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Reinventions and Interactions

Humanism at the sight of contemporaneity

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The universal rejected by contemporaneity

The claim for Humanism today is light-years away from the expectations of a decade ago. In this modernity, shaped by technology and progress, that gave us the Secularism in its intent to stand as an alternative to Belief, we saw ourselves as penetrated by the feeling of transcendence.¹ Humanism turned into the expression of the discourse of the universal, under the promise of the final unfolding of rationality, in face of the scientific revolution, the epistemological advancement of understanding, and the new deontology demanded by the *Dasein*.

¹ Rémi Brague, *Les ancres dans le ciel, L'infrastructure métaphysique*, Paris, Seuil, 2011, p. 36-41.

And this, as if an inexhaustible phenomenology linked the so-called objective reality to a world finally defined within the limits of our subjectivity. The axiological determination would encompass, immediately, such claim of the “more-being” unveiled unto the consciousness of our “being-there.” It is inseparable from a reference to the whole, and this is no other than the arcane of the individuality under construction. In its immediate attributes, it responds to the configuration of the *Dasein*, which is only conceivable as referable, and postulating the absolute as the limit of this “being-more.” No other could be the universe of culture, as exactly what is “peculiar” to Men, in contrast to nature and the inertial condition of the surrounding reality.

148 On the frame of the historical process, one cannot dislodge the primordial perception of the “being-there” from the condition of subject of human existence, contemporaneity² would affirm itself by being literally grounded on freedom. But it is also in an irreversible objectivity of the “coming-to-be” that stages are defined in this assumption of consciousness identified with the crescent bestowal of the historical being. In the remnants of our experience, we find in the Enlightenment the rupture of the transcendent mediation and the potestative limit-affirmation of reason. In its first phenomenological perception, Humanism asserted this de-sacralization along with a radically de-mediating vision of a knowledge yet inadvertent of the reduction

² Giorgio Agamben, *Qu'est-ce que le contemporain?*, Paris, Rivages-Poche, 2008; *Idem*, *Le Temps qui reste*, Paris, Payot & Rivages, 2000.

to the simulacra, to the intentionality, that should wait the twentieth century of Husserl and Heidegger.³

Enlightenment and the diachrony of historical time

Humanism would be the teleological assurance of such conduct, supposing a final convergence of truths, on the fundamental invariance of its nature.⁴ It would take time for the experience of Immanentism and of the *ethos*, in its integrity, in the full or adequate exercise of freedom—as assurance of this “being-more” in a limit-search of its *placetus*—to be registered as a necessarily performative practice in the very core of existence itself. This very time of plenitude is that of the limit-accordance of the individuality of each existence: its presumption, more than its mediation, is the universal.⁵ And this fully heads towards the endless operating rationality, in such frame in which this “thinking being” anchors his *cogito* in his memory and, in it, the permanent support of his condition of “being-in-the-world,” of his *Dasein*.

A depleting of such ethos emerges on the weight of the historical process, spun from an unchanging arcane into

3 Martin Heidegger, *Phénoménologie de la vie religieuse*, Paris, Gallimard, 2012; Edmund Husserl, *Recherches logiques*, Paris, PUF, CII, 1961, p. 132; Richard Rorty, *Essais sur Heidegger et autres écrits*, Paris, PUF, 1995, p. 77.

4 Jürgen Habermas, *Le discours philosophique de la modernité*, Paris, Gallimard, 2011, p. 1-27; Jürgen Habermas e Joseph Ratzinger, *Raison et religion. Dialectique de la sécularisation*, Paris, Salvator, 2010.

5 Paul Ricœur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris: Seuil, 2000, p. 44-107.

a permanent and distinguishable “come-to-be.”⁶ Under the same historical time frame, the transparency of such representation becomes muddled to the measure that cultures are subject to domination, through which the straightforward game of power structures is taken over by the subdued collective subjectivity transposed into the hegemonic culture.⁷ The post-Renaissance West imposed itself unto the adjoining cultures as a phenomenon of the rise of Civilization, through the expropriation of their collective unconscious and its replacement by a reductive representation displaying the dominated subjectivities in the simulacra of their individuality and their “come to be.”

150 Humanism was at the forefront of a new foundational stage in the midst of the Enlightenment transparency, but setting aside the raid of belief over reason and guaranteeing the synchrony of conquests over the inertia of nature and its homogeneous fruition by humankind.⁸ The arrival of the universe of citizenship and the isonomic coexistence of all were implicit on such perspective. That is, difference sprouted, as an unquestionable given of the individual and always permanently recognizable, through the absolute surrender to its evidence.⁹

6 Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie des formes symboliques*, I, Paris, Le Langage, 1972, p. 72-4.

7 Alfred Weber, *The theory of culture*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura, 1954.

8 François Julien, *Les transformations silencieuses*, Paris, Grasset, 2009, p. 91; *idem*, *De l'universel, de l'uniforme, du commun et du dialogue entre les cultures*, Paris, Fayard, 2008, p. 212-13.

9 Axel Honneth, *La théorie de la reconnaissance*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 2000, p. 16-8.

Difference and the solipsism of citizenship

On the emerging horizon of globalization, an ever-greater acute breach took place, contrary to the overcoming of the diachronic access promised by civilization and progressism as conceived by the Enlightenment as characterizing the West and its missionary expansion.¹⁰ No other is the bulging consciousness of such paradox, the one of the emerging multidomination and its release from the Imperialism's cocoon, the first historical timeframe, *urbi et orbi*, of the systemic or organic relations of production made possible by western capitalism.

This knowledge is an attempt that exceeds the parameters of the Enlightenment; a heuristic that responds to the Sloterdijk's imperatives of the cynic reason.¹¹

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The preconditions for the enforcement of the universals are defined today on a new diachronic temporal architecture. September 11th has shown to what point the assertion of difference could reach a new "holy war" and affect the process of the West as the civilization. There has been a rupture in the assumptions through which the beginning of the 21st century saw the isonomic advent of that humanity arrived to citizenship—and to the assurance of human rights as a repertory of the canonic exercise of its freedom and the daily conquest of its "being more." On the contrary, in this decade what one comes upon is the emergency of

10 Alain Badiou, *Le réveil de l'histoire*, Paris, Lignes, 2011, p. 85-93.

11 Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique de la raison cynique*, Paris, Christian Bourgeois, 1987, p. 67-9.

previous cautions as *praeter*-rights of the difference and the assurance of authenticity, in face of what the world of the universals of reason would be seen as pleonastic in the classic scenario of the advent of the individuality of each and all the humankind.¹²

Correlate to the struggle for difference is the imperative of its mandatory witnessing facing the former purported universal peace and its isonomic demands. On this very stride, for the full performance of citizenship, the conquest of Secularism¹³ and the discarding of Belief would necessarily be hurt.

From martyrdom of witnessing to the collapse of representation

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Martyrdoms and *jihads* come on the grooves of this new emergence, in the priorities assumed by the witnessings, risking even the harm to the other in order to accomplish the sacrifice.¹⁴ And terrorism, absolutely intransitive in its message, acquires all its new evidence in this beginning of century, contrarily to the violence at all costs, but with objective goals of a change in the *status quo*, as in Ireland or the Basque Country.

So, the whole isonomous vision of humanity vanishes, and with it the personableness of all *vis-à-vis*. Not even an

12 Jean-Luc Petit, *Solipsisme et intersubjectivité. Quinze leçons sur Husserl et Wittgenstein*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1996, p. 25-41.

13 Françoise Dastur, "Phénoménologie et différence", in *Philosophie et différence*, Les Éditions de la Transparence, 2004, p. 85-115.

14 Jean Delumeau, *La peur en Occident (XIVe-XVIIIe siècles)*, Paris, Fayard, 1978.

explicit message is needed, and the anonymous line of human bombs, waiting to explode, sanctions the rupture of the universality of contemporaneous coexistence. Above all, and contrary to the humanism of a decade ago, one faces the collapse of representation, hampered by a mediation increasingly ambiguous of public opinion in its collective feeling, as expression, always susceptible of generalization, of individual sum total accounts, with no remnants, in the electoral procedures.

Public space turns again to the square, exhausted the presumption of the achievement of a consensus in the scales and hierarchies of representative majorities and minorities, as a national body. The “democracy of the indignant,” appeared in recent times, has its a priori in the non-reducibility of their aspirations to the concerted interplay of Congress plenaries and public opinion. Moreover, it shows the perception of the expropriatory character attained by the universe of the media in inducing and manipulating public opinion in the sense of completely eliminating the remnants of the difference for the constitution of the subjectivity, at the level of the contradictions, synthesis and discrepancies of the global society.

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Overdetermination of difference

What we also face today is the threshold of that epistemological condition described by Carl Schmitt¹⁵—a world that re-encounters the polarization friends-enemies, reaching the

15 Jean-François Kervégan, *Que faire de Carl Schmitt?*, Paris, Gallimard, 2011, p. 208-42.

extreme rejection of the other in such intransitive manifestation of the difference. Within what limits, then, would stand the claims for humanism, bearer of the heritage of the remanding interaction between the universal and the rational, and the old Kantian belief in the advent of a humanity, independently or not from the affirmation of the State in its configuration?¹⁶

154 Even more disquieting, in the framework of the “war of religions,” is the extent to which, in the West, the republicanism of the Tea Party unfolds in successive variants of the same fundamentalism, from the Mormons up to the radical Catholic extremism. One would have to talk of a limit-heuristic for the maintenance of that dialogue, threatened by the brought down of the collective recognitions of this world, that would be a haven to civic terrorism and the social subjectivities descended into the trenches. One would have to ask if the first task of this heuristic should be that of still thinking of the devolution of the polarities to the classic dialectics and to possible remittance of the distinctions, yet driven out to the very last ground of rationality, to the synthesis, at the scarps of analogies and approximations. Perhaps, we have not yet realized to what extent the world of the “wars of religion” eliminates the very perspective of the *vis-à-vis* amongst the collective subjectivities. Nor have we considered what, in a residual phenomenology of recognition, could be the premises for this coexistence to the point

16 Michel Foucault, “Le sujet et le pouvoir”, in *Dits et écrits*, IV, Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque des Sciences Humaines, 1994, p. 577.

of compromising the complete denial of the other.¹⁷ It is as if the ultimate imperative of such survival did not superimpose itself to a minimal presumable platform of affirmation of human rights, where the *prius* of humanity would rise at least as a natural imperative, and of the irrevocable environment for the whole subjective collectivity. In consequence of the stirring up of the “war of religions,” one might even say that the human rights are a “western ideology.” However, the humanism now emerging would settle on the un-conditionality of consciousness, on the exercise of its freedom, a priori linked to that of the other, regardless of the advancement of its quiddity or the subsequent manifestation of their differences.¹⁸ In other words, we could only come upon the recognition, *in minimis*, of this new Humanism in a progress of the Enlightenment, perceived as natural, and from the drawing out of the process of rendering immanent the post-Renaissance rationality.

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Civilization of fear and *in minimis* dialogue

Within the extremes of the diachronies of the same historical time, this new horizon will also face the regressive impacts of the de-sacralization of the human, through the return of the Muslim cultures to the Sharia and the postulation of transcendence and the religious State.¹⁹

17 Theodor Adorno, *Dialectique négative*, Paris, Payot et Rivages, 2003, p. 174-1.

18 Slavoj Žižek, *Vivre la fin des temps*, Paris, Flammarion, 2010, p. 75-9.

19 Jean Baubérot, *La laïcité falsifiée*, Paris, La Découverte, 2012, p. 7-11.

On the same measure that the advancement of terrorism defines a universal perception of a “civilization of fear,” it would be unthinkable to have the sacrificial terrorism regulated. At the same time, the millenary vision of a “just war” supporting the West in the conflicts of the crusades is once and for all overcome, what is also confronted in parallel with the jihads. But in the past decade of the 21st century, as much as the secularism, the purported presumptions of unanimities in the acknowledgement of the crimes against humanity *urbi et orbi* subjected to the jurisdiction of an International Court are especially in clear retrogression.

156 Secularism would have been just an *intermezzo* in this new sacralization of the public order by the establishment of the Sharia in the Islamic States.²⁰ The pendulum reaches its extreme in Iran, who astoundingly deems to have equanimous judicial prowess to the Court of Hague to judge crimes against humanity. The diffidence of the regimes emerging with the Arab Spring, especially Tunisia and Egypt, expresses the difficulties in conserving such Secularism in face of a State religion. Even if an extremist fundamentalism might not be attained, the emerging strength of a rather more rigorous Salafism alongside with the Muslim Fraternity grows in the Egyptian ballots.²¹

On the extremes of such fundamentalism, the Boko Haram in Nigeria are professing territorial separation and, most

20 Hélé Béji, *Islam pride. Derrière le voile*, Paris, Gallimard, 2011, p. 71-81.

21 Tarik Ramadan, *Mon intime conviction*, Paris, Archipoche, 2009, p. 149-57.

importantly, the adherence to the Sharia—in a direct confrontation to other religions by the murdering of believers and destruction of Jewish and Christian temples.

The *ad intra* regression of the Western Enlightenment

It could be so that the frontiers of the collective recognition unto which the emerging Humanism²² is being suggested, as a replica of tradition, in a venue of a neo-heathenism, when Maometism coexisted with Christians and Jews, in a subaltern system, in the Kingdoms of the Umayyad and the Abbasids. On such a perspective, the platform of a full citizenship *vis-à-vis*, aspired by modernity, loses its purported plenitude of rights in force in face of the new ethnic restrictions to migration adopted by European governments with respect to the Islamic labor into their territory.²³ On such exact measures, the recourse to foreign forces, such as NATO, depend on regional leagues while appealing to the right of safety—contrary to the post-war of 45' and the Cold War that led to the American command, with its transcontinental breadth. What has been seen in Libya puts at stake the interferences of such devices with these countries' domestic normalcy, already in a patent conflict with their sovereignty. The claims for human rights are a new mediation between the regional associations in their full

22 Mohammed Arkoun, *La construction humaine de l'Islam*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2012, p. 105-27.

23 Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *La question migratoire au XXIe siècle*, Paris, Sciences Po. Les Presses, 2010, p. 85-127.

primacy. Moreover, what one should expect from this new Humanism is the safeguard of the West itself against the de-secularization in its core, and in it the new limits within which the American fundamentalism could grow over the conquests based on the 18th century revolutions.²⁴ And this was only made possible on the wake of the effective protection of an enjoyable life, not of its teleological understanding, even at the expenses of banning the access to the universal scientific knowledge, with the elimination of any reference to evolutionism in the American schoolbooks.

The persistence of progressive Providentialism

158 The compliance with such minimal and non-negotiable demands by the very claim of the human being in the context of a regressive postmodernity is currently found on the urges for the recovery of our environment, threatened by the radical technological progress. And that, from the stewardship of nature to the intrinsic social improvements—but detached from progressive Providentialism—, should be pursued in order to support development policies in the urgency and plenitude of their accomplishment.²⁵ Such an imperative molded by a state of collective conscience implies an urge towards the tangible and effective common good. The successive and cumulative hurdles to its accomplishment range from the change of the economic structure to

24 Liliane Crété, *Les puritains — Quel héritage aujourd'hui?*, Lyon, Olivétan, 2012, p. 92-100.

25 François Julien, *L'invention de l'idéal et le destin de l'Europe*, Paris, Seuil, 2009, p. 290-4.

the increase in social mobility and political self-determination, and the collective consciousness of the access to welfare. Without their overcoming, such imperatives would remain somewhat aside of the notion of “common good,” which would remain within the limits of the *Gendarme* state concerned with the strict safeguard of public order.

On the broader scope of a more demanding and performance-driven behavior, one should mention a literal ethics of change and the concrete commitment to act, at the right timing, in all areas of social practice, respecting their mutual conditionings and the cumulative effect of the outcomes. Today, such commitment towards development regards intrinsically the primary imperative of collective justice and, *urbi et orbi*, the “more-being” promised to the immanence of mankind.

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Also noteworthy is the potential conflict of this *ethos* with the imperative of its insertion into a nature marked by the destruction of the planet’s reserves or by the climate change of portions of inhabitable land entirely open to the consequences of technological transformations. Moreover, a pseudo conflict of duties would emerge with respect to the priorities and demands of the collective coexistence, transferring to environmental care the citizen’s priorities of social justice and improvement of well-being.²⁶ The consciousness of change is still premature, especially in what comes to the components of a collective ethics, notably in

26 Edgar Morin, *Introduction à la pensée complexe*, Paris, ESF, 1990, Points Essais, 2005; *idem*, *La méthode (coffret in two volumes)*, Paris, Opus Seuil, 2005.

the nations that experienced their status of colony as a “total social fact” under the otherness of a system of production that obliterated all their expectations related to the benefits of an effective functionality of the economic dynamics.

Such nations are then exposed to the impending failure of effective change, losing the instance or the moment in which the multiple conditionings of a new social structure might indeed prevail. Such a scenario demands a proper timing and a strategy of no return. Otherwise a social inertia could sometimes take place, without possibility of recovery, leading to new cycles of unfavorable productive performance and exploitation.

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The presumed natural convergences of prosperity

Still in the dimension of the search for a minimum of interlocution in the world of the “civilization of fear,” the humanism of our time would place its wager on the western survival of universalism, on the acuteness of the critical reason, putting nowadays at stake the credibility of the capitalist system itself.²⁷ We experience in these decades the depletion of the belief in social democracy or in the idea of a State as provider, the *État Providence*, and, on the other hand, in the classic economic regimes, through the exasperation of social inequality, in contrast with the “golden age” of the western prosperity of the post-war years in the West.

27 Tony Judt, *Retour sur le XXe siècle. Une histoire de la pensée contemporaine*, Paris, Éd. Héloïse d’Ormesson, 2010, p. 13-43.

Today the financial capitalism nurtures the dynamics of an increasing ambiguous and contradictory system, as seen by the critical reason, considered the limits attained in the European economy of the transference of private revenue to the public treasury through fiscal obligation, and the limits reached by the assets of the State. This is what creates all the perplexity about the nature of profits in a capitalist entrepreneurship and its effective productivity.²⁸

The unprecedented proposals of increase in taxes by the highly concentrate American capitalist groups may already suggest something like a “Pyrrhus attempt” in order to gain time in the search for a new possible social pact. In such a pact, and as an heritage of the social State of a half century ago, this same critical reason would see the need for the involvement of other dimensions, as those related to the problem of employment or the control over technological innovation. One should not only acknowledge the deadlock of the vision of totality characteristic of the Left, but also the loss of the historical, empirical, decantation of consensus brought to the concept of revolution, as shaped by the Enlightenment. When exploitation yet could be seen as a sharp and unambiguous divide, we still had assumed polarizations to establish a *vis-à-vis* towards change.

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The improbable new social pact

This new asynchronous time is, above all, the time of this concurrent coexistence of new radical marginalities,

28 Gianni Vattimo, *El socialismo, o sea, Europa*, Barcelona, Edicions Bellaterra, 2011.

potentially reaching subcontinent levels destitute from a previous mobilizing consciousness. In such context, the scale of distances and comparative prosperity is lost. The Humanism becomes devoided from such a minimal condition of recognition or identity in which fruition and labor were supposed to respond to the post-Enlightenment pact of *ad intra* competition in the market. Leisure and effort are bereft of any complementarity, in which the *vis-à-vis* of viability could constitute the first mirror for such humanity in its process of “coming-to-be.”

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Now, one must acknowledge such retraction of bridges in which, in limit, Humanism still shelters a remaining universality that rests on the claims for human rights and the residual exercise of citizenship in face of the State. The retrieval of fundamentalism reinstates nowadays the Sharia and the re-sacralization of the public order in the context of religious premises beyond any form of transgression. And, in these circumstances, all citizen coexistence will depend on the political autonomy accorded (or not) to the various faiths and to the miscreants. The most unsettling, however, is to know to what extent the “New International Order” in progress is able (or not) to replace the action of the State and sovereignty in the legal discipline of a territory. Especially when the so-called “Global Order” substitutes the organizations regionally responsible for guaranteeing that security, allowing for the intervention of clearly extra-regional mediating organizations, as is the case with the NATO in countries of the Mediterranean, starting with Libya. Such overlapping in the institutional support of citizenship is unacceptable, as already stated by the Arab League in the

Middle-East or by continental entities in Latin America, as are also unacceptable the new response mechanisms as those in the European Union facing potential forced migrations of various ethnicities.

The true imperatives of multiculturalism still linger in the European collective consciousness in what comes to the exponential presence of the West in the world, *vis-à-vis* their counterparts of the new coexistence. The confusion between culture and civilization persists, enmeshing the intrinsic advance of humankind's "being more" throughout the historical process, on one hand, with what can be perceived as the founding breakthroughs of the building of a collective inner self characterizing culture, on the other. Such a picture is that of Luc Ferry in recent critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss,²⁹ where he condemns the premise of an absolute relativism in the confrontation among contemporaneous cultures. Could we still accept the existence of an intrinsic congeniality between the West and the revealing rationality of reality as the privileged ground for the advent of the absolute in our "coming-to-be"?³⁰

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Survival of dialogue and residual ethics

Humanitarianism, as a vocative of the emerging Humanism progresses on a new frame of outbreaks, as manifested

29 Luc Ferry, "Si toutes les civilisations se valent", *Le Figaro*, 23 février 2012.

30 Marcel Gauchet, *Les possibles de la pensée, in Dérangements — Aperçus. Autour du travail de François Julien*, Paris, Hermann, 2011, p. 177-8.

in the case of hosts of Haitian destitutes³¹ whose situation impelled neighboring nations to harbor them, as recently occurred in Brazil. The fate of those struck nationally by exceeding misery is associated to a citizenly clamor for support that goes beyond the classic and worn out international aid, the *assistencialismo* of half century ago. One is faced nowadays with a right to citizenship, as is that related to the generalized pursuit of employment, which could not remain subject to national market protection mechanisms. In this new scenario, and as universals of this acknowledgment of citizenship, to the right of free access one should add the right of job seeking, as a challenge to the domestic definition of the common good, for the benefit of a social welfare claimed by an international right of general and prompt coexistence.³²

As long as the effective feasibility of the full restoration of the dialogue remains out of reach, the experience of coexistence characteristic of the period previous to the “war of religions” remains animated, in a somnambulistic way, by its presumptions and expectations. Among them, those of the emergent social groups in the developing countries, based on the presumption of an implicit agreement towards the advancement of quasi beneficent advantages articulated through the loose consciousness of the neopopulism and a scenario of complacency with their social improvement. They benefit from the complicity of sectors of overflowing

31 Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and universal history*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009.

32 Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 123-7.

wealth that feel no need to create hurdles to the other rising sectors.

Concurrently to this, the classic elites who survive on a liberal ideology place their wagers on conservatism. Since the advent of distributive regimes and their power, the option for change, alongside with a consciousness involving neopopulism, will reach extremes on the agenda of radicalism, by the laxity of effective mobilization. They fail to grasp the true scope of reality and the nature of the prevailing origin of social bitterness. Also, by the gravitational force of the historical process subjected to the fast-tracked diachrony, the backdrop of converging suppositions vanishes. The imperatives of “identity” and “liberty” are confronted, and a universal democratic advent is no guarantee for a *fiat* of such conversion.³³ Now, orphans of such homogeneous process, they face a last call confrontation in the yielding of the mechanics of democracy.

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33 Martin Rueff, “Une nouvelle logique du sens”, in *Dérangements — Aperçus. Autour du travail de François Julien*, Paris, Hermann, 2011, p. 156-7.

