin of this source of analytical clarity that has done so much to obscure the debates in science studies, that is the distinction between epistemological questions and ontological questions, between mental representations and things themselves, between subjects and objects. If there is no factish but only fetishes which are, in this definition, nothing but pieces of wood and mute stones, where are we to locate all the things that believers believe in? There is no other solution than to push them into the mind of believers or their fecund imagination, or even further down into their rather perverse and crooked unconscious.

Why not let them reside where they were, that is in the many intermediary worlds? Because the world itself has been filled beyond capacity by the simultaneous other move that has transformed factishes into facts. If no human agency is at work—or has been at work—in the manufacture of facts, if there is no limit of cost, information, network, manpower to produce, expand and maintain them, then nothing, absolutely nothing stops the facts from proliferating everywhere, filling in a continuous voidless fashion every little corner of the world—and also unifying the worlds into one single homogeneous world. The notion of matter, of a mechanical universe, of a mechanical world-picture, of a natural world, are simple consequences of the breaking away of the two meanings of facts: what is being fabricated, what is not fabricated. But on the other hand, the notions of a belief, of a mind, of interior representations, of illusions, are nothing but the consequence of having shattered the fetish into two halves: what is fabricated, what is not fabricated.

It is hard to decide what has come first. Has the notion of an interior mind been invented to find a repository for all the entities squeezed out of the world, or, on the contrary, did the belief in beliefs empty the world so that there was room to allow “factoids” to proliferate like rabbits in Australia? What is sure is that, by breaking the ways of arguing and acting through factishes, by removing the human agencies from the fabrication of facts and from the fabrication of fetishes, two fabulous reservoirs have been invented, one for epistemology, one for ontology. The subjects with an inside are as strange as the objects with an outside. Indeed, the notion of an inside and an outside are very queer and is, in its own respect, a fabulous innovation. With one stroke, the iconoclast is now able to start the most powerful suction- and force-pump ever devised. Whenever entities are obstacles to his action they can be sucked out of existence into beliefs.¹³ Whenever there is a deficit of mechanical entities that render his action unsteady or objectionable, they can be forced-pumped into existence by the thousands.

There is of course a difficulty in talking as if only the iconoclast was a naive believer, as if only he and he alone was projecting feelings onto objects and forgetting that the facts he was making in the laboratory have no maker. How could he, and he alone, be naive, and immersed in bad faith and false

consciousness? Is there not a lack of charity here; worse a lack of reflexivity; even worse, a lack of symmetry? It is true that the modernist iconoclast does not believe more naively in his double construction of facts and fetishes than any of the other believed in the idols he destroyed to “free” them from their chains. Something else is at stake in his obsession, another wisdom, which, to be sure, is not that of the factishes, but is a wisdom all the same, no matter how tortuous it will appear to be. Let us consider one last time the extraordinary power of the modernist iconoclast, when he is not self-conscious, that is before he stops being modern, when he still resides in his pristine and unspoiled exoticism!

We see why we cannot be naive enough in attributing naive belief in anti-fetichism to the iconoclast. It is, on the contrary, a very precise mechanism that allows, by removing human agency twice, an extraordinary degree of freedom since, at no cost, it is possible to free the passage for action by disintegrating entities into mere beliefs and solidifying opinions and positions into hard facts. No one ever had so much freedom. Freedom, is precisely what triggers and justifies the iconoclast’s strokes. But freedom from what? Freedom from caution and care (see the next section), not from factishes because the iconoclast is not of course free not to have human agency manufacturing facts in the laboratory, nor is he free to confine entities in internal states of a mind endowed with an imagination and a “deep” unconscious. On that score, modernists are like everyone else and there is only one non-modern humanity. Factishes are necessary everywhere to every one. But the main advantage of the critical modernist is to be able to use at once the two sets of resources, the one of the factishes, like everyone else, and the ones, apparently contradictory, that radically distinguish facts —that no one has made— from fetishes —which are totally non-existing objects, just beliefs and internal representations. This is what gives the modernist his unique anthropological peculiarity, what allows comparative anthropology to recognize that culture among all the others¹⁴.

Let us very quickly tick the items off this check list.

Modernists are iconoclasts, they have all the rage and violence and power that allows to break the factishes and allows for the production of two irreconcilable enemies: fetishes and facts.¹⁵

Modernists are freed, by this very shattering act, from the chains that bind all the other cultures, since they can, at will, pump out of existence whatever entities limit their action, and pump into existence whichever entitie enhance or accelerate their action (at least, this is the way they understand the “other cultures” to be as if those were “blocked”, or “limited”, or “paralyzed”).

Modernists, protected by this iconoclasm, can then proceed, like everyone else, to produce, inside the insulated womb of their “laboratories” as many factishes as they want. To them even the sky is not a limit. Hybrids can be tried out endlessly since there are no consequences attached to them. The inventiveness, originality, juvenile ardor of the moderns can go on unfettered. “It is only practice”, they can say, “it has no consequence, theory will remain safe for ever”.¹⁶ Modernists behave like the Carthaginese saying of their own children sacrificed to Baal “they are only calves, only calves, not children!”¹⁷

Above them, watching them like protective goddesses, the clear-cut distinction of subject and object, science and politics, facts and fetishes, render for ever invisible their complicated and rather bizarre mixing up of all of them. Above, subject and objects are infinitely distant especially in science. Below,

subjects and objects are intermingled to the most extreme, especially in science making. Above, facts and values are infinitely distant. Below they are confused and redistributed and tossed around endlessly. Above science and politics never mix. Below, they are remade anew from top to bottom.

Notice the construction that makes factishes thrice invisible: above they have disappeared to be replaced by a clear and radiant theory that in order to be lit requires that a complete and constant distinction be made between fact and fiction; below, the factishes are there —how could they not be?— but they are hidden, invisible, mute, since only the silent and babbling practice can account for what is strictly forbidden above. To be sure, actors constantly speak about “that”, but in a shattered and hesitant language that only field work can retrieve and that never threatens the opposite discourse of theory. Finally, an absolute distinction keep separate the top of the set up from the bottom part. Of course the factish of the modern exists, but their construction is so strange, that they are everywhere active, visible to the naked eyes, and yet invisible and impossible to register.

Naturally, the moderns, are conscious, reflexive and explicit about this three fold construction. If they were not, we would have to believe in a conspiracy, to believe in belief, to believe in *illusio* and to deny to the moderns, and only to them, the right of being like everyone else, that is freed from belief and in the solid hands of factishes. How do we know that the moderns know they have never been modern? Because, far from only keeping separate the facts from the fiction —in the top half of their construction— and the theory of the separation from the practice of mediation —the bottom half—, they endlessly, obsessively, fix up, repair, overcome, those broken fragments. Everything at hand is used to show that subjects and objects should be reconciled, patched up, overtaken, *aufhebunged*. Modernism never stops fixing and repairing, and patching up again and being desperate about not being able to fix it because, with all this repair work, modernists never abandon the shattering gesture that began all of it and that created modernity in the first place. So desperate are they that, after having shattered all the other cultures, they start to envy them and to devise, under the name of exotism, the museographic cult of the whole, complete, organic, wholesome, unspoiled, untouched, unmodernised savage! To the modern, they add an even queerer invention, the premodern.

So we can sketch the psycho-social ideal-type of the modern, the model of critique. Iconoclast, it breaks the idols, all of them, always, fiercely. Then, protected by this gesture, in the silent practice liberated for him like a huge underground cavity, it can have a go, with all the juvenile ardor of invention, at mixing up all sorts of hybrids without fearing any of the consequences. No fear, no past, only what can be tried. But then, terrified by the sudden realization of the consequences —how could a fact be just a fact with no history, no past and no consequence, a “bald” fact instead of a “hairy” one?— they suddenly shift from brave iconoclasm, and juvenile ardor, to guilt ridden bad consciousness and this time they destroy themselves, in endless ceremonies of atonement, looking everywhere for the broken fragments of their creative destruction, fixing them up in huge and fragile bundles.

What is the most strange is that these godless, fetish-less creatures, are viewed by all the others, as possessing terrifying protectors and gods!¹⁸ And the other cultures do not know when they are more terrifying: is it when they break down the idols and burn them in *autodafés*? When they innovate freely down in

their laboratories without the slightest worry for the consequences? Or, when they go around beating their chest and tearing their hair out, desperate at the sins they have committed and wanting to recover everywhere in their museums the wholesomeness of the lost paradises?

Yes indeed, the moderns are interesting characters, worth the attention of comparative anthropologists!

Other models than the model of the critique

Now that we have turned the modernist repertoire from a resource to a topic, and that we have portrayed the guilt-ridden iconoclast as one interesting but peculiar trait of one culture among others, is it possible to imagine a model for doing politics that would not rely so heavily on the model of the critique? This is an extraordinarily difficult question because the scenography of the Left has been so powerfully influenced by iconoclasm that it seems that if you do away with it, you immediately fall into one of the very few models of reactionary politics. How can the number of models be multiplied and the definitions of “reaction” and “fall” be modified? One way is to deeply modify the scenography of politics itself⁹. The task is of course beyond my ability, but I just want to explore a bit further the wisdom of the factishes. If we were living under their protection again —and no longer in between facts and fetishes— at least three things would be deeply different: the definition of action and mastery; the definition of agency and of their types of ontology; the definition of care and caution and the public institutions to exhibit them.

a- action and mastery

What has been broken by iconoclasm that can be retrieved by factishes? A certain theory of action and of mastery. Once the hammer has shattered facts and fetishes, the dual question is raised and nothing can stop it: did you do the construction yourself, or is the thing you constructed autonomous? This endless, sterile and boring question, has paralyzed the field of science studies centuries before it even started: when a fact is fabricated, who is doing the fabrication? The scientist? The thing? If you answer “the thing”, then you are an outdated realist. If you answer “the scientist”, then you are a bloody constructivist. If you answer “both”, then you do one of those repair jobs known as dialectics that patch up the dichotomy, hiding it even deeper and further by turning it into a contradiction that has to be resolved and overcome. And yet, it is both, obviously, but without the mastery that seems to go with the realist or the relativist answer or a clever mixture of both. Laboratory scientists make autonomous facts.²⁰ That we have to hesitate between two versions of this simple “make do” (*fait-faire*), proves that we have been hit by a hammer that has broken in two parts the simple and straightforward factish. The shock of critical intelligence has rendered us stupid.

What if we listened exactly to what is said by practicing scientists without adding or withdrawing anything? The scientist manufactures a fact, but of course, when we manufacture something, we are not in command, we are slightly overtaken by the action, every builder knows that. Thus the paradox of constructivism is that it uses a vocabulary of mastery that no architect, mason, city planner or carpenter would ever use. Are we taken in by what we do? Are we seized, possessed, alienated? No, not always, not quite. What slightly overtakes us is also, because of our own agency, because of the *clinamen* of our own action,

slightly overtaken, modified. Are we just restating dialectics? No, there is no object, no subject, no contradiction, no *aufhebung*, no mastery, no recapitulation, no spirit, no alienation. But there are events. I never act, I am surprised by what I do. What is acting through me, is also surprised by what I do, by the occasion offered to mutate, and to change, and to bifurcate, that is offered, by me and the circumstances surrounding me, to what has been invited, recovered, welcomed.²¹

Action is not a story of mastery, of hammer and shatters, but of bifurcation, event, circumstances. Of course, this is difficult to retrieve once iconoclasm has struck, because facts and tools are now firmly in place, offering a model for *Homo faber* that can never, after that, be displaced and reformatted. But, no human agent has ever built, constructed, fabricated any thing, not even a stone tool, not even a basket, not even a bow, with the repertoire of action invented for *Homo faber*. *Homo faber* is a *Homo fable* through and through, a retrospective projection into our fantastic past of a definition of matter, humanity, mastery and agency which dates entirely from the modernist period, and which uses only a quarter of its repertoire—the non-human material world.²² So we cannot account for laboratory practice by falling onto a modernist definition of construction—or, even worse, of social construction!

Why is it so difficult to retrieve other theories of action? Because it is crucially important to the modernist ethos to have to choose between what you fabricate—meaning a free and naked human—and what is a fact out there that no one has ever fabricated. The whole work of the modern has been to make those two extreme agents unfit for any other role than opposing one another. No wonder they cannot be used for anything else! It is a simple question of ergonomics: they cannot be handled for a different job. But of course, the idiom change immediately, when the two halves of facts are brought together again. Facts are facts, that is “fait-faire”. Of course the scientist does not make up facts—who has ever made up anything? this is another fable, symmetric with the *Homo faber* one and that deals, this time, with the fancies of the mind. But it is seized, modified, altered, possessed by non-humans which alters, at the occasion of the scientists’s work, their trajectory, destiny, history. Only modernists believe that the only choice given is to be a free Sartrean agent or a thing out there. Every scientist know that things have a history too and that Newton happens to gravity and that Pasteur happens to the microbes. “Intermingle”, “bifurcate”, “happen”, “concesce”, “commerce”, “negotiate”, “ally”, “be the circumstances of”, such are some of the verbs that can account for the shift in attention from the modernist to the non-modernist idiom.

What is at stake here of course is mastery. In the fanciful description of a construction, modernists believe that they will be made in the image of God. This is a strange and rather impious definition of God. As if God was master of His creation! as if He was omnipotent and omniscient! But if He had all of these perfections, there would be no Creation.²³ God, too is slightly overtaken by His Creation, that is, by what is changed and modified and altered in encountering Him. Yes, we are indeed made in the image of God, that is, we do not know either what we are doing. We are surprised even when we have, when we believe we have, complete mastery. Even a software programmer is surprised by her creation after two thousand lines of software; should God not be surprised after a much longer package? Who has ever mastered an action? Show me a novelist, a painter,

an architect, a cook, who has not, like God, been surprised, overcome, ravished by what she was —that they were no longer— doing.

And do not tell me that they were “possessed”, “alienated”, “dominated” by other outside forces. They never exactly say so. They say that these others have been modified, altered, ravished, at the occasion of the action, in the circumstances of the event. Mastery, domination, recapitulation, are not what is at stake. No non-modern wants to have to deal with that sort of God or that sort of Man. Factishes have a quite different definition of God, of human agencies, of action, of non-humans. No model of political action will be offered as alternative to the critique before we can modify the anthropology of them all, that is before we retrieve the anthropology practiced by the modernists even during the time they believed themselves to be modern.

b- entities with different ontological specifications

The iconoclast, as we have seen, triggers into existence the most powerful sucking and forcing-pump ever devised, able to empty the world of all its inhabitants by turning them into representations and filling it in with continuous mechanical matter. What happens when this pump itself has stalled, when there is no longer an inside mind into which one can squeeze, under the name of fancy or belief, every entity and when there is no longer an outside world made of ahistorical, ahuman, “out there” causes? The difference between inside and outside is the first to go, naturally. It does not mean that everything is outside, but simply that the whole scenography of outside and inside has dissipated away.

What appears in its place is, at first, a bewildering array of entities, divinities, angels, goddesses, magic mountains, characters, controversies about facts, statements in all stages of construction. The scene might be so filled with such an heterogeneous crowd that one might start worrying and miss the modernist time, when the pump was at work sucking out of existence all of the beliefs and replacing them all with sure and safe and certain objects of nature. But fortunately these entities do not request the same ontological specifications. They cannot be ordered, to be sure, into beliefs and realities, but they can be ordered, and very neatly, according to their types of claim to existence.

Jagannath’s stone, for instance, does not claim to be a spirit as in the fetishist mode, nor of course does it claim to be the symbol of a spirit projected unto the stone as in the antifetichist version.²⁴ As Jagannath realizes clearly when failing to desecrate the stone, it is what makes them human, what holds them in existence, that without which they would die. Of course, understood in the fact/fetish dichotomy, the stone immediately becomes a spirit, that is a transcendental entity that obeys the same specification as an object of nature except that it is invisible.²⁵ In practice, however, the stone is a factish and does not request to be a spirit, nor to be invisible, it never fails to remain, even for the aunt and for the priest, a “mere stone”. It simply requests to be what protects humans against inhumanity and death, what, when removed, turns them into monsters, animals, things.

The problem is that this way of arguing —granting ontology back to the very content of beliefs— runs against the whole deontology of the social sciences. “When the sage points to the Moon, says the Chinese proverb, the fool looks at his fingertip”. Well, we have all educated ourselves to be fools! This is our deontology. This is what a social scientist learns at school, mocking the unwashed who naively believe in the Moon. We know that when actors speak about the Virgin Mary,

divinities, *saligram*, UFOs, black holes, virus, genes, sexuality, etc. we should not look at the things thus designated—who should be so naive nowadays?— but look instead at the finger, and from there, following along the arm through the nerve fibers, to the mind of the believer, and from there, down the spinal chord to the social structures, to the cultural systems, to the discursivities, or to the evolutionary bases that make possible such beliefs. So strong is the anti-fetishist bias that it seems impossible to argue the opposite without hearing the indignant screams: “realism! religiosity! spiritism! reaction!”. We should imagine now a scene that would play Jannagath’s trauma in reverse: the non-modern thinker wants to touch the objects of beliefs again, and the modernist and postmodernist critiques, horror stricken, scream at them “don’t touch them!! don’t touch them! Anathema!”²⁶. And yet, we, the science students, have touched them, and nothing happened except that the dreams of social constructivism disappeared!

After centuries of detachment, the focus of attention is now turning back to the fingertip and from it to the Moon. The simplest explanation for all the attitudes of humanity since the dawn of its existence, is probably that people mean what they say, and when they designate an object this object is the cause of their behavior—and not a delusion to be explained by a mental state.²⁷ Here again we should understand that the situation is entirely different since the advent of science studies. To be anti-fetishist was feasible when facts could be used as destructive weapons against beliefs. But if we are now talking of factishes, there exist neither beliefs (to be fostered or destroyed) nor facts (to be used as hammer). The situation is much more interesting. We are faced with many different practical metaphysics, practical ontologies.²⁸

By granting ontology back to the non-human entities, we can start to tackle the major difficulty of the model of critique, I mean its lack of public support.²⁹ The modernist Enlightenment, in its republican ideal at least, became, for a while, a popular movement. It stuck a chord in all of the oppressed around the world. By accommodating facts into our collective existence, masses of delusion, oppression, manipulation, went away. But since then, the models of the critique have ceased to be popular. They now run against the very grain of what it is to be human and to believe. Facts have overdone it, transforming everything else into beliefs. The burden of supporting all these beliefs become unbearable when, as in the postmodern predicament, science itself has been submitted to the same doubt. It is one thing to attack beliefs by believing in science. But what is one supposed to do when science itself is transformed into belief? The only solution is postmodern virtuality, a low point in politics, aesthetics and metaphysics. The engine of virtuality however is in postmodern heads, not in the worlds surrounding them. Virtuality is what everything else becomes when belief in belief has run amock. Time to stop the little salt-mill grinding, before every thing else has become bitter.

Could we not say, quite simply, that people are tired of being accused of believing in non-existing things, Allah, djinns, angels, Mary, Gaia, gluons, retroviruses, rock, televisions, laws, and so on?³⁰ The non-modern intellectual is not in Jagannath’s posture, bringing day after day new *saligram* to desecrate, and then throwing them aside, discouraged at discovering that only he, the desecrator, the iconoclast, the liberator, believes in those and that everyone else—ordinary pariahs, average laboratory scientists— has always lived under a completely different definition of action under factishes of totally different shapes and functions.... Thus, maybe it is that new models for politics can no longer find use

in the critique. The diplomacy of existing entities is now what should be argued for.³¹

c- care and caution

What was the factish doing best before it got broken by the anti-fetichist strike? To say that it mediated action between construction and autonomy is an understatement and depends too much on the ambiguous definition of mediation. Action is not what someone does, but the “fait-faire”, the make-do, by others in an event, at the occasion of circumstances. These others are not ideas, nor things, but non-human entities which have their own ontological specifications and populate, through their complex gradients, a world that resembles neither the mental world of psychologists nor the physical world of epistemologists, although it is as strange as the first and as real as the second.

What the factishes were good at was to articulate caution and publicity. They were publically declaring that care should be exerted in the manipulation of hybrids. When they break the fetishes, the iconoclasts break the factishes instead. Of course, this is what gives the modernists this fabulous energy, invention, creativity. They are no longer held by any constraint, any responsibility. The broken halves of the fetish, on top of the modernist temple, protect them against any moral implication of what they do, down below, and they are all the more inventive since they are wallowing in “mere practice”. Then, what has been removed by the hammer is care and caution. Of course, action has consequences but those come later, literally after the fact, and under the subservient guise of unexpected consequences, of belated impact.³² Modernist objects are bald — aesthetically, morally, epistemologically—, but the ones produced by the non-moderns have always been dischevelled, networky, rhyzomelike.³³ The reason why one should always beware with factishes is that the consequences are unseen, the moral order fragile, the social one unstable. This is just what happen with modernist facts, except that consequences are an after-thought.³⁴ It is only after the desecrating ceremony that Jagannath realizes that no one ever believed the *saligram* not to be a stone and that the only one who produced inhumanity through this destruction of the idol, was he, the free thinker. When the aunt and the priest were screaming “beware!, beware!”, they did not mean, as he thought, that they were afraid of him breaking the taboo, but that they were afraid of him breaking the factish that keep care and caution under attentive public consideration.³⁵

How sad to realize that the iconoclast’s hammer strikes always missed their target. How strange is it to write this for a symposium in Jerusalem a city which has been built on the sudden suspension by an Angel of a sacrificial gesture! Are we not the descendants of all the iconoclastic gestures of our history? Of Moses striking down the Golden Calf? Of Paul breaking down the pagan idols? Of the Lutherans sorting out what should and what should not be painted?³⁶ Of Galileo shattering the antique cosmos? Of the revolutionaries breaking down the Ancien Regime? Of Nietzsche, the philosopher with a hammer, breaking down every idol, or, more accurately, hitting them gently to hear how hollow they sound under inspection? To believe the opposite, to denounce this pedigree, this prestigious genealogy, would be, to be sure, to accept the grave accusation of becoming reactionary, archaic, pagan even. How could this absurd position lead to another model for politics?

First, “paganism”, “archaism” and “reaction” are dangerous but only when used as foils for modernization. There is, as we learned from anthropology, no such a thing as an archaic primitive culture to which one could go back. This has always been an exotic fantasy of reactionary racism. Same thing for paganism. Same thing for reactionary politics, itself an invention of modernizers. “Reactionary” is a dangerous and unstable word, but it might be construed as what simply means bringing care and caution back into the fabrication of facts and to make the salutary “beware!” heard again in the depth of the laboratories —ours included.

Second, becoming again non-modern necessarily implies a reworking of our genealogy and of our ancestry. The fight against idolatry might have been all along a misplaced target for monotheism.³⁷ The fight against icons a misplaced fight for Byzantine orthodoxy³⁸. The fight against catholic piety is probably a misplaced target of Protestant Reformation. The fight against irrationalism, a misplaced target for science. The fight against realism, a misplaced targeted for social construction. The fight against divinity, a misplaced target for psychiatry. Each time, the misinterpretation is the same: the naive belief in the others’s naive belief. The modernists always have difficulties in understanding themselves because of their iconoclasm and because of the indefinite worries they have of having been iconoclasts. To study iconoclasm as part of their anthropology, of their psycho-social ideal-type necessarily modifies its effect and its impact. The knife no longer has a cutting edge, the hammer is too heavy. And yet, it is necessary to think about it, since the alternative is no longer viable: we will not modernize the world, “we” meaning the tiny number of “non-believers” at the tip of the Western peninsula.

Third and more importantly, politics has always also been about things.³⁹ To reuse Isabelle Stengers’ beautiful title, what has been into question has always been cosmopolitics. It is only through an extraordinary shrinking of its meaning that politics has been limited to values, interests, opinions, and forces of isolated, naked, humans. The great interest of letting facts merge back into their dishevelled networks and controversies, and letting beliefs regain their ontological weight, is that politics becomes what it always was anthropologically: the management, diplomacy, combination, negotiation of human and non-human agencies. Who or what can withstand whom or what? Thus another political model is offered, not one that will add a supplement of soul, or that will ask citizens to adjust facts to their values, or that will drag us back to the village assembly, but one that will entertain as many practical ontologies as there are factishes. The role of the intellectual is not then to have a hammer in hand and to break beliefs with facts,⁴⁰ but to be factishes —maybe also facetious— themselves, that is to keep the diversity of ontological status against their transformation into facts and fetishes, beliefs and things. No one requests Jagannath to be content with his high-caste rank and to maintain the *status quo*. But no one asks him either to debunk the sacred family stones or to set the others free⁴¹. In the long history of the models of critique, we underestimated what freedom meant, when you add human agency twice to the fabrication of fetishes and to that of facts. We seem to have missed something along the way. It might be time to retrace our steps, the risk of being reactionary might be smaller than that of being modernist at the wrong time and in the wrong fashion.

In the Tel-Aviv Diaspora Museum one can see a medieval manuscript where Abraham gesture interrupted by the hand of God is aiming at a little Isaac on a pedestal that strikingly resembles an idol about to be broken. This bloodiest of all city is funded on an interrupted human sacrifice. Is not one of the many causes of this bloodshed the strange contradiction there is in suspending human sacrifices while carrying out with glee the destruction of idols? Should we not abstain from that destruction of humanity too? Whose hand should stop us before the critical gesture is carried out? Where is the ram that could be used as a substitute for the critical mode of reasoning? If it is true that we are all descendants of that Abraham's suspended knife, what sort of people will we form when we also abstain from destroying factishes? Jagannath was left pondering: "When they touched it, we lost out humanity—they and me, didn't we? And we died. Where is the flaw of it all, in me or in society? There was no answer. After a long walk he came home, feeling dazed."

¹ U.R. Anantha Murphy Bharathipura, in 1990, *Another India*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp.98-102.

² Serres, M. (1987). *Statues*. Paris, François Bourin. He also points out that the hammer is itself a broken piece chipped out of another broken block. Speaking of Michel Angelo's *Pieta*: "Les trous dans les mains et les pieds du Christ mort, la plaie béante à son flanc, traces de lances ou de clous enfoncés au marteau, différents-ils des blessures infligées à marteau sur la face de marbre de la mère de marbre par un fou dangereux le dimanche de Pentecôte 1972 ou du coup porté à Moïse par le sculpteur lui-même jetant sur lui marteau et ciseau et lui enjoignant de parler? Ou des chocs qui le taillèrent?" (p.203).

³ One of the inventors of the word "fetishism" links it to another etymology: "Les Nègres de la côte occidentale d'Afrique, et même ceux de l'intérieur des terres jusqu'en Nubie, contrée limitrophe de l'Égypte, ont pour objet d'adoration certaines Divinités que les Européens appellent fétiches, terme forgé par nos commerçants du Sénégal, sur le mot Portugais *Fetisso* (sic), c'est à dire chose fée, enchantée, divine, ou rendant des oracles; de la racine latine *Fatum*, *Fanum*, *Fari*." (p.15) in Charles De Brosses, (1988), *Du Culte des dieux fétiches*, (1760) new edition Corpus des Oeuvres de Philosophie, Fayard, Paris, but all the dictionaries link it to the portuguese past participle of fabricated. On the conceptual history of the term, see William Pietz, *Fetichism as Cultural Discourse*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, (1993), Alfonso Iacono, *Le fétichisme. Histoire d'un concept*, PUF, Paris, (1992). See Schaffer??

⁴ This is a cliché of epistemology. For a recent treatment, see Latour, B. (1996). Do scientific Objects Have a History? Pasteur and Whitehead in a Bath of Lactic Acid. *Common Knowledge*, 5(1), 76-91. I show in this paper that Pasteur explicitly articulates the constructivism and the realism in one single theory of "fait-faire" that fuses in a completely original solution the two contradictory meanings of "fact". This implies, however, to extend historicity to things.

⁵ I take it to be obvious that science studies has been both the symptom and the instrument of the demise of the model of the critique by rendering ridiculous the idea of a social construction. With some disciplinary patriotism, I take this *felix culpa*—the failure of providing a social explanation of hard facts—as the major intellectual event of recent years. It has revealed that all the other social explanations, even on softer facts, were of little import, and symmetrically, it has rendered unusable the notion of a positivistic causation.

⁶ Two examples among hundreds from Rio: “Eu fui raspado para Osala em Salvador mas precisei assentar Yewa e mãe Aninha me mandou para o Rio de Janeiro porque já na época Yewa era por assim dizer um Orisa em via de extinção. Muitos j’a não conheciam mais os oro de Yewa”; “Eu sou de Oba, Oba quase que já morreu porque ninguém sabe assentar ela, ninguém sabe fazer, então eu vim para cá porque aqui eu fui raspada e a gente não vai esquecer os awo para fazer ela”, from Patricia de Aquino “La construction de la personne dans le Candomblé”, 1995, Musée National, Rio de Janeiro. Candomblé adepts no more hide the simple fact that they make, fabricate, sit or produce their gods—which is why they are real—than scientists hide the fabrication of their facts.

⁷ As in the scenography promoted by Pierre Bourdieu to its most extreme. The notion of *illusio* is used by him to explain how the ventriloquist takes his own stomach as a foreign voice. But the *illusio* is entirely in the head and eyes of the sociologist who believes that the other believes and that, without it, the whole society will flounder. No king is more naked than the sociologist who believes he is the only sane mind in the asylum. See especially “La délégation et le fétichisme politique” in *Choses dites*, Minuit, Paris, (1987). p.185-202.

⁸ Marxist anti-fetishism, by the way, is not that simple to decode because the human labor which is revealed by the critical thinker as what has been projected by mistake on the merchandise, is not given back to the human individual agent. It is now redistributed to a very complex set of collective agencies. Thus, the fetish, far from being what has been emptied and reversed by marxism becomes one of these very active factishes that distributes agencies, hides the origin of forces, and substitutes to the transcendence of idols, another transcendence, that of the generic and social humanity. Once again, the more antifetichists you add, the more factishes you find.

⁹ I use “human agency” to cover the two hidden halves of each of the two words “fact” and “fetish”, but the definition of human, action and agency, is completely modified through this operation. See the first part of the last section. What is interesting is that “human agency” looks very different when applied symmetrically to facts and to fetishes than when applied to only one of the two halves. This symmetrical treatment, once again, is the decisive discovery of science studies, the one that no other domain could make since it implies to attend simultaneously to the sturdy facts of science and to the furious history of the social.

¹⁰ “Factish” is a way to give a firmer model to the symmetric anthropology began with Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern* (Catherine Porter, Trans.). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

¹¹ See a nice case of that reaction in Heinich, N. (1993). Les objets-personnes. Fétiches, reliques et oeuvres d'art. *Sociologie de l'art*(6), 25-56.

¹² See the powerful use of the notion of factish in Stengers, I. (1997). *Cosmopolitiques - Tome 4: mécanique quantique, la fin du rêve*. Paris: La Découverte.

¹³ Representations, or discourses, or *epistemes*, or structures are some of the more polite words used to euphemise beliefs. Structuralism has been so important for anthropologists because it was a polite way to make a rational science out of non-sense, by grouping together, in some legible set up, signifying without signifiers. It was a science of non-sense, but still a science. Post-structuralism threw into doubt this equilibrium by applying to the rational enterprise itself the same doubt as for the

other representations. It manages to produce a non-science of non-sense! Foucault's knowledge/power slogan marks the dividing line, but he himself never chose which was what, balancing his act cleverly between the science that gave him all the advantage of rationality and the non-sense that provided him with all the privileges of radical politics. After him, the jugglers were not so clever and they let a few balls fall on the floor! It fell to them to imagine the ultimate experiment: the non-sense of non-sense, that is virtuality.

¹⁴ The specificity of the notion of "nature" that has been produced by this modernist culture is now well recognized by anthropologists as can be seen through the remarkable collection of essays assembled by Descola, P., & Palsson, G. (Eds.). (1996). Nature and Society. Anthropological Perspectives. London: Routledge, see in particular the chapter by Descola, P. Constructing Natures: Symbolic Ecology and Social Practice pp. 82-102

¹⁵ A large part of the anthropology of the modern would be the anthropology of iconoclasm. See in France the work, in history of art, of Gamboni, D. (1996). The Destruction of Art. Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution. London: Reaktion Books.

¹⁶ It can even be shown that the very notion of practice is a consequence of the modernist division between the purification work on top and the mediation work at bottom. Practice is not silent or without theories, on the contrary it speaks endlessly and with extraordinarily subtle concepts, and yet, field studies are needed to retrieve this interpretation that is forbidden, abolished, purified away by the top part. This is why the methodological slogan "follow the actors themselves" is so important for the new anthropology that looks for explicitations not for explanations.

¹⁷ See Serres, op. cit. chapter 1.

¹⁸ "The pariahs found him more menacing than Bhutharaya"! which means that the freedom fighter now has on his side the power of two gods instead of one! Pariahs always lose against modernization.

¹⁹ Latour, B. (1997). Socrates' and Callicles' Settlement or the Invention of the Impossible Body Politic. Configurations, in press

²⁰ On all of this see the case study of Pasteur op.cit. For a recent beautiful case studies see Pickering, A. (1995). The Mangle of Practice. Time, Agency and Science. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

²¹ See the remarkable interpretation of some of the Chinese theories of action in Jullien, F. (1995). The Propensity of Things. Toward a History of Efficacy in China. (translated from the French) Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press. In his latest book (1997). Traité de l'efficacité. Paris: Grasset the feat is even more extraordinary since the Western rational theory of efficiency seems totally magical to the Chinese!.

²² Against the notion of fabrication see my attempts in (1994). "On Technical Mediation." Common Knowledge 3(2): 29-64, and (1996). On Interobjectivity -with discussion by Marc Berg, Michael Lynch and Yrjo Engelström. Mind Culture and Activitu, 3(4), 228-245.. See also a detailed case study in (1996). Aramis or the Love of Technology. Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press. The theory of technology is crucial for understanding science and hence constructivism and hence society.

²³ Whitehead, A.N. Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology, Free Press, New York, (1929 1978): "All actual entities share with God this characteristic of self-

causation. For this reason every actual entity also shares with God the characteristic of transcending all other actual entities, including God”, p. 223).

²⁴ See the ethnopsychiatric work of Nathan, T. (1994). *L'influence qui guérit*. Paris, Editions Odile Jacob. Nathan, T. and I. Stengers (1995). *Médecins et sorciers*. Paris, Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond. I have done an internship in his consultation. This section is very much influenced by this experience of alternating, for a term, between Nathan's divinities resurrected in the place of migrant workers' psychology, and the CSI where actor-networks were replacing objects of science and technology. Symmetric anthropology is now physically visible in Paris. The question arises then: what space houses both quasi-subjects and quasi-objects?

²⁵ Spiritualism, or worse spiritism are not misallocation of beliefs, as in the modernist idiom, as if internal representations had been unduly projected onto outside things. They are mistakes on the specifications of ontologies. So, by rejecting the fact/fetish dichotomy one does not find oneself in the proverbial “dark night where all cows are grey”. Analytical clarity and judgement are possible but on the condition of knowing how to write down the “specifications” of all these types of entities. Differentiation is always the enemy of demarcation.

²⁶ This scene has been played very realistically in the exchange between Harry Collins and Steven Yearley on the one hand and Michel Callon and I, on the other; see Pickering, A. (Ed.). (1992). *Science as Practice and Culture*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

²⁷ This is the difference that Tobie Nathan sees between *angst* in psychoanalysis and “fright” in ethnopsychiatry. The latter takes very seriously the idea that the fright indeed has a cause. This is also what the patient says. But then one has to abandon the idea of a mental state and begin addressing the divinity that is the cause of the fright. This does not mean shifting to spiritism though or irrationality, since the divinity does not request the ontological status of a spirit or of a neurone. Same thing for the Virgin Mary in the exemplary study carried out by Claverie, E. (1991). Voir apparaître, regarder voir. *Raisons Pratiques*(2), 1-19.

²⁸ See for instance the work of Cussins, C. (1996). Ontological Choreography : Agency for Women Patients in an Infertility Clinic, *Social Studies of Science* pp.

²⁹ I take very seriously the American backlash against intellectuals —and especially the recent reaction by a fraction of the scientific establishment against science studies. One way is of course to fight against such critics, and that should be done, the other, better suited for this volume, is to accept the critique and to see what we have failed to do and to understand. If the critical model accepts being limited to university campuses, it itself becomes a sect that deserves to be fought against. The intellectual can only express what every ordinary person says, not fight alone against an ocean of false beliefs.

³⁰ To repeat myself *ad nauseam* the strength of science studies is to apply the same reasoning to hard facts and to soft beliefs and to realize that it does not hold water for any of them. No one before had done it! The list was always biased either with fetishes only or facts only. But, to continue the metaphor, the *Felix culpa* of science studies makes the resurrection possible after the sin!

³¹ I am using here the word in Isabelle Stengers's sense op.cit.. It can also be related to Barbara Herstein-Smith definition of ecologies ???. For the “Parliament of Things” political argument, see B. Latour (1995). “Moderniser ou écologiser. A la recherche de la septième Cité.” *Ecologie politique*(13): 5-27.

³² See the fascinating treatment of this belatedness in Beck, U. (1992). Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity. London, Sage, and (1995). Ecological Politics in the Age of Risk. Cambridge, Polity Press.

³³ “Chevelu” in French has a nice set of connotation that hairy or dishevelled does not have. Deleuze’s rhyzomes could be a good metaphor. This is also what is known by economists under the name of externalities. Positive and negative externalities add to any object, contract and closure a rich network of unexpected consequences. Cite callon\$\$

³⁴ The whole of the new history of science can be read as this after-thought, after the fact. By reconnecting the social order, the moral order and the natural and technical order, the historians of science are doing exactly what everyone of their Newton, Laplace, Pasteur, Kelvin or Edison was explicitly and reflexively doing — except that they were also doing the opposite: pure science as far away as possible from politics.

³⁵ This is what worries most the pariah’s woman Viramma interviewed in the magnificent book she wrote with two French ethnographers Viramma, J. Racine, et J. Racine (1995). Une vie paria. Le rire des asservis. Inde du Sud. Paris, Plon-Terre humaine.

³⁶ See Koerner, J. L. (199-). The Image in Quotations: Cranach's Portraits of Luther Preaching. Shop Talk. Studies in Honor of Seymour Slive: 143-146 and his present work on Lutheran theology of aesthetics.

³⁷ See the fascinating Halbertal, M. and A. Margalit (1992). Idolatry. Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press. Botero, the French specialist of Babylonian thought, prefers the word enotheism.

³⁸ Mondzain, M.-J. (1996). Image, icône, économie. Les sources byzantines de l'imaginaire contemporain. Paris: Le Seuil.

³⁹ See the beautiful Ezrahi, Y. (1990). The Descent of Icarus, Science and the Transformation of Contemporary Democracy. Cambridge Mass, Harvard University Press.

⁴⁰ Nor facts with beliefs, as in the cartoon-like attempts of social-constructivists!

⁴¹ See the fascinating account on the “cremation of widows” by Weinberger-Thomas, C. (1996). Cendres d'immortalité. La crémation des veuves en Inde. Paris: Le Seuil.