The Hermetic Bell
Space for a Non-transferable Anthropology

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I SUGGEST that what we officially disseminate as artists in the social arena is only an imitation of everything which, for one reason or another, we consider problematic, too real, unfiltered, that it reveals what has made us what we are as social, political and artistic subjects. Our work is supposed to be a mirror image of ourselves, but like everything reflected in a mirror, just like a studio photograph, it suffers from excessive lipstick and makeup, from our most flattering angle that supposedly disguises the absurdity implicit in every social projection of what we are not quite entirely. I’m not saying that the work of an artist is necessarily a lie, though it is that, but it is also a great truth, though only after stitching by the tailor of language and symbolic manipulation. It is just another form of servitude of civilised beings to the conventions of polite society demanded by barbarians.
SYMBOLIC VENGEANCE as a form of reconciliation with History and history. As a way of restoring to the social arena the poisoned sweetmesses of the trauma we all carry within us. Given the duty to live once born, the task begins of reordering the order of the father, the dictator, the bishop and the canonical specialist with pretensions. To put it another way, the order of all those who only want theirs so everyone else has to swallow it.

THE WINTER CAMPAIGN IN THE AUTISTIC CONTAINER. The MACBA has forced me to conduct an archaeological campaign in the wrong season. In Europe, these things are done at the end of spring, when the days are long, temperatures are pleasant and the weather is stable; for academics, the university year has come to an end, as has their lab research, and students have finished their exams. All are free to do fieldwork, excavating down to the substratum wherein hides the beginning of things, sedimented time and the first causes unearthed during campaigns of days working out in the sun, those days after which one rests under the stars. It is a nobly epic endeavour. But I have been called on to do it in winter, in shipping containers and within the walls of my own home (one that is temporary, as they all are) in Barcelona, which is full of boxes that were sealed decades ago like miniature tombs from the Bronze Age, or like bunkers from the First World War buried after the explosion of an underground mine that left them intact inside, with the dead arrested in the middle of an unfinished activity that was once part of an ended life’s narrative. The gravitational field of history, both individual and shared, is tyrannically intense, like a possessive mother. It never lets you forget where you come from or to what and to whom you owe what you are; in other words, it is another mechanism of subjugation and emotional blackmail. Perhaps this is also the function of museums, all of them: museums of ethnology, anthropology, history, art, matches (after all, there’d be no civilisation without fire... And by the way, who exactly invented the flint?). Perhaps this is also the function of nationalism, religion and football: straitjackets to ensure that the present is not the result of freedom of action but of the tyranny of the past. The best example of enlightened despotism is an illustrated history book. I imagine History as a free zone full of shipping containers piled up to the stratosphere and stretching far beyond the horizon.
DARWIN AT HOME. You are born when your time comes and then later, while you are still small, you realise there was once someone at home occupying your place. Before you arrived. A garrulous, dark, hairy child with huge hands and ears. Before we, the Cro-Magnons, arrived and made ourselves masters of the world, the place was occupied by more or less distant cousins to whom we owe a small percentage of our genetic code. They were our forebears, the trial-and-error experiments that enabled us to appear on the planet, tidily at first but later taking it over in the most abusive and absolute way. Homo proconsul, Paranthropus robustus, Ardipithecus ramidus, Kenyanthropus platyops, Australopithecus afarensis, Homo antecessor, Neanderthal. Most were oafish, dark and hairy. They were also innocent because they were children from the evolutionary point of view. So, for two years my mother raised a bonobo baby, a white-faced chimp, brought to Barcelona by the brother of one of the members of the Instituto Canino Rex on Carrer Petritxol, where she worked before getting married in the 1940s. This brother of the owner was a professional hunter in Africa. He trapped wild animals alive for circuses and zoos. A crackpot cardsharp and a ladies’ man who wound up dead one morning, bitten by the black mamba he lived with. The bonobo he brought back to Barcelona was very smart and was called Tono. Up to the age of two, apart from a larynx suited to spoken language, there is not much difference between a human baby and a bonobo of the same age. My mother taught him to use a pencil and an eraser to undo what he had done – at first, he confused the eraser with the bar of soap in the bathroom – so that he could entertain himself, drawing spirals in the pages of a school book, then rubbing them out and starting over again. She would take him out, holding his hand, for a walk on the Ramblas. He would be dressed like a boy of the time in short trousers, a shirt, a jumper, socks and shoes (my poor mother was no ethologist), which stirred up a hullabaloo among the people working at Boqueria Market. Tono liked croissants and one day he undid the bolt on the shop door (he had observed how my/his mother did this), crossed the street and went into the café opposite, which he spotted through the shop window, from where he saw his/my mother go in to get croissants every morning. Calm as you like, he went off in search of his morning pastry, sowing panic among the contingent who had come for their hot chocolate and sponge fingers. Two years came and went before they sold him one day to a circus or a zoo, I don’t know which. He didn’t
last long. On being separated from his/my mother, he stopped eating, fell ill and died of
grief, a profoundly human reaction. But he became a family legend and a permanent
protophilosophical question in my childish primate brain. My favourite prank to
embarrass my parents when they had guests was to get out the photo of Tono dressed as
a boy and to use it in one of two ways I had devised: either I showed the photo as if it
was me before making the change; or as the photo of my older brother who had died
before my arrival into the world. I came in time to realise that the second version was
better because of the great truth it harboured. Chimpanzees did not in fact precede us:
we separated from our common ancestor some eight million years ago and we have
ended up being contemporaries, and now we humans currently hold the fate of the
survival of simians in our hands. We will undoubtedly put an end to his species soon, just
as we will put an end sooner or later to all the great apes, including ourselves. And the
lesser apes too, just so they don’t feel discriminated against. Chimpanzees are our
closest ‘non-human’ cousins: we share 98% of our genetic code with them and that
remaining 2% is the abyss that exists between responsibility (ours) and innocence
(theirs). White-faced bonobos, which are more intelligent than any other branch of the
common chimpanzee, use sex to lower tension or resolve conflicts between members of
the group, which is matriarchal. They mate face to face, looking at each other like us
(among other options) and are the only great apes with whom we share this manner of
copulating. In any event, chimpanzees are closer to Pithecanthropus and
Australopithecus (Lucy) than us, from whom we are also separated by several million
years. I was close to him, but not enough. I would have liked to have grown up with an
older brother in intimate contact with primeval nature, though now transferred from the
green jungle to grey asphalt. I would have learned things that it has taken me decades to
become aware of and I would undoubtedly be a better person. Every obsession ends up
surfacing in our work, which is nothing more than a metaphor for what has left its mark
on us as we learn to live.

CAPSULES is what we are, time capsules, irreplaceable to the extent that we are unique
as diachronic subjects, shaped by our time, which is also unique and never to be
repeated. The tension between our particularity and the account of History by the
powers-that-be is what defines us as political beings. All political struggles are
confrontations to settle once and for all who the owners of this History writ large are: be it what we today in the West call the citizenry or the political and economic oligarchy that governs this citizenry; be it the citizenry of the world that has arisen from decolonisation or that of the former mother country; be it the oligarchy of phallocratic civilisation or that of the culture of women’s emancipation, which is under constant attack from its opponents. Those who control the narrative of history control everything else. The multiplicity of accounts is tremendously corrosive for those who hold real power, whatever their ideological stripe; that’s already well known. The same is also true of the narrative monopoly of Western art of the 21st century and its dominant version rooted in capitalism, based on a market of scarcity, in other words of luxury, which presents itself as the only one that is legitimate. Questioning this status quo entails its potential collapse and is not accepted unless it can be co-opted behind the smokescreen of democratic tolerance (the very word itself, ‘tolerance’, is already darkly suspicious). Denying the validity of the dominant version of the world is the first step towards changing it. That is why it is so important, in my view, to turn our attention to the open terrain of everything that informs, for example, art without being art itself. This text, in fact, has been written because there will be an art exhibition held in a museum, though it speaks about things that seemingly have very little to do with art. It talks of the polymorphic galaxy of unfiltered signifiers that orbit around childhood, and which is fixed by means of a fundamentally emotional, subconscious and uncontrolled reaction from the early years of a human’s life – which is the original moment of learning – before they come across the programmatic control of social integration that begins at school. There is no model of Paradise that has government-regulated schooling. That is why it is so important to observe play and symbolic manipulation from the moment it appears in childhood. Baudelaire spoke about this, about toys, the first tools for rehearsing on the path of socialisation. In short, we have to acknowledge that at the origin of what makes an artist an artist, art is not present as art but it is as a pattern of behaviour, as symbolic manipulation of the world. A child plays with a toy plane, a representation of a magnificent machine, but he has a greater need for an aerial force of his own and to be able to win the war that he is going to wage against Japanese planes made of plastic. He’s going to do it because his parents took him to the cinema to see Wing and a Prayer
(Henry Hathaway, 1944) at the Venus cinema on Avinguda Gaudí. The equipment he lacks he makes himself using bits of wood. A pen is a missile.

A PEN IS A MISSILE, a banana is a phone, a bottle holder is a sculpture and a urinal is a fountain. This does not happen only in 20th-century art: for Caravaggio, a harlot is the Virgin Mary; for Ribera, a beggar is a saint; for Velázquez, a dwarf is a king. The miraculous, alchemical act of transformation of the world in art reached its highpoint with Piero Manzoni when he turned his own shit into an artwork and, by extension, into money, just as a modest wine is transubstantiated into the blood of Christ every day in any church in any part of the world before money is asked from the flock. They are acts of faith. Freud says that a child observes his stools as his first product delivered to the world, as are, it could be said, paraphrasing Elizabeth Frank, the sublime pissings, ejaculations and pukings of Pollock on his canvases, today worth millions.

THE MORAL OF TOYS. On 17 April 1853, Le Monde Littéraire published an article by Baudelaire entitled 'Morale du joujou' (The Philosophy of Toys). In this very brief piece, Baudelaire makes highly revelatory comments about the symbolic behaviour of children (mainly boys, unsurprisingly, given the time) and toys’ function in introducing the outside world to infants. Paradoxically, their mediation with adult existence puts an end to the magical world of childhood, in which everything is governed by desire, as Peter Fuller explains in his seminal book The Naked Artist. Art & Biology (1983), written 130 years after Baudelaire’s article. According to Fuller, the relationship between a watchful mother and her baby is such that she anticipates the child’s needs (let us say, for example, a boy born in Barcelona in 1948), as a result of which the child detects that his desire is met simply by being felt, which is effectively synonymous with automatic gratification of the felt desire. This is, needless to say, a lethal association. We spend the rest of our adult life trying to get over the disappointment caused by the disappearance of the magical power that comes from the unadulterated satisfaction of our early desires, which is a very nasty trick. To compensate for this loss, some of us become artists, which is what most closely resembles childhood in terms of the search for pleasure and instant gratification, an obsessive search that becomes obvious as we observe laboratory primates capable of eating their weight in sugar, correctly repeating ad infinitum an
exercise they have learned in exchange for a sweet reward. I am not surprised there is an
evident connection between play, art and sexuality, since all three are activities related
to erotic desire and creativity (in the sense of creating a non-transferrable world of one’s
own), as a result of which their fluids flow between them or that one can act as a
compensatory replacement for another or others. The famous and today much
questioned Freudian sublimation.

But, to get back to the toy, that miniaturised version of part of the real world which, by
themed accumulation, ends up representing it in its entirety only on a manageable scale,
just as reproductions of real battlegrounds with all their components on a scale of 1:285
were used until quite recently and in a similar way in military academies to train officers.
Reproductions, that were replaced two decades ago with extremely realistic electronic
games originally created as cybergames for children (absolutely true). These games and
toys are the realm of experimentation in which the child begins to gain access to adult
reality. In it, he mimics what he sees, he implements what he hears, he symbolically
interprets it and he makes it his by means of a manipulation very similar to processes of
prescientific learning, to totemic behaviour, to the fabulation – invention of a story – that
is at the origin of all cosmogonies and religions. Humans have learned and grasped the
world in this way from the beginning of time. Endowing things with meaning is a
biological need. If you do not have a way to explain something fundamental, you make it
up for yourself, otherwise you succumb to the lack of a guiding behavioural pattern that
gives sense to the experience. In his article, Baudelaire says:

Isn’t all life contained there in miniature, and much more colourful, clean and
sparkling than real life? There we find gardens, theatres, beautiful clothes, eyes
as pure as diamonds, cheeks lit up by paint, lovely lacework, cars, stables,
drunkards, charlatans, bankers, comedians, puppets that resemble fireworks,
kitchens and entire well-disciplined armies with their cavalry and artillery.
All children talk to their toys; their toys become actors in the great drama of life,
reduced by the camera obscura of their small brain. In their games, children
demonstrate their enormous capacity for abstraction and their superior
imaginative force. They play without toys [...] the stage coach, the eternal drama
of the stage coach played with chairs: the chair stage coach, the chair horses,
the chair travellers; the only living person is the postillion! The team of horses
remain motionless, yet it devours made-up spaces with burning haste. How
simple the staging! Is this not enough to make a theatre audience ashamed of
their feeble imagination, that blasé audience that demands of theatres a physical and mechanical perfection and is incapable of conceiving that Shakespeare's plays would be just as noble with an apparatus of barbarous simplicity?

And the children that play at war! Not in the Tuileries with real guns and real swords; I'm talking about the solitary boy who commands and leads two armies into battle on his own. The soldiers may be stoppers, dominoes, pawns, jacks; the fortifications will be boards, books, etc.; the projectiles marbles or any other thing; there will be deaths, peace treaties, hostages, prisoners and tributes [...] This ease with which children satisfy their imagination is evidence of their spirituality in their artistic conceptions. Toys are children’s first initiation into art, or rather, their first realisation. And once they have reached maturity, those perfected realisations will not fill their spirit with the same enthusiasm or the same belief.

So, if the child’s first performance occurs as a totemic game in the primeval grotto of his room, his inalienable Chauvet Cave, if his symbolic world is more recognisably his than the world outside the cave – in fact it is his in its totality, something the real world will never be – if it is more real than the real world, the one that permits no fabulation or magic, from the moment in which formal socialisation begins, the field of possibilities is reduced to two: either accept the reality of the reality of the Other, with a capital letter because it is the reality of the Powers-that-Be, or defend your own reality come what may. Either the king or the barricade. Art allows the second option in exchange for living under a constant and systemic threat; it is also made possible by political militancy of a millennial bent. In other words, by revolutionary militancy. In fact, this is the only serious option, but it is usually very dangerous to your health and I don’t believe there are many people now willing to lose their lives and wealth if they can afford the luxury of thinking about where they’re going to spend their next holidays. This is the West, after all.

BEFORE THE CAVE, BEFORE THE MUSEUM, the analogical register was already installed in the skull of a proto-Neanderthal who lived 430,000 years ago, like those found in Atapuerca. The owner of this skull was not capable of representation. He had some kind of symbolic behaviour – at least the late Neanderthals did, as they buried their dead – but he did not reorder the world by representing it and explaining it through what he depicted of the world when he reordered it (excuse the clumsy sentence...), thus
remaining in the never-ending loop we call art. That’s something the Cro-Magnons did and still do, as we are all Cro-Magnon. The Altamira brain is the same as the quantum physics, dodecaphonic music and iPhone brain. So, it would appear that the differences between two species capable of symbolic behaviour, one of which depicts the world and the other not, are to do with cerebral and neurological structure. Nothing more, nothing less. Structurally, the Neanderthal brain favours the areas of memory located in the occipital side and ‘neglects’ the frontal neocortical areas that regulate language and abstract thought, which are more highly developed in our brain. All the indications are that the Neanderthals had a prodigious memory that enabled them to carry all the knowledge of their species on them, literally, and never forget anything unless due to an injury or illness. However, since they were incapable of abstraction, they couldn’t represent it. To symbolically translate a three-dimensional world into a two-dimensional analogical equivalent is a profound exercise in abstraction that requires an enormous evolutionary leap. The ‘moment’, made up of hundreds of thousands of years of genetic evolution, when one of us made a mark on the wall of a cave with his hand covered in iron oxide, or filled it by drawing the figure of a woolly mammoth, is one of the most wondrous episodes in the history of the human species, a powerful moment that defines who we are and the place we occupy in the world. The Cro-Magnons of Altamira didn’t know that what they were doing was art as we understand it today, and they didn’t need to. It’s enough that we know it. In any event, it constituted the transition from biology to culture, from genes to memes, and it shaped the mould or the model of behaviour that we’ve been using and repeating compulsively since Lascaux, Altamira and the Chauvet Cave, as well as the Romanesque and Gothic churches, Renaissance palaces, the homes of the upper bourgeoisie, general and modern art museums till we come – in these times as uncertain as every other era that has gone before – to the contemporary art museum, a Western social-democratic invention from the post-war era that has become universal. All the examples I have described are in fact European, yet the same analysis could apply to any culture, although the only ones among us who have a concept of art, especially contemporary art, as something almost completely and seemingly independent of the dominant vectors of power are we Westerners. These symbolic spaces that exist as repositories of the ways in which we have interpreted the world can be seen as virtual copies of the brain cavity from which they emerged. They are analogical brains, files,
archives (so much in vogue), non-digital exogenous computers of the species. This is the description occasionally given to the rupestrian cave, the depository of art often termed ‘parietal’ art. I say this because I’m fascinated by the idea that the birth of ‘art’ was not cultural but biological and neurological; that culture is the finest excrescence of genetic evolution, of nature itself, a wondrous accident that I am lucky (or unlucky) to be a part of.

THE OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY ARRIVES IN THE EMPIRE OF GREY. In the early 1950s, Barcelona was coated in a grey slime. It could be seen on the façades of all the buildings in the city. People dressed in grey and black, and nobody took a shower every day. The cars, all from the interwar years, were black with the sole exception of the yellow blot that the city taxis regaled us with, a breath of fresh air that made me love them from the moment I reached the age of reason. I still do now, when there is less of the future than there ought to be. My father was an advertising and graphics art draughtsman, the job title given to commercial artists before the term grafista (graphic artist) was invented. Somehow, he had managed to get several American magazines, which were delivered to him regularly, no mean feat at the height of Franco’s drive for self-sufficiency in Spain. The main reason was that he was keen on the memorable full-page illustrations dotted in among the articles. These magazines were mainly Saturday, Evening Post, Look and Collier’s, classic titles of the era, none of them still in print. They were weekly generalist magazines and there would be something of everything in them: articles about the war in Korea; reports on Africa; short stories to do with war or love and romance; gangsters and femmes fatales with plunging necklines and long legs that would send me off to sleep hot between the legs; the wars waged by the 7th Cavalry in the American south-west against the Chiricahua, Apache, Mescalero and Navajo Indians; the wars Custer fought in the American high plains against the Sioux, Comanche, Blackfoot and Shoshone; and women, lots of women from another planet; all illustrated full page in full colour. I began to wake up to the outside world through these images that illustrated articles written in a language I did not understand but which I grasped was the language of the big boys in town, a feeling reinforced by the arrival of the United States Sixth Fleet in the port of Barcelona, with its difference in size and proportion (the Forrestal and Saratoga aircraft carriers were giants that made the buildings in the city look small in the same ratio that
the height and physical fitness of the Yankee seamen made the local men look small, somewhat puny and undernourished). What curse was keeping us on the small side of History?

PROCEEDINGS OF MODERNITY ON ULTRAMARINE PAPER. The image of the extraordinary also became virtual thanks to the double-spread car adverts in my father’s collection of American magazines, haigas, the local, popular terminology of the time for big, showy cars. Photography was used in the adverts, but more often than not there were hyperrealist illustrations – ‘art’ in the Anglo-American concept of the term applied to advertising – which, for the boy I was then represented the epitome of excellence, of the extraordinary, of the superior, of the never-seen-that-before, all enveloped in luxuriant beauty, perfect lacquers, explosive colours in direct contrast with the boneshakers you’d see on the streets of Barcelona after the war: scarce, black and old (I know, I’m repeating myself). It’s very difficult to explain what these images were able to activate in the brain of a four or five-year-old Catalan boy, the son of Republicans in the years of penance and punishment. It is more difficult still for those who did not experience it to understand. What is evident is that the United States’ greatest success during the Cold War was the worldwide cultural and propaganda campaign conducted by the American intelligence services so well described by Frances Stonor Saunders in her seminal book Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War. Nothing turned out better for the CIA and its cultural arm, the United States Information Agency (USIA), during its existence until the present, than the brilliant political use of American culture, high and low, in comparison with the rest of its strictly political and military activity, during which it reaped a long string of monumental blunders and well-known failures. Elvis the Pelvis; Marilyn Monroe’s thighs; blue jeans; the tailfins of the Cadillac Eldorado, Coupe de Ville and Biarritz from 1948 to 1959; Jackson Pollock’s Autumn Rhythm (Number 30). All of this is just as inseparable from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs as it is from having won the Second World War and coming out to pitch as the country producing 45% of world GDP. The success of American culture after the war was unprecedented, as illustrated by the well-known role of Levi’s jeans and jazz as symbols of rebellion against communism in Brezhnev’s Soviet Union itself, and these are just two of hundreds of examples.

Excellence is an attribute we would like to identify, in the classical Greek tradition, as a
moral good. Unfortunately, it is not: it is as amoral as a pistol, everything depends on how and why it is used. In this sense, the American propaganda campaign in the realm of culture in the thirty years after the war was a portent of amoral intelligence, a lesson in operational and intellectual excellence to be expected of a brilliant people at the service of an idea, theirs, which the rest of the world, and especially Europe, swallowed whole in the face of the clumsy counteroffensive exercises of the Soviet Union. Being a communist is always based on pure and simple ideological conviction, not because of the capacity of the iconographic galaxy produced by social realism to seduce him. The left of the past, which held all the cards for changing the world on the basis of joyful festivities like those held on the eve before St. John’s Day, managed to be as boring as the life of all the proletarians that it had to save. A Trabant cannot hold a candle to a Ferrari. And we all know that Ferraris are for exploitative and extractive millionaires; the flaw was that not everyone could have one. And if you’re talking about a Ferrari, you’re also talking about a nice suit or nice shoes, the ones that fit your feet like a glove as you slam down on the pedals of a sports car or gently touch on those of a Bernstein Grand, rather than having to persevere with a pair of military boots that flay your feet and with underwear made of sandpaper. That Italy is a country out of a novel is demonstrated by the fact that it was the only one in the world where it was possible to be a millionaire, aristocrat and communist at the same time without getting a hair out of place.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SOLITUDE. I didn’t like the country I had been born in. I didn’t like what I saw. I decided to create a new one and began to draw it, a classic case of appropriation by means of symbolic manipulation. I drew everything, even the dollar banknotes, as well as police cars, ambulances, lorries, luxury cars, race cars, planes, merchant ships, warships. I didn’t draw buildings, I guess because I thought if you had money and cars, you didn’t need to live anywhere in particular, or perhaps because the city I didn’t draw was my childhood room, which only needed to be filled with the essentials: cars, banknotes and the red-headed pinups in leopard-skin bikinis in the Saturday Evening Post calendars. These girls were outside the realm of my personal control because they were the sole property of my father and were hanging in his studio with the randy complicity of his wife, my mother, the blonde in the second flat on the eighth floor.
THE GEOLOGICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL MODELS OF THE HUMAN BRAIN. Both are metaphorical models, naturally, but in the first and most analogical of the two, its structure is revealed to us in layers of evolutionary sediment similar to those observed in studies of the Earth’s crust. In general terms, the deeper you delve into the crust, the older the layers. Something similar is also true of the strata of ice at the poles. According to Paul MacLean – who was a geologist before he became a neurologist – there are three evolutionary areas in the brain, each of which is a progressive or regressive step in relation to the other two; in fact, it could be said that they each constitute a brain in their own right, though wired to the other two. The basis of this model, clinically known as the Triune Brain Model (the three-in-one brain model) is the reptilian complex, situated next to the hypothalamus, which we share with reptiles and fish; the next and intermediary complex is the limbic system, which we share with our fellow mammals, particularly felines; and lastly, the most superficial and recent, the neocortex, which we share with the other primates and sea mammals, and which has reached its maximum evolutionary development in us. Among other things, it controls language and abstract thinking. The archaeological model, in contrast, is exclusively literary and metaphorical in relation to a specific function of the brain, memory. It seems natural to us to visualise the act of remembering as a descent, an immersion in the depths of experience, digging down till we reach what we are looking for and reliving it by means of a combination of reconstructed (and always subjective) memories and literary fabulation, because there is an element of truth that is only reached through informed fiction. Memory, like history, cannot exist if it is not narrated – which is the same as saying it depends on discursive language – and ownership of this narrative (or struggle to achieve it) is an eminently political fact (I’m repeating myself again, I know) in the collective sphere and in the individual realm, which is the one that we are concerned with here.

THE COLLECTOR, THE RAG AND BONE MAN, THE MUSEUM AND THE LOST PROPERTY OFFICE. There are people who hoard everything, others who collect things: machines, stamps, coins, beer bottle tops, stones; there are those who collect art or shoes. In fact, the desire that lies within each accumulator of sediment, human or otherwise, is the desire to possess everything so as to be able to reorder the world in a way that is well
founded, according to the obsession of the person concerned. Walter Benjamin referred to the aura of the artistic object, but he neglected the aura of ordinary objects recontextualised by the urge of the recollector. Duchamp adjusted Benjamin’s partiality somewhat with his ready-mades. No choice is neutral. Every choice is an attempt to fill a gap. Everything comes from something, from an original thing, from a moment in which that something fractured and caught you with your guard down because you were innocent. You’re only innocent in your childhood. Consequently, the revenge of certain adults consists in possessing the world to rebuild it according to some specific and inescapable – not necessarily conscious – needs, as an act of Faustian rebellion. In every accumulation, in every collection, there is a latent state of totalitarianism which, in the case of art, is channelled and deactivated by means of the creative activity itself. Morse Peckham said that the function of art was to provide a field of radical experimentation which, if it were to exist in politics, would leave the world in flames. In art, in contrast, we can try out anything and nobody dies, or almost nobody. A social revolution is the opposite: it is serious in the dark sense of the term and its destructive power is colossal.

But let us go back to the aura of the object, to that of a Republican hand grenade found on a former battlefield in the Ebro, for example. The emotional and evocative charge of an object like this, for anyone who keeps up with the news, has a little bit of imagination and believes that knowing history is crucial, is of incomparable force. The same can be said of a can of Russian tinned food with the key to open it still stuck in the middle of the spiral formed by the twisted lid, as twisted as the history of Spain from the day the tin was opened till now. Everything is there, just as it is in *The Large Glass* by Duchamp or in the parietal paintings in Chauvet Cave. It is just a matter of changing the angle of approach or the focal distance of the eye to understand that the museum, of art or of anything, is a vast lost property office, objects whose recovery and conservation have helped us to understand the world we live in. Everything, in one way or another, is in pieces, as is the body of a soldier wounded in combat or of a victim of a car bomb. Museums move everyone capable of recognising the effort and pain embedded in their collections, in the Benjaminian aura of each of the objects they harbour. Those who question the museum as an institution are orphans of History, they haven’t understood a thing.
WILD ART (RUSSIA). A story from twenty long years ago. While on a trip to Russia in the early 1990s, I went to visit the Artillery Museum in St. Petersburg, formerly Leningrad. I was looking for Lenin’s car, but it was nowhere to be seen. I found it there. As I was on an official visit, I was greeted by the museum director, a lieutenant colonel on active service, accompanied by a number of junior officers but about the same age. The man was in his forties at the time. Initially serious, he gradually relaxed as he realised that I knew quite a bit about the history of the Soviet Union, the Revolution, the Second World War and military matters in general. It also helped that I thanked him, as a representative of the former Red Army, for having won the Second World War in Europe. We ended up having a meal together, and he told me the following: 'Communism made me who I am. It gave me an education, a prestigious career, it taught me how to view the world from a socialist viewpoint, and I accepted it without reservations. But one day, overnight, they told me to forget everything, that communism was finished in Russia, that it had all been a great lie and that I had to adapt to the new times, though we had no idea what these new times were about. I am willing to accept that Stalin was a very bad person', he said, 'and that the communism of Brezhnev and company was a heap of mediocrity and corruption – not Khrushchev, mind! – but it is our history in the 20th century, terrible but also heroic, when we got to become a world power. Losing that would be a tragedy. That is why rather than presenting myself as a volunteer for service in Afghanistan, with better pay and more opportunities for promotion, I applied to be the director of this museum because I thought that if I didn’t do it, no-one else would' We said goodbye, full of emotion, our left fists raised high. In that remarkable museum that occupies a huge barracks (like everything in Russia) dating from the 18th century, I saw countless art installations that did not know that that is what they were, such as a field cannon which, during the siege, had taken a direct hit from a German battery, killing its entire crew and leaving the cannon twisted and open like an orchid. Somebody had left flowers anonymously beside it. In a space not accessible to foreign invited officers and out of sight of the public, they kept all the booty plundered from Hitler’s Chancellery in Berlin in 1945, including Hitler and Eva Braun’s clothes, as was finally revealed a few years later when the secrecy was lifted. I was standing chatting next to the door that led into the room containing Tutankhamen’s sarcophagus, and I had no idea. I would have
given anything to see that room. Probably the pinnacle of artwork of historical content in the multimedia installation genre ever made by the Artillery of the Soviet army.

WILD ART (SPAIN). Another story, similar to and earlier than the one I’ve just recounted. In the second half of the 1980s, I passed through Madrid and I went to visit the former Army Museum next to the Prado. It was a very interesting museum in which nothing had been moved since its founding immediately after the war. On display, for example, was the microphone used by Queipo de Llano on National Spanish Radio in Seville to terrorise the people on the other side of the front, the first ever use of radio as a psychological weapon of war. There were uniforms belonging to Francisco Franco alongside glasses worn by Mola, broken in the opportune (for Franco) plane accident that cost him (Mola) his life. But what was really striking was a large room, which disappeared with the museum, in which there were just three objects: the horse-drawn carriage, riddled with bullet holes, in which General Prim had been travelling when he was killed in an attack against him on Calle del Moro in Madrid in 1870; the American Marmon car, equally riddled with bullet holes, in which President Eduardo Dato was mortally wounded by Catalan anarchists, also in Madrid, in 1921; and the Dodge 3700 in which Admiral Carrero Blanco had been travelling with his security detail when he was assassinated by ETA in 1973, once again in Madrid, wrinkled like an empty packet of Marlborough. A hundred and fifty years of Spain’s political history displayed and activated by just three objects, placed there by an unknown military officer obeying orders. I would love to have been the one to make this dazzling installation, a masterpiece in this discipline, but someone got there before me. It has everything, including my personal vocabulary of the car (as well as its precursor, the horse-drawn carriage) as an ideological vehicle that is a repository of power; political ideology covering the entire ideological arc of the 19th and 20th centuries in Spain; and the priceless aura of the object as a witness of history. When I was small, I learned to make gunpowder, with which I would blow up cars to the amazement of my gang of mates.

WAR AND MEN. This is a great mystery to me and always has been. I’m not a pacifist. Hitler and Mussolini were wiped off the map by force. If only we had been capable of doing the same with Franco. Our lives would undoubtedly have been different if we had.
All the men of my grandfather’s generation who visited the house in Viladecans at the weekend were Republican veterans who had fought in the war in Spain. All of them had suffered reprisals; some, like my grandfather, had served long prison sentences; others had passed through the concentration camps in the south of France and had enlisted with the French resistance during the Second World War; one had even been a spy working for the Allies in Andorra and had been given the mission of rescuing American and British fighter pilots shot down by the Germans over the French-Spanish border and of getting them back to Britain via Spain and Portugal. They were all Reds. All of them had stories to tell that fascinated me. They were men who had had experiences that placed them above everyone else, my father’s generation, for example, who had never been called on to fight. They were something else. They were like the Americans who appeared in the Saturday Evening Post, fighting in Korea against the North Koreans or the Chinese. As a boy, I was incapable of understanding that my grandfather and his friends had more in common with the Chinese than with the American soldiers fighting against them. That would come later. As far as I was concerned then, they were all the same: brave tough guys capable of dealing with anything thrown at them. They fought heroically against the enemy, whoever that might be, because that was the way things are, while their womenfolk waited for them at the home front or tended their wounds in field hospitals. There is always an enemy, there’s never any lack of them, as they’re manufactured in huge numbers. Meanwhile, the boy I was then played at waging war (everything is taught and everything is learned) with miniature American, Japanese and German soldiers, and with plastic cowboys and Indians that have become deformed with the passing of time, just as time itself is deformed as it flows along, so that remembering ends being a visualisation of the recollection, like a reflection in a distorting mirror at a fairground. Later on, once the political and ideological issues were in their place, the perceived and accepted need for a world revolution that would put an end to capitalism (such naive ideas, right?) continued to reinforce the figure of the guerrilla fighting in a national liberation army as a violent and masculine ideal, though the presence of women at the front was by then becoming obvious among the left engaged in combat around the planet. To be clear, the Chinese were now the good guys, and the Americans fighting in Vietnam the enemies to be swept way, just as Franco and his minions still needed to be swept away in Spain. The only ones doing this with any degree of success since Carrillo
ordered the end of armed combat even as the anarchist urban guerrilla force was shot to extinction by Franco's police in the mid-1950s were the men and women of ETA. Many of us admired them before their indiscriminate drift, before Hipercor, before the senseless terror far and wide. Of course, you can’t say this nowadays. The powers-that-be have managed to confuse things so that anything goes in a democracy except violence in the hands of citizens; violence must only be in the hands of the powers-that-be so they can use it to defend themselves precisely from citizens when they become fed up with so many falsehoods and so much servitude. Democracy has ended up becoming the greatest social deactivator ever invented, a lucrative pastime for advantage players, well-fed fraudsters and three-card tricksters in a made-to-measure suit.

SCATTERED BONES AND ABANDONED MUNITIONS. In Berlin, when I was living there in the second half of the 1980s, whenever the construction of a new building began or underground works were done on the electricity or water supply, clearly visible signs were put up that said 'Achtung, Bomben' (Beware, bombs), and they were not joking. The Allied carpet bombing in the Second World War was so dense that unexploded munitions continue to be unearthed to this day. And not just munitions. Within a radius of a hundred kilometres from the centre of the capital, some thousand corpses have been recovered annually, year in year out, since 1945. The same occurs in Spain, by accident and on another scale, but it is in no way a minor issue, with munitions and bones from the Civil War. They are constantly being found along the Ebro, and if more do not appear, it is due to the lack of enthusiasm for dealing once and for all with the remains of this chapter in Spain’s history. One summer in the 1980s, I remember that a forest fire broke out in the Gandesa area and at first the firemen were unable to get close to the flames because the intense heat generated by the blaze had begun to set off unexploded artillery projectiles, bringing back to life a ghostly battlefield that had remained inert and empty of combatants for almost fifty years. I saw it on television. Once, as I was walking through woodland near Corbera d’Ebre this century, again after a forest fire, I came across a pelvis resting against a tree trunk, surrounded by various exploded Lafitte hand grenades. Trauma leaves profound traces that can hide in the subconscious, but they never disappear. All it takes is the glowing cigarette butt of a chance encounter, a place, a smell, a word for everything to suddenly go up in flames.
with the force of yesteryear. Everything leaves a trace, everything has an influence and is more powerful than the wish to forget, something that is only easy for idiots without any imagination. I don’t know how to forget, and I come back to the aura of the objects that I have found over the years during my walks along the Ebro valley, though the Serra de Pàndols and Serra de Cavalls. I’m not interested in the bombs and weapons so much as the spoons bent so that they can be hung from a belt, the Norwegian, Mexican, Russian and Czech tinned food, the pipe mouthpieces, the water canteens, the bowls, the shoes or the silk stockings I found in the basement of a bombed house in the old town of Corbera d’Ebre, Catalonia’s Belchite. Note, there were two legs sheathed in the silk stockings in Corbera; note, once again, every empty tin is a meal hurriedly eaten in the trenches by a young man who perhaps survived the war or maybe died with this Norwegian, Mexican, Russian or Czech food half digested in his stomach. My great uncle Isidoro fell there, no-one knows where, killed not so much by ideological causes but by the cruelty of a banal woman whose betrayal drove him to the front. He hoped to heal his wounds there and he only lasted a week. As I eat my breakfast amid all these unexploded munitions, I spare a thought for the farmers ploughing the fields of Flanders who have to reinforce the chassis of their tractors in order to avoid certain death if by chance they hit an explosive dormant there since the First World War, now almost a century ago. Every open, rusty tin of food found on the former Ebro Front is more important than all the declarations that might be made by the tinpot politicians of this country made in their image and likeness. A canteen found on the old Teruel Front is more important than all my work combined. Any sediment of the war still lying on the ground is a truth writ large: it is truer than this shoddy democracy; truer than all the expressions of national greatness, because these expressions of greatness are built by those who do not fight, by the old men who order young me to die for them. Neither the leaders of the Catalan independence movement nor the leaders of Indivisible Spain will die fighting, should fighting ever occur.

ANETO AND TROTSKY’S ASSASSINATION. Climbing up Aneto mountain on your own, in other words, not roped to others as you cross the glacier, is no mean feat. If, moreover, you’re sixteen years old and you are equipped solely with a pair of canvas walking boots without crampons and an ice axe, it is an exploit which, if it doesn’t end in tragedy, it’s
because today isn’t your time to die. I have always hated mountains as a swinging-dick activity among men. That is why I also hated being a member of the boy scouts, a paramilitary organisation led by adults dressed as children. My ‘patrol’ set off very early, just as a thin line of light was appearing in the sky. The intention was to get to the glacier before sun-up, when the snow was still solid and there was a crust of ice that would break underfoot and make it easier to walk along without slipping, all roped together. In sunshine, it would begin to melt and there would be a high risk of losing your footing, even with crampons. If that happened, the others roped to you would keep you up, thereby preventing you from falling straight into the crevasse at the bottom of the glacier, a few hundred metres below at a terrifying angle of inclination (and fall). The swinging dicks set off at a pace I didn’t want to match and I said so. You didn’t have time to admire the landscape. The answer was that if I didn’t want to keep up, I should go back to the refuge and quit whining. They continued on their testosterone-fuelled way and I was left alone, but instead of going back, I rested for a bit and then set off at my own pace, in my pitiful boots without a rope or crampons and only my ice axe to help me. I got to the glacier at around eleven in the morning, with the sun beating down and the snow liquid on the surface. Other groups going balls out passed me above and below (the fucking glacier seemed to drop vertically) and signalled to me that I should not carry on. Or, worse, that I should put my foot to the pedal and join them. I paid them no attention and continued onwards alone. After a while – I don’t remember how long I took – I reached the far side of the glacier and started on the last stretch of rock up to the summit. When my fellow scouts saw me arriving, the blood drained from their cheeks. They were as white as snow when they realised I had reached the top with absolutely nothing in the way of safety measures and that it was a miracle I was alive. I left the scouts shortly after that, but I still have the ice axe, to which I have made one recent modification, to wit, the shortening of the shaft to match what is known about a tremendously important political assassination. I’m talking about the assassination of Leon Trotsky by the Catalan Ramon Mercader, a crime ordered by Stalin in 1939 to rid himself once and for all of his main rival, who persistently questioned him on his usurping of the status of Lenin’s political and ideological heir. Trotsky, with good reason, claimed this inheritance for himself. Everything about the assassination is known, but what remains an unfathomable mystery, to me at least, is the assassin. Ramon Mercader
was the son of Caritat Mercader, a woman who, if she had been dropped in among the Furies and Bacchantes in ancient Greece, would have scared the living daylights out of them. She was a fearsome woman and her son was just like her. Handsome, charming, a textbook hard nut, a veteran of the war in Spain. He did his job with glacial coldness armed with just an ice axe hidden in his raincoat (which is why he cut the shaft shorter). He did not want to use a gun because the noise of the shot would have given him away immediately; killing with a single slash of a knife without the victim shouting is not easy to do. So he decided on an ice axe brought down vertically in a massive blow to Trotsky’s head. He half failed, of course, and was caught red handed. However, the thing that most fascinates me – because this is an unequalled example of extreme diabolical evil – is the way he managed to inveigle himself into Trotsky’s inner circle. The plan seems simple: seduce the revolutionary leader’s American secretary, Sylvia Ageloff, and keep up a loving relationship with her – for months! – without her ever suspecting her lover. In other words, Mercader had to be extremely convincing, producing erections at the drop of a hat and using them with sufficient tenderness so that his partner would swallow the deceit without ever noticing even the slightest hint of duplicity. Fucking with loving ardour a woman scorned as a political enemy and a traitor to the communist ideal, as Stalin saw her, is beyond me. In other words, Mercader was a monster who has succeeded in shocking me to the core. Also shocking is this connection between an ice axe and death in two versions, one deliberate and the other accidental, the assassination of Leon Trotsky and the ascent of Aneto by a sixteen-year-old boy who performed a feat without realising it. If he had done – realised it, that is – he would never have lived to tell the tale. Many revolutionaries abandon themselves to the stormy waters of history because they do not know what awaits them. Once in the water, they cannot stop swimming because swimming has become the Cause.

MY FATHER’S PAINTINGS are no great shakes because they were done by an amateur who had had no training. My father was born and grew up in a very poor family of Andalusian immigrants who were unable to give him an education. He tried his hand at everything: studying fine art at the Llotja in Barcelona; studying music, something he did. But when, after seven years of singing, the time came to hire a piano so he could practise on the instrument and he went and asked my grandmother Paca for the money he had
saved up, it turned out she had spent it on food for the family. He tried to write poetry, and the only book he finished is an incunabulum because it is the only copy and he wrote it by hand – he even wrote the introduction himself – but got nowhere with it. He started work at the age of eleven and didn’t stop till he died. And yet he was my first introduction to art. At the weekends at the home in Viladecans of my grandmother on my mother’s side, he would set about painting still lifes, landscapes or, in moments of madness, an occasional nude of my mother that had the half the town in a whirl. And he would talk of Picasso, Miró and even of Tàpies, who he did not understand but whom he ended up imitating. What I mean by this is that artistic desire isn’t necessarily conveyed through the excellence captured but through a pattern of behaviour that derives from being capable of representing, of transforming the surrounding reality into something singular, which only a few can do, even if they don’t do it very well. Within the family circle, my father was the only one who painted, much to the admiration of everyone else, even his father-in-law, a brave Republican who very much liked Dalí, whom he had met personally, because 'when he painted a bit of bread, it looked like you could eat it'. Picasso and Miró, on the other hand, were bullshitters who were beyond redemption. All this to say that what is really fundamental about art from an anthropological point of view or from the point of view of human behaviour, which are one and the same thing, is not that the art is necessarily excellent but that it is done, full stop. According to Arthur Danto, it was more important in the Middle Ages that a St. Anthony was recognisable than that he was well painted, hence every St. Anthony is depicted in the company of a pig, just in case, and that the pig identified the saint beyond any shadow of doubt. It is logical to suppose, then, that the search for excellence was a consequence of the competition between artists to get more commissions, though what mattered most to the bishop were other things (no change there). It was in the Renaissance that the situation altered, and aesthetic quality perceived by the eye on the back of resemblance to the natural world (Michelangelo’s 'Speak!') came into play, though the blame for this lies with the Greeks and Romans of the classical era. All in all, an impressive reinvention of the wheel.

THE ANCIENT GREEKS believed that thunder was the farting of the gods who, though they were immortal, had been unable to do without a humbly human metabolism. It is
crucial to find an explanation for things, whatever the explanation. The fact that it is true or likely is secondary. Even today, in fact, booms and bangs are associated with the limitless power of the gods of the day, now mortals but possessing prodigious flatulence capable of putting an end to the entire planet. In the transition from thunder to gunpowder to nuclear weapons, we have the evolution of blast power, of the transideological explosion as a manifestation of absolute power. In evolutionary terms, we have been ‘scientific’ for only a short while: till the hegemonic irruption of science a few centuries ago, the only method available for explaining the world and our place in it was symbolic manipulation (I know I’m repeating myself, but I’m doing it deliberately to make this linear text as spherical as possible), with the magical interpretation of empirically observed reality, fabulation, deductive imagination without any type of reference apart from the perceived and experienced and nothing more. If you lack knowledge, you invent an explanation, and the invention is explained because without it you could not possibly survive in this world. It is impossible to exist in a state of absolute ignorance of things, without interpretative norms that make sense of experience. Without answers, you die. In this need dictated by biology resides the origin of myths, religions, art, animist medicine, cosmogonies and the beginnings of astronomy. Of science itself, you might say, with good reason.

THE BIONIC BUCEPHALUS. The speed of a human being in good physical shape, though not an athlete, is 10 km per hour. That is our biological speed and we cannot exceed it unless we come up with an external multiplier. We humans are good at these things and we soon domesticated equines, with which we have had a long relationship based on mutual co-operation for thousands of years. The use of horses as a means of individual transport and as a combat platform multiplied our biological speed fivefold, with evident advantages monopolised by the ruling classes, to whom speed has always belonged. With the Industrial Revolution, technologies were developed that led to the internal combustion engine powered by fossil fuel. This, coupled to the horse-drawn carriage and its four wheels, turned into the automobile that we are all familiar with today and which has dramatically changed the face of the planet and cities in little more than a hundred years. An extraordinary development that we are paying for with unsustainable levels of urban pollution, to mention but one of the many serious problems that exist. However,
the car is powerful in the metaphorical sense of the word because it has become a symbol of the triumvirate consisting of speed associated with freedom of movement across long distances, the modern concept of progress, and the capitalist economy. In communist countries, there was virtually no such thing as private ownership of cars, and fast luxury automobiles were the exclusive attributes of the nomenklatura, just as the fastest aircraft are fighter planes and belong to the state. I was surprised, bearing in mind its cultural, industrial and environmental impact, that the car has a somewhat limited presence as content in the finest literature, visual art or film – works comparable to *Ulysses*, *Guernica* and *Paths of Glory*, for example – works in which the car is the central element, the crux, given that it is such a significant product, as stated, in the social culture of the 21st century (in the first world, as it used to be called). In reality, it is no surprise that this should be the case in light of the fact that art needs components that can be reduced to the realm of the symbolic for the result to function precisely as art. Yet with the car, this is very difficult to achieve because it is already to a large extent irreducible, since it is an extremely powerful symbol in its own right, and its metaphorical malleability is severely limited. Also because artists generally do not know much about biological evolution (1), reconstructive plastic surgery and prosthetic design (2) and, lastly, military theory (3).

(1) Throughout almost our entire existence as a species, we have depended exclusively on biological evolution based on the spontaneous method of trial and error to gradually improve the raw material of our genes and thus became what we are. This was the case until the appearance of culture. In the same way that the Pratt & Whitney R-2800 radial piston engine, used on the American F4U Corsair fighter plane during the Second World War, was the acme of radial propeller engines from the very beginning of its history and, having reached this point, it could no longer be developed without generating morphological aberrations that would have given rise to an unusable monster – making the evolutionary solution the jet engine, a colossal mutation – in the case of our species, culture freed us from morphological aberrations, such as, to mention one example, women developing a hip width that would have made it impossible for them to move in exchange for being able to accommodate while giving birth the
enormous heads required to encase in the worst possible way a brain several
times larger than today’s and capable of handling the continual exponential
growth in our need for knowledge. Large-headed geniuses would not have been
great runners either, given that the centre of gravity of their bodies would have
been in an absurd place. Instead of doing things like this after millions of years of
genetic evolution, we invented the computer and we continue to play football.
Beginning half a million years ago, cultural evolution has replaced biological
evolution, or to put it another way, we evolve with memes, not genes. Biology
has become culturalised.

(2) The origin of plastic surgery was totally unrelated to beauty but to the need to
reconstruct organic tissue destroyed by work accidents or war wounds. After the
American Civil War, there was tremendous concern over the issue due to the
enormous number of disfigured young men who were unable to find a partner
because of their injuries and scars. However, the problem reached critical mass
after the First World War due to the scale of the butchery, which also made it
possible, due to the wealth of opportunities for experimentation it afforded, to
develop ever better and safer techniques for facial reconstruction, for example.
The practices of plastic reconstruction are intended basically to palliate the visible
effects of a severe incident or accident, thereby enabling the victim to return to a
more or less normal social life. It is also a concept appropriate to the eventuality
of a car accident, to the machine itself. Even though the most significant damage
and repairs are internal, the bodywork must also be repaired because it is the
most obvious mutilation to the external eye and it reduces the trauma. On a
complementary level, we can say that the car is itself a prosthetic device for the
whole human body, a space-time expansion of the body, which it completely
envelopes while magnifying its natural capabilities and at the same time adding
emotional and aesthetic gratification, environmental comfort, physical pleasure, a
display of purchasing power and a symbol of (male) sexual power. We could add
that the car is an anthropomorphic machine that acquires its energy and
processes its food of organic origin (fossil fuel) in the same way that the human
body does, by internal combustion.
Paul Virilio has already enlightened us as to the close relationship between speed and economic, political and military power. Speed eliminates space, moulds perceived time and annuls diachronic or historical time, which till very recently was conditioned by biology, its seasonal cycle and the speed at which animals can move. Technology at the service of power has changed all this, just as the German Field Marshal Guderian revolutionised the traditional war scenario just two days ago – in 1940, when the fastest thing around was a galloping horse – with his concept of Blitzkrieg (lightning mechanised warfare). The thing that most closely resembles a Formula 1 race car is a fighter plane, and vice versa. Both are single-seaters; both are the fastest versions of their class; each race is a hostile encounter in which there is only one winner. Speed, the quintessence of technology, is a fundamentally aggressive element in a competitive environment (OK, being able to transport a transplant organ hundreds of kilometres in a jet plane and save a patient’s life is not a hostile or competitive act, but it benefits from technology that was originally military in purpose, just as we benefit each day from video, virtual reality and the internet, which also began as military projects with the edge taken off them by the use of the term ‘binary technologies’, or military technologies with civilian uses.) If we start from the basis that there must be a way to reclaim history so that the present is not a simple process and that there is a possibility of there being a future, then the survival of all ‘dromological’ machines, among them cars, has an expiry date, and when this is reached, all the places on the Earth will once again be remote from each other.

EPILOGUE, COMPENDIUM, SYNTHESIS. There are none.

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