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e-flux journal #82 — may 2017 Gilbert Simondon
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1. The Notion of the Phase Applied to Coming-into-Being: Technicity as a Phase

This study postulates that technicity is one of the two fundamental phases of the mode of existence of the whole constituted by man and the world.[1] By phase, we mean not a temporal moment replaced by another, but an aspect that results from a splitting in two of being and in opposition to another aspect; this sense of the word phase is inspired by the notion of a phase ratio in physics; one cannot conceive of a phase except in relation to another or to several other phases; in a system of phases there is a relation of equilibrium and of reciprocal tensions; it is the actual system of all phases taken together that is the complete reality, not each phase in itself; a phase is only a phase in relation to others, from which it distinguishes itself in a manner that is totally independent of the notions of genus and species. The existence of a plurality of phases finally defines the reality of a neutral center of equilibrium in relation to which there is a phase shift. This schema is very different from the dialectical schema, because it implies neither necessary succession, nor the intervention of negativity as a motor of progress; furthermore, opposition, within the schema of phases, only exists in the particular case of a two-phased structure.

The adoption of such a schema founded upon the notion of the phase aims to put into play a principle according to which the temporal development of a living reality proceeds through a split on the basis of an initial, active center, then through a regrouping after the furtherance of each separated reality resulting from this split; each separated reality is the symbol of the other, just as each phase is the symbol of the other phase or phases; no phase, as a phase, is balanced with respect to itself, nor does it contain a complete truth or reality: every phase is abstract and partial, untenable; only the system of phases is in equilibrium in its neutral point; its truth and its reality are this neutral point, the procession and conversion in relation to this neutral point.

We suppose that technicity results from a phase shift of a unique, central, and original mode of being in the world: the magical mode; the phase that balances out technicity is the religious mode of being. Aesthetic thought appears at the neutral point, between technics and religion, at the moment of the splitting of the primitive magical unity: it is not a phase, but rather a permanent reminder of the rupture of unity of the magical mode of being, as well as a reminder of the search for its future unity.

Each phase in turn splits into a theoretical mode and a practical mode; there is thus a practical mode of technics and a practical mode

of religion, as well as a theoretical mode of technics and a theoretical mode of religion.

In the same way as the distance between technics and religion gives rise to aesthetic thought, the distance between the two theoretical modes (the technical one and the religious one) gives rise to scientific knowledge, as a mediation between technics and religion. The distance between the practical technical mode and the practical religious mode gives rise to ethical thinking. Aesthetic thought is thus a more primitive mediation between technics and religion than science and ethics, since the birth of science and of ethics requires a prior splitting between the theoretical and the practical mode at the heart of technics and of religion. Out of this arises the fact that aesthetic thought is indeed really situated at the neutral point, prolonging the existence of magic, whereas science on the one hand and ethics on the other oppose each other with respect to the neutral point, since there is the same distance between them as there is between the theoretical and practical mode in technics and religion. If science and ethics could converge and reunite, they would coincide within the axis of neutrality of this genetic system, thereby providing a second analog to the magical unity, above and beyond aesthetic thought, which is its first analog, and which is incomplete since it allows for the phase shift of technics and religion to subsist. This second analog would be complete; it would at once replace magic and aesthetics; but it is perhaps nothing more than a mere tendency playing a normative role, since nothing proves that the distance between the theoretical mode and the practical mode can be completely overcome: this direction defines philosophical research.

In order to indicate the true nature of technical objects, it is thus necessary to resort to a study of the entire genesis of the relations of man and the world; the technicity of objects will then appear as one of two phases of man's relation with the world engendered by the splitting of the primitive magical unity. Must one then consider technicity as a simple moment of genesis? – Yes, in a certain sense, there is indeed something transitory in technicity, which itself splits into theory and praxis and participates in the subsequent genesis of practical and theoretical thought. But in another sense, there is something definitive in the opposition of technicity to religiosity, for one can think that man's primitive way of being in the world (magic) can inexhaustibly furnish an indefinite number of successive contributions capable of splitting into a technical phase and a religious phase; in this way, even though there is effectively a succession in genesis, the successive stages of different geneses are simultaneous within culture, and there exist relations and interactions not only between simultaneous phases, but also between successive stages; not only can technics encounter religion and aesthetic thought, but also science and ethics. Now, if one adopts the genetic postulate, one notices that a science or an ethics can never encounter a religion or a technics on a truly common ground, since the modes of thought are at different levels (for example a science and a technics) and exist at the same time, and they neither constitute a single genetic lineage nor arise from the same sudden outpouring of the primitive magical universe. True and balanced relations only exist between phases of the same level (for example between a technical ensemble and a religion) or between successive degrees of genesis that are part of the same lineage (for example between the stage of technics and religions in the seventeenth century and the contemporary stages of science and ethics). True relations only exist in a genetic ensemble balanced around a neutral point, envisioned in its totality.

This is precisely the goal to be attained: the mission of reflexive thought is to lift upright and perfect the successive waves of genesis through which the primitive unity of man's relation with the world splits in two and comes to sustain both science and ethics through technics and religion, between which aesthetic thought develops. In these successive splits, the primitive unity would be lost if science and ethics could not come back together at the end of genesis; philosophical thinking inserts itself between theoretical thought and practical thought by way of an extension of both aesthetic thought and the original magical unity.

Now, in order for the unity of scientific knowledge and ethics to be possible in philosophical thought, the sources of science and ethics must be at the same level, contemporary to each other, and have arrived at the same point of genetic development. The genesis of technics and of religion conditions that of science and of ethics. Philosophy is itself its own condition, for as soon as reflexive thinking has begun, it has the power to perfect whichever of the geneses that has not fully accomplished itself by becoming aware of the sense [*sens*] of the genetic process itself. Hence, in order to be able to pose the philosophical problem of the relations between knowledge and ethics in a profound way, one would first have to complete the genesis of technics and the genesis of religious thought, or at the very least (for this task would be infinite) to know the real direction [*sens*] of these two geneses.

2. The Phase Shift from the Primitive Magical Unity

It is therefore necessary to begin with the primitive magical unity of the relations of man and the world in order to understand the true relation of technics to the other functions of human thought; it is through this examination that it is possible to grasp why philosophical thought must realize the integration of the reality of technics into culture, which is possible only by revealing the sense of the genesis of technics, through the foundation of a technology; it is only then that the disparity between technics and religion will be attenuated, which is detrimental to the intention of a reflexive synthesis of knowledge and ethics. Philosophy must found technology, which is the ecumenism of technics, for the sciences and ethics to be able to meet in reflection, a unity of technics and a unity of religious thought must precede the splitting of each of these forms of thought into a theoretical mode and a practical mode.

The genesis of a particular phase can be described in itself; but it cannot really be known along with its sense, and consequently grasped in its postulation of unity, unless it is placed back into the totality of the genesis, as a phase in relation with other phases. This is why it is insufficient, for understanding technics, to start from constituted technical objects; objects appear at a certain moment, but technicity precedes them and goes beyond them; technical objects result from an objectivation of technicity; they are produced by it, but technicity does not exhaust itself in the objects and is not entirely contained within them.

If we eliminate the idea of a dialectical relation between successive stages of the relation of man and the world, then what could be the motor of the successive splits in the course of which technicity appears? It is possible to appeal to Gestalt theory, and to generalize the relation it establishes between figure and ground. Gestalt theory derives its basic principle from the hylomorphic schema of ancient philosophy, supported by modern considerations of physical morphogenesis: the structuration of a system would depend on spontaneous modifications tending toward a state of stable equilibrium. However, in reality it seems that it would be necessary to distinguish between a stable equilibrium and a metastable equilibrium. The emergence of the distinction between figure and ground is indeed the result of a state of tension, of the incompatibility of the system with itself, from what one could call the oversaturation of the system; but structuration is not the discovery of the lowest level of equilibrium: stable equilibrium, in which all potential would be actualized, would correspond to the death of any possibility of further transformation; whereas living systems, those which precisely manifest the greatest spontaneity of organization, are systems of metastable equilibrium; the discovery of a structure is indeed at the very least a provisional resolution of incompatibilities, but it is not the destruction of potentials; the system continues to live and evolve; it is not degraded by the emergence of structure; it remains under tension and capable of modifying itself.

If one agrees to accept this corrective and replaces the notion of stability with that of metastability, it seems that Gestalt theory can account for the fundamental stages of the coming-into-being of the relation between man and the world.

Primitive magical unity is the relation of the vital connection between man and the world, defining a universe that is at once subjective and objective prior to any distinction between the object and the subject, and consequently prior to any appearance of the separate object. One can conceive of the primitive mode of man's relation to the world as prior not only to the objectivation of the world, but even to the segregation of objective units in the field that will be the objective field. Man finds himself linked to a universe experienced as a milieu. The emergence of the object only occurs through the isolation and fragmentation of the mediation between man and the world; and, according to the posited principle, this objectivation of a mediation must have as correlative, with respect to the primitive neutral center, the subjectivation of a mediation; the mediation between man and the world is objectivized as technical object just as it is subjectivized as religious mediator; but this objectivation and subjectivation, which are opposition and complementarity, are preceded by an initial relation to the world, the magical stage, in which the mediation is not yet either subjectivized or objectivized, nor fragmented or universalized, and is only the simplest and most fundamental of structurations of the milieu of a living being: the birth of a network of privileged points of exchange between the being and the milieu.

The magical universe is already structured, but according to a mode prior to the segregation of object and subject; this primitive mode of structuration is one that distinguishes figure and ground by marking key-points in the universe. If the universe were devoid of all structure, then the relation between the living being and its milieu could take place in a continuous time and a continuous space, without any privileged moment or place. In fact, preceding the segregation of units, a reticulation of space and time that highlights privileged places and

moments institutes itself, as if all of man's power to act and all the world's ability to influence man were concentrated in these places and in these moments. These places and these moments keep hold of, concentrate, and express the forces contained in the ground [*fond*] of reality that supports them. These points and these moments are not separate realities; they draw their force from the ground they dominate; but they localize and focalize the attitude of the living vis-à-vis its milieu.

According to this general genetic hypothesis, we suppose that the primitive mode of existence of man in the world corresponds to a primitive union, prior to any split, of subjectivity and objectivity. The first structuration, corresponding to the appearance of a figure and a ground in this mode of existence, is the one that gives rise to the magical universe. The magical universe is structured according to the most primitive and meaningful of organizations: that of the reticulation of the world into privileged places and privileged moments. A privileged place, a place that has a power, is one that drains from within itself all the force and efficacy of the domain it delimits; it summarizes and contains the force of a compact mass of reality; it summarizes and governs it, as a highland governs and dominates a lowland; the elevated peak is the lord of the mountain, [2] just as the most impenetrable part of the woods is where all its reality resides. The magical world is thus made of a network of places and of things that have a power and that are bound to other things and other places that also have a power. This path, this enclosure, this τέμενος [*temenos*] contains all the force of the land, the key-point of the reality and the spontaneity of things, as well as their availability.

In such a network of key-points, of high-places, there is a primitive lack of distinction between human reality and the reality of the objective world. These key-points are real and objective, but they are that by which the human being is immediately bound to the world, both in order to be influenced by it and in order to act upon it; they are points of contact and of mutual, mixed reality, places of exchange and of communication because they are formed from a knot between the two realities.

And magical thought comes first, since it corresponds to the simplest and most concrete, the most vast and flexible structuration: that of reticulation. Within the totality constituted by man and the world a network of privileged points actualizing the insertion of human effort appears as an initial structure, and through which the exchanges between man and the world take place. Each singular point concentrates within itself the capacity to command a part of the world that it specifically represents and whose reality it translates, in communication with man. One could call these singular points the key-points commanding over the man-world relation, in a reversible way, for the world influences man just as man influences the world. Such are the peaks of the mountains or certain, naturally magical, mountain passes, because they govern a land. The heart of the forest, the center of a plain are not only metaphorically or geometrically designated realities: they are realities that concentrate the natural powers as they focalize human effort: they are the figural structures in relation to the mass that supports them and constitutes their ground.

When seeking to identify the remnants of magical thought in the context of the current conditions of life, we usually look at superstition as an example of the schemas of magical thought. Superstitions are, in fact, merely a degraded vestige of magical thought, and can only mislead the search for its true essence. One ought, on the contrary, to refer to high, noble, and sacred forms of thought, requiring a fully enlightened effort in order to understand the sense of magical thought. Such is, for example, the affective, representative and voluntary foundation that supports an ascent or an exploration. The desire for conquest and a sense of competition are perhaps a part of the motivation that enables one to go from common existence to these exceptional acts; but what is mostly at stake, when one invokes the desire for conquest, is to legitimize an individual act for a community. In fact, the thought at work in the individual or the small group of those who realize an exceptional act is much more primitive and far richer.

The ascent, the exploration, and more generally any pioneering gesture, consists in connecting with the key-points that nature presents. To climb a slope in order to go toward the summit, is to make one's way toward the privileged place that commands the entire mountain chain, not in order to dominate or possess it, but in order to exchange a relationship of friendship with it. Man and nature are not strictly speaking enemies before this connection at this key-point, but are simply strangers to each other. For as long as it hasn't been climbed, the summit is merely a summit, a place that is higher than the others. The ascent gives it the character of a place that is richer and fuller, and not abstract, a place through which this exchange between the world and man comes to pass. The summit is the place from which the entire mountain chain is seen in an absolute manner, whereas all the sights from all the other places are relative and incomplete, arousing the desire for the view from the summit. An

expedition or a navigation allowing one to reach a continent by a definite route do not conquer anything; and yet they are valid according to magical thought, because they allow one to make contact with this continent in a privileged place that is a key-point. The magical universe is made of a network of access points to each domain of reality: thresholds, summits, limits, and crossing points, attached to one another through their singularity and their exceptional character.

This network of limits is not only spatial, but also temporal; there are remarkable dates, privileged moments to begin this or that action. Moreover, the very notion of a beginning is magical, even if all particular value is denied to the date of the beginning; the beginning of an action that is meant to last, the first act in a long series of actions, would not in themselves have any majesty or any particular power of direction, if they weren't considered as governing the duration of the action as well as the rest of the successful or unsuccessful efforts; dates are privileged points in time allowing an exchange between human intention and the spontaneous unfolding of events. Man's insertion into natural coming-into-being is carried out by way of these temporal structures, just as the influence of natural time is exerted on every human life as it becomes a destined end.

In current civilized life, vast institutions are concerned with magical life, but they are hidden by way of utilitarian concepts that justify them indirectly; in particular official holidays, celebrations, and vacations which compensate, with their magical charge, for the loss of magical power that civilized urban life imposes on us. Thus, holiday trips or vacations, which are considered ways for procuring rest and distraction, are in fact a search for old or new key-points; these points can be the big city for the country-dweller, or the countryside for the urbanite, but it is more generally not just any point of the city or countryside; it is the shore or the high mountain, or else the border one crosses in order to arrive into a foreign land. The dates of public holidays are relative to privileged moments in time; sometimes, there can be an encounter between the singular moments and the singular points.

Everyday time and space, in turn, serve as the ground to these figures; dissociated from the ground, the figures would lose their signification; holidays and celebrations are not simply a time of rest with respect to current life, through a halting of current life, but rather a search for the privileged places and dates in relation to the continuous ground.

The figural structure, in primitive magical thought, is inherent to the world, it is not detached from it; it is the reticulation of the universe into privileged key-points through which the exchanges between the living thing and its milieu come to pass. Now, it is precisely this reticular structure that is phase-shifted when one passes from the original magical unity to technics or religion: figure and ground separate by detaching themselves from the universe to which they adhered; the key-points objectivize themselves and only retain their functional characteristics of mediation, they become instrumental, mobile, capable of efficacy in any place and in any moment whatsoever: as a figure, the key-points, detached from the ground whose key they were, become technical objects, transportable and abstracted from the milieu. At the same time, the key-points lose their mutual reticulation and their power of influence from a distance on the reality that surrounded them; as technical objects they have action only through contact, point by point, instant by instant. This rupture of the network of key-points frees the characteristics of ground which, in their turn, detach themselves from their own narrowly qualitative and concrete ground in order to hover over the whole universe, the entirety of space and throughout all of duration, in the form of detached powers and forces, above the world. While the key-points objectivize themselves in the form of concretized tools and instruments, the ground powers subjectivize themselves by personifying themselves in the form of the divine and the sacred (God, heroes, priests).

The primitive reticulation of the magical world is thus the source of opposing objectivation and subjectivation; at the moment of rupture of the initial structuration, the fact that the figure detaches itself from the ground is translated by another detachment: figure and ground detach themselves from their concrete adherence to the universe and follow opposite paths; the figure fragments itself, while the qualities and forces of the ground universalize themselves: this parceling out and this universalization are, for the figure, ways of becoming an abstract figure, and for the ground, a unique abstract ground. This phase shift of mediation into figural characteristics and characteristics of ground translates the appearance of a distance between man and the world; the mediation itself, rather than being a simple structuration of the universe, takes on a certain density; it objectivizes itself in technics and subjectivizes itself in religion, leading to the appearance of the first object in the technical object and of the first subject in divinity, when there was hitherto only a unity of the living and its milieu: objectivity and subjectivity appear between the living and its milieu, between man and the world, at a moment when the world does not yet have a complete status of object nor man

a complete status of subject. One can furthermore note that objectivity is never completely coextensive with the world, any more than subjectivity is completely coextensive with man; it is only when the world is viewed from a technicist perspective and man from a religious perspective that it appears that one can be said to be entirely object, and the second entirely subject. Pure objectivity and pure subjectivity are modes of mediation between man and the world, in their initial form.

Technics and religion are the organization of two symmetrical and opposed mediations; but they form a couple, because they are each only a phase of the primitive mediation. In this sense, they possess no definitive autonomy. What is more, even taken in the system they form, they cannot be considered as enclosing all of the real, since they are between man and the world, but do not contain all of the reality of man and world, and cannot apply to it in a complete way. Directed by the gap that exists between these two opposite aspects of mediation, science and ethics deepen the relation between man and the world. With respect to science and ethics, the two primitive mediations play a normative role: science and ethics are born in the space defined by the gap between technics and religion, following a median direction; the direction exercised by the precedence of technics and of religion before science and ethics is of the same order as that exerted by the lines limiting an angle on the bisector of that angle: the sides of the angle can be indicated by short segments, while the bisector can be indefinitely extended; in the same way, on the basis of the gap between very primitive technics and religion, a very elaborate science and ethics can progressively be constructed, that is guided rather than limited by the basic conditions of technics and religion.

The origin of the split that has given rise to technical thought and religious thought can be attributed to a truly functional primitive structure of reticulation. This split has separated figure and ground, the figure giving the content of technics, and the ground that of religion. While, in the magical reticulation of the world, figure and ground are reciprocal realities, technics and religion appear when figure and ground detach themselves from one another, thereby becoming mobile, fragmentable, displaceable, and directly manipulable because they are not bound to the world. Technical thought retains only the schematism of structures, of that which makes up the efficacy of action on the singular points; these singular points, detached from the world whose figure they were, also detached from one another, losing their immobilizing reticular concatenation, become capable of being fragmented and available, as well as reproducible and constructible. The elevated place becomes an observation post, a watchtower built on the plain, or a tower placed at the entrance of a gorge. Often, a nascent technics need go no further than modifying a privileged place, as when constructing a tower on the summit of a hill, or by placing a lighthouse on a promontory, at the most visible point. But technics can also completely create the functionality of privileged points. It merely retains the figural power of the natural realities, not the placement and natural localization on a ground that is determined and given prior to any human intervention. Fragmenting the schematisms more and more, it turns the thing into a tool or an instrument, in other words a detached fragment of the world, capable of operating efficiently and in any place and under any conditions, point by point, according to the intention directing it and the moment man wants it. The availability of the technical thing consists in being liberated from the enslavement to the ground of the world. Technics is analytical, operating progressively and through contact, setting aside the liaison through influence. In magic, the singular place enables action on a domain in its entirety, just as it suffices to speak to the king in order to win over an entire people. On the contrary, in technics the whole of reality must be traversed, touched, and treated by the technical object, detached from the world and applicable to any point and at any moment. The technical object distinguishes itself from the natural being in the sense that it is not part of the world. It intervenes as mediator between man and the world; it is, in this respect, the first detached object, since the world is a unity, a milieu rather than an ensemble of objects; there are in fact three types of reality: the world, the subject, and the object, which is intermediary between the world and the subject, whose initial form is that of the technical object.[3]

3. The divergence of technical thought and of religious thought

Technical thought – resulting from the rupture in the primitive structure of the magical world's reticulation, and retaining the figural elements that can be deposited in objects, tools, or instruments – gains an availability from this detachment that enables it to apply itself to every element of the world. However, this rupture also produces a deficit: the technical tool or instrument has only retained figural characteristics detached from the ground to which they were once directly attached since they arose out of an initial structuration that provoked the emergence of figure and ground within a reality that had been one and

continuous. In the magical universe, the figure was the figure of a ground and the ground, ground of a figure; the real, the unity of the real, was at once figure and ground; the question of a possible lack of the figure's efficacy on the ground or of the ground's influence on the figure could not arise, since ground and figure merely constituted a single unity of being. Conversely, in technics, after the rupture, what the technical object retained and maintained of figural characteristics will henceforth encounter any ground whatsoever, an anonymous, foreign ground. The technical object has become a bearer of form, a remnant of figural characteristics, and it seeks to apply this form to a ground that is now detached from the figure, having lost its intimate relation of belonging, and capable of being informed by whichever form it encounters, but in a violent, more or less imperfect manner; figure and ground have become foreign and abstract in relation to each other.

The hylomorphic schema doesn't describe only the genesis of living beings; perhaps it doesn't even essentially describe it. Perhaps it does not even come from the reflected and conceptualized experience of technics: before the knowledge of the living being and before the reflection on technics, there is this implicit adequation of figure and ground, ruptured by technics; if the hylomorphic schema appears to emerge from technical experience, it is as a norm or as an ideal rather than as an experience of the real; technical experience, putting into play vestiges of figural elements and vestiges of the ground characteristics gives new life to the primary intuition of a mutual belonging of matter and form, of a coupling preceding all splitting. In this sense, the hylomorphic schema is true, not because of the logical use that has been made of it in ancient philosophy, but as an intuition of a structure of the universe for man prior to the birth of technics. This relation cannot be hierarchized, there cannot be more and more abstract successive stages of matter and form, since the real model of the relation of matter and form is the first structuration of the universe into ground and figure; indeed, this structuration can only be true if it is not abstract, if it is on a single level; the ground is really ground and the figure is really figure, it cannot become ground for a higher figure.

The manner in which Aristotle describes the relations between form and matter, in particular the supposition that matter aspires to form ("matter aspires toward form as the female to the male"), is already far from primitive magical thought, for this aspiration can exist only if there is a prior detachment; but here, there is just one being, which is both matter and form.

Furthermore, perhaps it should not be said that the individual being alone has form and matter; since the appearance of a figure-ground structure is prior to any segregation of units; the mutual relation of correspondence of such a key-point and of such a ground neither presupposes this key-point to be isolated from the network of other key-points nor this ground to be without continuity with the other grounds: a universe is what is structured in this way, and not a set [*ensemble*] of individuals; after the rupture of the primitive reticulation the first detached beings to appear are technical objects and religious subjects, and they are charged either with figural characteristics or with characteristics of ground: hence they do not fully possess form and matter.

The dissociation of the primitive structuring of the magical universe entails a series of consequences for technics and religion, and through them, conditions the subsequent coming-into-being of science and ethics. Unity belongs to the magical world. The phase shift opposing technics and religion irreducibly leaves the content of technics with a status lower than unity and that of religion with a status higher than unity. This is where all the other consequences come from. In order to fully understand the status of the technicity of objects, one must grasp this coming-into-being that puts the primitive unity out of phase. Religion, retaining its ground-characteristics (homogeneity, qualitative nature, lack of distinction of elements within a system of mutual influences, long distance action through space and time, engendering ubiquity and eternity), represents the putting into play of these functions of totality. A particular being, a defined object of attention or effort, is always considered, in religious thought, to be smaller than the real unity, inferior to the totality and included in it, surpassed by the totality of space and preceded and followed by the immensity of time. The object, the being, the individual, subject or object, are always grasped as less than unity, dominated by a sensed totality that infinitely surpasses them. The source of transcendence lies in the function of totality that dominates the particular being; according to the religious view, this particular being is understood with reference to a totality in which it participates, on which it exists, but which it can never completely express. Religion universalizes the function of a totality, which is dissociated and consequently freed of all figural attachment limiting it; the grounds related to the world in magical thought, and consequently limited by the very structuration of the magical universe, become in religious thought a limitless spatial as well as temporal background; they retain their positive qualities of ground (the forces, the

powers, the influences, the quality), but rid themselvesof their limits and of their belonging which attached them to the *hic et nunc*. They become absolute ground, a grounding totality [*totalité de fond*]. The universe is promoted on the basis of these freed up and, to a certain extent, abstract magical grounds.

After the disjunction of ground and figure, religious thought preserves the other part of the magical world: the ground, with its qualities, tensions, and forces; but, like the figural and technical schemas, this ground itself also becomes something detached from the world, abstracted from the primitive milieu. And in the same way that figural schemas of technics, once freed from their adherence to the world, fix themselves onto the tool or instrument by objectivizing themselves, so too the ground qualities, made available by the mobilization of figures through technicity, fix themselves onto subjects. The technical objectivation that leads to the emergence of the technical object, mediating between man and the world, has religious subjectivation as its counterpart. In the same way that technical mediation establishes itself by means of a thing that becomes the technical object, religious mediation appears by virtue of the fixing of the characteristics of ground onto real or imaginary subjects, divinities or priests. Religious subjectivation normally leads to mediation through of the priest, while technical mediation leads to the mediation through the technical object. Technicity retains the figural characteristic of the primitive complex of man and the world, while religiosity retains the character of ground.

Technicity and religiosity are not degraded forms of magic, or relics of magic; they come from the splitting in two of the primitive magical complex, the original reticulation of the human milieu, into figure and ground. It is through their coupling, and not in and of themselves, that technics and religion are the heirs of magic. Religion is not more magical than technics; it is the subjective phase of the result of a split, while technics is the objective phase of this same split. Technics and religion are contemporaries of one another and, considered on their own, they are impoverished with respect to the magic from which they come.

Religion thus has by nature the vocation to represent the demand for totality; when it splits into a theoretical mode and into a practical mode, it becomes by way of theology the demand for a systematic representation of the real, according to an absolute unity; through morality, it becomes the demand, from the ethical point of view, for absolute norms of action, justified in the name of totality, superior to any hypothetical, i.e., particular imperative; to both science and ethics it brings a principle of reference to totality, which is the aspiration to the unity of theoretical knowledge and to the absolute character of the moral imperative. The religious inspiration constitutes a permanent reminder of the relativity of a particular being with respect to an unconditional totality, going beyond all objects and subjects of knowledge and of action. Conversely, technics receive content that is always below the status of unity, because the schemas of efficacy and the structures that result from the fragmentation of the primitive network of key-points cannot apply to the totality of the world. Technical objects are multiple and fragmentary by nature; technical thought, enclosed within this plurality, can progress, but only by multiplying technical objects, without being able to recapture the primitive unity. Even by infinitely multiplying technical objects, it is impossible to recover an absolute adequation with the world, because each of the objects attacks the world only in a single point and at a single moment; it is localized, particularized; by adding technical objects to one another, one can neither recreate a world, nor recover the contact with the world in its unity, which was the goal of magical thought.

In its relation to a determined object or to a determined task, technical thought is always at a level inferior to that of unity: it can present several objects, several means, and choose the best; but it nevertheless always remains inadequate to the whole of the unity of the object or of the task; each schema, each technical object, each technical operation is dominated and guided by the whole from which it derives its means and its orientation, and which provides it with a never attained principle of unity that it translates by combining and multiplying its schemas. The vocation of technical thought is by nature representing the point of view of the element; it adheres to the elementary function. Technicity, by introducing itself into a domain, fragments it and leads to the appearance of a chain of successive and elementary mediations, governed by the unity of the domain and subordinated to it. Technical thought conceives of an overall functioning [*fonctionnement d'ensemble*] as a series of elementary processes, acting point by point and step by step; it localizes and multiplies the mediation schemas, always remaining below unity.

The element, in technical thought, is more stable, better known, and in a certain way more perfect than the ensemble; it is really an object, whereas the ensemble always remains to a certain extent inherent in the world. Religious thought finds the opposite balance: for religious thought, totality is that which is more stable, stronger, and more valid than the element.

Technics bring, as much in the theoretical domain as in the ethical domain, a concern for the element. In the sciences, the contribution of technics has consisted in allowing a representation of phenomena taken one by one according to a decomposition into simple, elementary processes comparable to the operations of technical objects; such is the role of the mechanistic hypothesis that enables Descartes to represent the rainbow as the overall result of the point by point trajectory of each luminous corpuscle in each droplet of water in a cloud; it is according to the same method that Descartes explains the functioning of the heart, decomposing a complete cycle into simple successive operations, and showing that the functioning of the whole is the result of the play of elements necessitated by their particular disposition (for example that of each valve). Descartes doesn't ask himself why the heart is madein this way, with valves and cavities, but how it functions given that this is how it is made. The application of schemas drawn from technics does not account for the existence of the totality, taken in its unity, but only for the point by point and instant by instant functioning of this totality.

In the ethical domain, technical thought not only introduces means of action, which are fragmentary and tied to the capacities of each object becoming a utensil, but also a certain duplication of the action by technicity; a definite human action, considered in its result, could have been accomplished by a determinate technical functioning going through different stages; elements and moments of action have their technical analog; an effort of attention, of memory, could have been replaced by a technical operation; technicity provides a partial equivalence of the results of an action; it accentuates the awareness of the action by the being who accomplishes it in the form of results; it mediates and objectivizes the results of the action by comparison with those of the technical operation, performing a decomposition of the action into partial results, into elementary accomplishments. In the same way that in the sciences, technicity introduces the search for a howthrough the decomposition of an overall phenomenon [phénomène d'ensemble] into elementary operations, so too in ethics, technicity introduces the search for a decomposition of a global action into elements of action; the total action being envisaged as that which leads to a result, the decomposition of the action called for by technics considers the elements of an action as movements obtaining partial results. Technicity presupposes that an action is limited to its results; it is not concerned with the subject of the action taken in its real totality, nor even with an action in its totality, insofar as the totality of the action is founded on the unity of the subject. The concern with the result in ethics is the analog of the search for a howin the sciences; result and process remain below the unity of action or of the whole [ensemble] of the real.

The postulation of an absolute and unconditional justification that religion directs at ethics translates into the search for intention, as opposed to the search for the result that is inspired by technics. In the sciences, religious thought introduces a quest for absolute theoretical unity, rendering necessary a search for the sense of the coming-into-being and of the existence of given phenomena (hence answering a why?), while technical thought brings with it an examination of the how? of each of the phenomena.

In possessing a content that is at a lower level than unity, technical thought is the paradigm of all inductive thinking, whether in the theoretical order, or in the practical order. It contains this inductive process within itself, prior to any separation into a theoretical mode and a practical mode. Induction, in fact, is not only a logical process, in the strict sense of the term; one can consider as inductive any approach whose content has a lower status than that of unity, and which strives to attain unity, or which at least tends toward unity on the basis of a plurality of elements where each is lower than unity. What induction grasps, what it starts from, is an element that is not in itself sufficient and complete, that does not constitute a unity; it thus goes beyond each particular element, combining it with other elements that are themselves particular in order to attempt to find an analog of unity: within induction there is a search for the ground of reality on the basis of figural elements that are fragments; to want to find the law beneath phenomena, as with the induction of Bacon or J. S. Mill, or to seek only to find what is common to all individuals of a same kind, as with Aristotle's induction, is to postulate that beyond the plurality of phenomena and individuals, a stable and common ground of reality exists, which is the unity of the real.

It is no different for any ethics that would come directly from technics; to want to compose the whole of the duration of life from a series of instants, extracting from each situation what is pleasant in it and to want to construct the happiness of life from the accumulation of these pleasant elements, as is done in ancient Eudemonism or in Utilitarianism, is to proceed in an inductive manner, by trying to replace the unity of life's duration and the unity of human aspiration with a plurality of instants and with the homogeneity of all successive desires. The elaboration to which Epicureanism submits

desires has as its sole aim to achieve the incorporation into the continuity of existence by proceeding in a cumulative manner: for this purpose, each of the desires must be dominated by the subject, enveloped in it, smaller than unity, so as to be able to be treated and manipulated as a true element. This is why the passions are eliminated, since they cannot be treated as elements; they are larger than the unity of the subject; they dominate it, come from further afield than it does and tend to advance further than it does, obliging it to go beyond its limits. Lucretius tries to destroy the passions from within, by showing that they are based on errors; he does not, in fact, take into account the element of tendency in passion, in other words, this force that inserts itself into the subject, but that is vaster than it, and in relation to which it appears as a very limited being; tendency cannot be considered as being contained in the subject understood as unity. Wisdom, having reduced the forces at the origin of action to a lower status than that of the unity of the moral subject, can organize them as elements and reconstruct a moral subject within the natural subject; this moral subject, however, never completely reaches the level of unity; between the reconstructed moral subject and the natural subject, there remains a void that is impossible to fill; the inductive approach remains within plurality; it constructs a bundle of elements, but this bundle cannot be equivalent to a real unity. Every ethical technique leaves the moral subject dissatisfied, because they do not grasp its unity; the subject cannot content itself with a life that would be a sequence of happy instances, even an interrupted one; a life that is perfectly successful, element by element, is not yet a moral life; it lacks unity, which is what makes it the life of a subject.

But religious thought, inversely, which is the foundation of obligation, creates a search in ethical thinking for an unconditional justification that makes each act and every subject appear as inferior to real unity; related back to a totality that dilates infinitely, the moral act and subject derive their meaning only from their relation with this totality; the communication between the totality and the subject is precarious, because at every instant the subject is brought back to the dimension of its own unity, which is not that of the totality; the ethical subject is de-centred by the religious requirement.

3. Technical Thought and Aesthetic Thought

According to a genetic hypothesis such as this one, it would be best not to consider the different modes of thought as parallel to one another; thus, one cannot compare religious thought and magical thought because they are not on the same level; but on the contrary it is possible to compare technical thought and religious thought, because they are contemporary to each other; in order to compare them, it is not enough to determine their particular characteristics, as if they were the species of a genus; one must return to the genetic realization of their formation, for they exist as a couple, resulting from the split in primitive complete thought, which was magical thought. As for aesthetic thought, it is never characteristic of a limited field or of a determinate species, but only of a tendency; it is that which maintains the function of totality. In this sense, it can be compared to magical thought, provided however that one specifies that it does not contain, as magical thought does, the possibility of splitting into technics and religion; indeed, far from going in the direction of a split, aesthetic thought is what maintains the implicit memory of unity; from one of the phases of splitting, it calls upon the other complementary phase; it seeks totality in thought and aims at recomposing a unity through an analogical relation where the appearance of phases could create the mutual isolation of thought in relation to itself.

Such a way of approaching aesthetic effort would undoubtedly be untenable if one thus wanted to characterize works of art such as they exist in their institutional state in a given civilization, and even more so, if one wanted to define the essence of aestheticism. But, in order for works of art to be possible, they must be made possible by a fundamental tendency in the human being, and by the ability to experience the aesthetic impression in certain real and vital circumstances. The artwork that is part of a civilization uses aesthetic feeling and satisfies, sometimes artificially and in an illusory manner, man's tendency to seek a complement with respect to a totality, when he exerts a certain type of thought. It would be insufficient to say that the work of art manifests the nostalgia for magical thought; the work of art, in fact, grants us the equivalent of magical thought, since it recovers – on the basis of a given situation, and according to an analogical structural and qualitative relation – a universalizing continuity with respect to other situations and to other possible realities. The work of art re-establishes a reticular universe at least for perception. But the work of art doesn't really reconstruct the primitive magical universe: this aesthetic universe is partial, integrated, and contained in the real and actual universe that has emerged from the split. In fact, the work of art above all sustains and preserves the ability to experience aesthetic feeling, just as language sustains the

ability to think, without nevertheless itself being identical to thought.

Aesthetic feeling is not relative to an artificial work; it signals, in the exercise of a mode of thinking that is subsequent to the split, a perfection of completion that makes the ensemble of acts of thought capable of surpassing the limits of its domain so as to evoke the completion of thought in other domains: a technical work perfect enough to be equivalent to a religious act, a religious work perfect enough to have the organizational and operational force of a technical activity give off a feeling of perfection. Imperfect thought stays within its domain; the perfection of thought allows the μετάβασις είς άλλο [*metábasis eis állo*] that gives the fulfillment of a particular act a universal significance through which an equivalent of the magical totality, which had been abandoned at the origin, is recovered at the end of human effort; and the world itself must be present and authorize this achievement after a long detour. The artistic impression implies the feeling of the complete perfection of an act, a perfection that objectively gives it a radiance and an authority through which it becomes a remarkable point of lived reality, a knot of experienced reality. This act becomes an outstanding point of the network of human life integrated within the world; from this outstanding point a higher kinship with others is created, reconstituting an analog of the magical network of the universe.

The aesthetic character of an act or a thing is its function of totality, its existence, both objective and subjective, as an outstanding point. Any act, any thing, any moment has in itself the ability to become an outstanding point of a new reticulation of the universe. Every culture selects the acts and situations that are apt to become outstanding points; but culture is not what creates the aptitude of a situation to become an outstanding point; it only forms a barrage against certain types of situations, leaving narrow straights for aesthetic expression with respect to the spontaneity of the aesthetic impression; culture intervenes as limit rather than as creator.

The destiny of aesthetic thought, or more precisely of the aesthetic inspiration of all thought tending toward its own completion, is to reconstitute, within each mode of thinking, a reticulation that coincides with the reticulation of other modes of thinking: the aesthetic tendency is the ecumenism of thought. In this sense, beyond even the maturity of each of the genera of thought, there occurs a final reticulation that once again brings the separate types of thought which emerged from the shattering of primitive magic closer together. The first stage of each type of thought's development is isolation, non-adherence to the world, abstraction. Then, through its very development, each type of thought, which initially rejected what is not itself and behaved as a species, after having affirmed itself according to the unconditional monism of principles, pluralizes itself and widens according to a principle of plurality; one could say that each thought tends to become reticular and once more to adhere to the world after having distanced itself from it. After having mobilized and detached the schematic figures of the magical world from the world, technics return to the world to ally itself with it through the coinciding cement and rock, of the cable and the valley, the pylon and the hill; a new reticulation establishes itself, chosen by technics, privileging certain places of the world, in a synergetic alliance of technical schemas and natural powers. This is where aesthetic feeling appears, in this agreement and this surpassing of technics once more becoming concrete, integrated, and attached to the world through the most outstanding key-points. The mediation between man and the world becomes itself a world, the structure of the world. In the same manner, religious mediation accepts concretizing itself, after a dogmatism that was detached from the concreteness of the universe and having mobilized every dogma to conquer every representative of humankind, in other words religious mediation accepts attaching itself to each culture and to each human group according to relatively pluralistic modalities; unity becomes the unity of a network rather than being a monist unity of a single principle and a single faith. The maturity of technics and of religions tends toward re-incorporation into the world, the geographical world for technics, the human world for religions.

To this day, it does not appear possible for the two reticulations, that of technics within the geographical world and that of religions in the human world, to analogically encounter each other in a real, symbolic relation. And yet only in this way could the aesthetic impression state the rediscovery of the magical totality, by indicating that the forces of thought have once again found one another. Aesthetic feeling, common to both religious thought and technical thought, is the only bridge that could allow for the linking of these two halves of thought that result from the abandonment of magical thought.

Philosophical thought, in order to know how to deal with the contribution of technics and religion at the level of the distinction between the theoretical and practical modalities, can thus ask itself how aesthetic activity deals with this contribution at the level prior to the distinction of these modalities. What is broken in

the move from magic to technics and religion, is the first structure of the universe, in other words the reticulation of key-points, which is the direct mediation between man and the world. And aesthetic activity preserves precisely this structure of reticulation. It cannot really preserve it in the world, since it cannot substitute itself for technics and religion, which would be to recreate magic. But it preserves it by constructing a world in which it can continue to exist, and which is at once technical and religious; it is technical because it is constructed rather than natural, and because it uses the power of applying technical objects to the natural world in order to make the world of art; it is religious in the sense that this world incorporates the forces, the qualities, the characteristics of ground that technics leave out; instead of subjectivating them as religious thought does by universalizing them, instead of objectivating them by enclosing them in the tool or instrument, as technical thought does when it works on the basis of dissociated figural structures, aesthetic thought limits itself to concretizing the ground qualities via technical structures, staying in the space between religious subjectivation and technical objectivation: it thus makes the aesthetic reality, which is a new mediation between man and the world, an intermediate world between man and the world.

Aesthetic reality in fact cannot be said to be either properly object or properly subject; there is, of course, a relative objectivity to the elements of this reality; but aesthetic reality is not detached from man and from the world like a technical object; it is neither tool nor instrument; it can stay attached to the world, for instance by being an intentional organization of a natural reality; it can also stay attached to man, by becoming a modulation of the voice, a turn of phrase, a way of dressing; it does not have this necessarily detachable character of the instrument; it can remain integrated, and normally it does stay integrated within human reality or the world; a statue is not placed just anywhere, a tree is not planted just anywhere. There is a beauty of things and of beings, and a beauty in the ways of being, and aesthetic activity starts by experiencing it and by organizing it, by respecting it when it is naturally produced. Conversely, technical activity constructs separately, detaching its objects, and applying them to the world in an abstract and violent way; even when the aesthetic object is produced in a detached way, as a statue or a lyre, this object remains a key-point of a part of the world and of human reality; the statue thus placed before a temple is what makes sense for a defined social group, and the mere fact that it is placed, in other words that it occupies a key-point that it uses and reinforces but does not create, shows that it is not a detached object. One can say that a lyre is an aesthetic object, insofar as it produces sounds, but the sounds of the lyre are aesthetic objects only to the extent that they concretize a certain mode of expression, of communication, that already exists in man; the lyre can be carried like a tool but the sounds it produces and which constitute the true aesthetic reality are integrated into human reality and the reality of the world; the lyre can only be listened to in silence or with certain determinate sounds like that of the wind or the sea, and not with the noise of the voice or the murmur of a crowd; the sound of the lyre must integrate itself into the world, in the same way the statue becomes integrated. Conversely, the technical object, insofar as it is a tool, does not become integrated because it can act and function anywhere.

It is indeed this integration that defines the aesthetic object, and not imitation: a piece of music that imitates noise cannot become integrated into the world, because it replaces certain elements of the universe (for instance the noise of the sea) rather than completing them. A statue, in a certain sense, imitates a man and replaces him, but this is not why it is an aesthetic work; it is an aesthetic work because it becomes integrated into the architecture of a town, marks the highest point of a promontory, forms the endpoint of a wall, or sits atop a tower. Aesthetic perception senses a certain number of requirements: there are empty spaces that need filling, rocks that need to bear a tower. There are a certain number of outstanding places in the world, exceptional points that attract and stimulate aesthetic creation, as there are a certain number of particular, radiant moments in a human life, that distinguish themselves from others, that call for a work of art. The work, resulting from this requirement of creation, from this sensitivity to places and moments of exception, does not copy the world or man, but rather extends them and becomes integrated with them. Even if it is detached, the aesthetic work does not arise from a rupture in the universe or in the life time of man; it comes as a surplus of already given reality, bringing it constructed structures, but constructed on foundations that are a part of the real and which become integrated into the world. The aesthetic work thus makes the universe bud, extending it by establishing a network of works, in other words by establishing radiating realities of exception, key-points of a universe that is at once human and natural. More detached from the world and from man than the magical universe's old network of key-points, the spatial

and temporal network of artworks is a mediation between man and the world which preserves the structure of the magical world.

It would, undoubtedly, be possible to affirm that there is a continuous transition between the technical and the aesthetic object, since there are technical objects that have an aesthetic value and that can be said to be beautiful: the aesthetic object can then be conceived as not being integrated into a universe, and thus like the technical object, can be considered as detached, since a technical object can be considered as an aesthetic object.

In fact, technical objects are not inherently beautiful in themselves, unless one is seeking a type of presentation that answers directly to aesthetic concerns; in this case, there is a true distance between the technical object and the aesthetic object; it is as if there were in fact two objects, the aesthetic object enveloping and masking the technical object; this is the case for instance when one sees a water tower, built near a feudal ruin, camouflaged by added crenels and painted the same color as the old stone: the technical object is contained in this fake tower, with its concrete tank, its pumps, its tubes: the hoax is silly, and seen as such from the very first glance; the technical object retains its technicity beneath its aesthetic cover, hence the conflict that arises which gives the impression of the grotesque. Every disguise of a technical object generally produces the uncomfortable impression of a fake, and appears like a materialized lie.

But in certain cases there is a beauty proper to technical objects. This beauty appears when these objects become integrated within a world, whether it be geographical or human: aesthetic feeling is then relative to this integration; it is like a gesture. The sails of a ship are not beautiful when they are at rest, but when the wind billows and inclines the entire mast, carrying the ship on the sea; it is the sail in the wind and on the sea that is beautiful, like the statue on the promontory. The lighthouse by the reef dominating the sea is beautiful, because it is integrated as a key-point of the geographical and human world. A line of pylons supporting the cables that traverse a valley is beautiful, whereas the pylons, seen on the trucks that bring them, or the cables, on the big rolls that serve to transport them, are neutral. A tractor, in a garage, is merely a technical object; however, when it is at work plowing, leaning into the furrow while the soil is turned over, it can be perceived as beautiful. Any technical object, mobile or fixed, can have its aesthetic epiphany, insofar as it extends the world and becomes integrated into it. But it is not only the technical object that is beautiful: it is the singular point of the world that the technical object concretizes. It is not only the line of pylons that is beautiful, it is the coupling of the lines, the rocks, and the valley, it is the tension and flexion of the cables: herein resides a mute, silent and ever continued operation of technicity applying itself to the world.

The technical object is not beautiful in every circumstance; it is beautiful when it encounters a singular and remarkable place in the world; the high voltage line is beautiful when it traverses a valley, the car when it turns, the train when it enters or exits a tunnel. The technical object is beautiful when it has encountered a ground that suits it, whose own figure it can be, in other words when it completes and expresses the world. The technical object can even be beautiful with respect to an object that is larger than itself serving as its ground, in some ways as its universe. The radar antenna is beautiful when it is seen from the point of view of a ship, sitting atop the highest super-structure; placed on the ground, it is nothing more than a rather crude cone, mounted on a pivot; it was beautiful as the structural and functional completion of this whole [*ensemble*] that is the ship, but it is not beautiful in itself and without reference to a universe.

This is why the discovery of the beauty of technical objects cannot be left to perception alone: the function of the object needs to be understood and thought; in other words, a technical education is needed if the beauty of technical objects is to appear as an integration of technical schemas into a universe, within the key-points of this universe. How, for instance, could the beauty of a radio relay placed on a mountain, and oriented toward another mountain where another relay is placed, appear to the one who only sees a tower of mediocre height, with a parabolic grid in which a very small dipole is placed? All of these figural structures need to be understood as emitting and receiving the bundle of directed waves that propagates from one tower to another, through the clouds and the fog; it is with respect to this invisible, imperceptible, and real, actual transmission that the whole [*ensemble*] formed by the mountains and the towers is beautiful, for the towers are placed at the key-points of the two mountains in order to constitute the wireless cable; this type of beauty is as abstract as that of a geometric construction, and the function of the object needs to be understood in order for its structure, and the relation of this structure with the world, to be correctly imagined, and aesthetically felt.

The technical object can be beautiful in a different way, through its integration into the human world that it extends; thus a tool can be beautiful in action when it properly adapts itself

so well to a body that it somehow seems to be a natural extension of it and whose structural characteristics it appears to amplify; a dagger is only beautiful in the hand that holds it; a tool, a machine or a technical ensemble, are equally beautiful when they become integrated within the human world and cover it over in expressing it; if the alignment of boards in a telephone center is beautiful, then it is not beautiful in itself or in its relation with the geographical world, since it can be anywhere; it is beautiful because these luminous flashes that trace the multi-colored and moving constellations represent instant by instant the real gestures of a multitude of humans, attached to one another through the crossing of these circuits. The telephone call center is beautiful in action, because at every instant it is the expression and realization of an aspect of the life of a city and of a region; a light is someone waiting, an intention, a desire, imminent news, a ringing telephone that one won't hear but that will resound far away in another house. Here we witness the beauty found within the action; it is not simply instantaneous, but is also made up of the rhythms of use in peak hours and evening hours. The telephone call center is beautiful not because of its characteristics as an object, but because it is a key-point in collective and individual life. In the same vein, a traffic light [*sémaphore*] on a train platform is not beautiful in itself, but is beautiful by way of its functioning as a traffic light, which is to say through its power to indicate, to signify a stop or a track to be left free. In the same way again the Hertzian modulation we receive, as a technical reality, from a different continent, barely audible, made momentarily unintelligible underneath the static and distortions, is technically beautiful, because it arrives charged with the overcoming of obstacles and distance, bringing us the testimony of a faraway human presence, whose sole epiphany it is. Hearing a nearby powerful transmitter is not technically beautiful, because its value is not transformed by this power to reveal man, to manifest an existence. And it is not only the overcoming of difficulty that makes the reception of a signal emanating from a different continent beautiful; it is the power that this signal has for making a human reality emerge for us, which it extends and manifests in actual existence, by rendering it perceptible for us, when it would have otherwise remained unknown despite being contemporary with ours. "White noise" has as much technical beauty as a meaningful signal, when it bears within itself witness to a human being's intention to communicate; the reception of background noise or of a simple continuous sinusoidal modulation can be technically beautiful when it becomes integrated into a human world.

One can thus say that the aesthetic object is not strictly speaking an object, but rather the extension of the natural or human world that remains integrated within the reality that bears it; it is an outstanding point in a universe; this point is the result of an elaboration and benefits from technicity; but it is not arbitrarily placed in the world; it represents the world and focalizes its ground forces and qualities, like a religious mediator; it keeps itself in an intermediary state between pure objectivity and subjectivity. When the technical object is beautiful, it is because it has been integrated into the natural or human world, just like aesthetic reality.

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This text is an excerpt from Part III, chapter one, and Part III, chapter two, part one of the book On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects *(2017), published by Univocal/University of Minnesota Press.*

Gilbert Simondon (1924–89) was a French philosopher best known for his work on individuation and technology. He studied at the École normale supérieure in Ulm and the Sorbonne, defending his doctoral dissertations in 1958. He is the author of *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de Forme et d'Information*. While his main thesis, which laid the foundations of his thinking, was not widely read until it was reviewed by Gilles Deleuze in 1966, his complementary thesis, *Du Mode d'existence des objets techniques*, was published by Aubier shortly after being completed (1958) and is now available in English.

1
This is an excerpt from Gilbert Simondon's work from 1958 *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* newly translated into English for the first time by Cecile Malaspina and John Rogove and available this month from Univocal books. It is always a question how to approach a deployment of the terms 'man' and 'primitive' the Simondon uses them here. Whether, that is, to restore the damaged universal by substituting for the offending terms their contemporary equivalents, or to grant the writer the specificity he is unaware of asking for. This would mean reading Simondon's philosophy of technics and technicity *more particularly,* as referring to one sort of encounter with technology in a world where different ones are possible. 'Man' would still have to be replaced, but not because of its crimes against universalism - or not only those - but also for its ambiguity. Very probably Simondon narrates something like the masculine or butch experience of technicity, as opposed to that of the feminine or femme. However, the vocabulary of exploration and discovery, of mountains and towers, recalls latency more specifically still. In other words, the sequence described by Simondon, from a magical and unified world into one characterized by technics and religion, *describes also the sex-process*, whether this be understood as puberty, marriage, or something else entirely.

2
Not metaphorically, but really: it is toward it that the geological folding orients itself and the push that has edified the entire high plateau. The promontory is the firmest part of the chain eroded by the sea.

3
Variation in the proofs: "there are in fact three types of reality: the world, man, and the object, intermediary between the world and man, whose first form is the technical object." – *Ed.*