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Meditation in Ruin

The ruin of the structure signifies that in the vanished and destroyed aspects of the work of art other energies and forms—those belonging to nature—grow again, so that out of the art that still lives in it, and out of nature, which already lives in it, a new whole, a characteristic unity, emerges.

—Georg Simmel, *The Ruin*¹

1

A black ant brings him to his senses. It's just a haze of various shades of green and brown, at first. Slowly, something—a speck of moving blackness no larger than a peppercorn—comes into focus. It is an ant. And a moving leaf. No, the ant is carrying the leaf. The leaf is perpendicular to the ant's body, rising vertically like the head sail on a reed boat. The ant is struggling to surmount a cluster of dried leaves with its leaf intact. As he observes the ant, he is vaguely aware that his left cheek is pressed hard against the forest floor. The sour stench of stale vomit fills his nose. He tastes blood on his lips. He squeezes his pulsating head. But he keeps his right eye trained on the ant, captivated by its furious determination. The ant thrusts forward; the leaf falls; the ant whips around, grabs the leaf; charges another fraction of an inch; darts, and dodges an onslaught of branches and leaves. The ant loses the leaf in the melee, clinches it, like a buccaneer, in its barbed mandibles, and charges again. This is the moment when he passes from the mental fog into self-awareness. A simple but invigorating thought bolts through his mind—*just drop the leaf, fool.*

The ground is cool on his cheek. He closes his eyes and breathes in deeply. *What happened? What the hell happened?* He remembers sitting, as usual, cross-legged, back straight, head centered on his shoulders, leaning against the tree trunk. This memory quickens him. He pushes himself back up until he is sitting on his buttocks again. The tree trunk is right there to support him. Leaning

against it with his bare legs straight out in front of him, he stares into the woods. *What happened?* He remembers hunching over like a withered reed, gazing at the ground. His head suddenly felt as if a strongman were tightening a leather strap around it as a headband. Instinctively, he grabbed it with both hands fully extended, and began massaging it, hoping, in vain, to ease the pain. He gasped with fright when he felt his scalp. It was shriveled and withered. When he rubbed his head, the hair, rotten at the roots, fell to the ground. He remembers heaving in waves. The vomit shot in a stream onto the ground and splattered on his face. He couldn't hold out. In pain and exhaustion, he finally fell on his face.

He just stares into space now. The woods are dark. He wraps his arms tightly around himself, presses his knees against his chest, and pulls the tattered cloth that was once his robe over his shivering body. Overcome by loneliness, shame and, most devastating of all, a sense of catastrophic failure, he begins to weep. After half a minute, he stops. He wipes his face with his sleeve. He sits still, then punches the ground. His gaze sharpened, he mutters to himself, *now, where's that ant?*

Sadness was his natural element. Anger was his most effective tonic. Together, they were elixir, flushing self-pity and delusion from his mind and paralysis from his body. As a child already, he had discovered the futility of struggling against anger and sadness. It was like trying to prevent rain from soaking the ground. He had tried that once. The rains were coming. With the help of a servant, he constructed elaborate hemp roofing and dug a complex drainage system to protect his herb garden. The result was the ruin of his herb garden. The plants were smothered by the collapsed roof, beaten by the rain mercilessly into the ground, and finally drowned in ditches. He observed this disaster from his window and drew the logical conclusion. Nature is supreme power. Nature is perverse. It is element: water, fire, earth, and air. I, too, am this. I am nature. I have a stark choice: I can either struggle against nature as it takes its course or learn to live *as* its force. But doing so will take precise knowledge and great skill. In the meantime, I will just let the rain permeate the ground, pervade and infuse it, saturate it with its very nature, wetness.

Like the rains, anger and sadness were for him inevitable and all-consuming forces. When sad, he felt drawn down to the ground, helpless and disoriented. He lost all sense of who he was, what he was doing, and for what reason. Anger braced him, lifted him up, turned his face squarely toward the world. When mixed, these two affects were like the gods' nectar: they simultaneously clarified and impelled. Sadness was a mirror for his self-delusion. It lay open to view his fantasies about himself and the world. Anger narrowed his view, sharpened his focus. It provoked ideas and spurred him to action.

Now, here he is, sad and angry. With patience and care he will absorb their force and harvest their seed, as he has done so many times before. That is what he determines. On elbows and knees, he crawls over to where the ant had been struggling with its leaf. *That leaf was both its food and burden*, he thinks. *Both its sustenance and its ruin.*

Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of thinking.²

2

This text shares Peter Sloterdijk's premise about practice: "anyone who takes part in a program for depassivizing himself, and crosses from the side of the merely formed to that of the forming, becomes a subject." We can characterize the buddha's struggle to awaken to the elements of the Law that determine human existence in these terms, too. In this light, practice is an exercise in "deautomatization"; it entails "liberation from infection by blindly reproducing unexamined." We saw earlier that the "dip into a chaos" entailed by the buddha's contemplative experimentation is immersion into a "Dionysian space of undoing" within which he enacts "not a system of demonstration, but an ordeal in which the mind is given new eyes." The undoing must persist and the eyes be diurnally refreshed. The stark division of subject pathways being pointed out here is between that of a World's automaton and that of a World's buddha. It is the subject awake to the a priori powering the furnace of life, or really, of *a* life, one at a time. "The buddha" is the name of the subject of this practice. Borrowing the term from the ancient Greeks, Sloterdijk calls such practice "anthropotechnics." It is a term that follows from a confrontation with two "massive pseudo-evidences." Sloterdijk reminds us of the first of these extraordinary facts: no such thing as "religion" exists. There are only practices of human formation. Some practices produce neo-Nazis; others produce *bodhisattvas* of great compassion. Most produce automatons, mere surfaces reflecting the reigning ideology, mirroring it for Others and so serving as agents of its replication. Engaging a belief system is no less a "practice" than the *yogic* headstand. The second of these errors was proclaimed by Siddhārtha Gautama: no such thing as an inner "self" exists. There is only an interminable psychophysical-social-symbolic work in progress wrought by *paideia*, *autopoiesis*, *ritualization*, *humanitas*, *vinaya*, *Bildung*—or automation. Contrary to the hysterical fantasies propagated by the abettors of the New Age idealist apocalypse, wherein a cataclysmic *shift in this and that consciousness* will augur the dawn of an eternally utopian World,

a sober estimation recognizes the profound limitations of “the agent that cuts itself out” from our overbearing World. Anyone who has endeavored to change a relationship of two individuals much less the multitude of a World is frustratingly aware of the “radically asymmetrical, almost self-annihilating division” between “own and non-own.” “Non-own” is the sphere of causes, conditions, and influence of every single phenomenon arising bubble-like with each tick of the earth’s turning. This is a sphere so inconceivably gargantuan that it can be contained only in the mind of God. “Own,” as the word *agent* reminds us, is that sphere wherein I may act to drive something into and through the world *in the way I desire*. In other words, a sphere of power and influence that, in relation to that of the “non-own,” amounts to “virtually zero.” We may still—just barely—speak of autogenesis, that which is “brought about by the repercussions of actions on the actor.” Another way of saying this is that an anthropotechnic occurs at the juncture of the personal and the social. The individual is making an effort to enhance his psycho-symbolic “immunological” status. But such efforts must also serve to increase the “cognitive capital of our society.” The clamor it causes in the cellar of the personal *epoché* must rise as tumult on the city’s streets. It must, that is, transubstantiate into a force of thought with bodily engagement. “Meditation in Ruin” is addressing what I think has to happen at the very outset of such a practice, what lies *in front* of practice. In a sense, the text is asking about the a priori or basic conditions that permit us to speak of “the buddha subject,” a first cousin, perhaps, of Laruelle’s “stranger subject.” This subject is deeply allergic to representations—a condition that in itself must catalyze not only an approach to practice generally, but a quite particular practice. And yet, representation is a basic requirement of a life shared with others—of language, laughter, communication, symbolization, and so much more. How might we conceive today of a practice shorn of excess transcendental representation, a practice expelled, like Adam and Eve, from the idealists’ haven?³

3

This text once aspired to be an exercise, an *exercitia*. It desired to say something valuable, to be of help, to show a way. But those days have long passed. Its words have soiled themselves with doubt. Here is speech pitted with disenchantment. Its paragraphs are a squall of confusion, shame, and anxiety. I am afraid that what follows is delinquent in the niceties of persuasion. Simply put: *it is too late for arguments*. For, “can anyone who has reached the limit bother with arguments?” That is not to say that this text recoils from overreach and even bombast. Or that

it banks its wings away from the sun of beauty. It burns for beauty! But for the beauty of Hölderlin: *Does the laughter of people make me sad? Of course it does. After all, I have a human heart.* Stupidly, this text still pines for meaning, goodness, hope, and all of that. As you will find, though, it knows only the blackness of a faded dream and the memories of someone with the smell of death in his nose.⁴

4

By turns worrisome and ridiculous, words like that at least exude the ruination that I wish to unbind with this text. Think of that goal as emerging from a dialectic of excremental inversion. Dialectics posits the dynamism of knowledge—it's alive, it moves. To be effective, our thinking, our analyses, must thus *keep pace*. (Hence: "To understand analysis is to understand dialectics.") We will always have, first, our *abstraction*. And whether it is a chimera of reverie or the hardened certainty of *Weltanschauung*, our abstraction always lacks consummation with the lived. We come to this conclusion through real-world trial and error. That is to say, we will always have, next, our *negation*. And in the atmosphere of the Real the abstraction corrodes. Yet in this very decomposition, something remains. It falls. We pick it up. The analysis resumes. We perceive a *concrete*—some electric x that survives the passage from plenitude toward destitution. Short of disappearing into nothingness, this x falls with a thud into the lived Real. That alluring aroma drifting off the abstract (love, equality, wisdom, etc., etc.) as it falls, is its attrition, its cut, molecule by molecule into the fetid stench of the unadorned Real. *All things turn to shit*. But is not shit itself a precious, all-too-necessary *aide-mémoire* of our status as *Homo sapiens* ape?⁵

5

This text concerns an organon that places you at the threshold to analytic ruin. You may temporarily stave off the inevitable with any number of fantastic conceptual constructions. In this case, you turn back. Another possibility: You engage the analysis, but only to palliative ends, and fall short of ruin. Still another possibility: You do not flinch from the very fact that drove you back into the warm lap of consolation. This fact is central to ruin. This fact is inexorable and inevitable. It is rendered doubtful only by virtue of the darkest human ignorance or through an act of a gargantuan will to deny. If the history of the world is any indication, this fact is portentously hideous. If the history of our cultural institutions, of

our language, of our very biology is any indication, no greater menace threatens humanity. The fact: dissolution—the vaporous effervescence haunting existence, the genetrix of *Homo narcissicus*’ bastard bugbear, *nihil*. Not flinching before the presence of dissolution, you cross the threshold to ruin and don’t turn back.

6

Dissolution is self-evident. It obtains immediately in every instance of perception, conception, and sensation. Over greater spans of time, say a lifetime, it is made evident through comparison and memory. Science traces it over eons, before the advent of human beings. Science traces it, too, into oblivion, when “the accelerating expansion of the universe will have disintegrated the fabric of matter itself, terminating the possibility of embodiment,” when “every star in the universe will have burnt out, plunging the cosmos into a state of absolute darkness and leaving behind nothing but spent husks of collapsed matter.” Dissolution is instantaneous and continuous. It is to extinction what a molecule is to mass, argon to vapor. Extinction describes more than the absolute cessation of objects and entities: it describes the condition that negates even the possibility of their being further extinguished. Extinction is patient: it waits for the final instance. Its purview is immense and vast. It sees its object after millions and millions of years. Dissolution occurs in the midst of things—in the salience of their rising, persisting, and fading away. Its view is minute and narrow. It sees its object in an instant of intimate if destructive embrace. Yet, being instantaneous and continuous, dissolution is not extinguished. Although a concept itself, dissolution is one that hovers near the fact it names, rendering it intelligible. Dissolution as concept lends lucidity to what, without it, remains a dark, foreign, and harrowing domain. The concept dissolution makes possible the thinking of the fact of dissolution. Yet, thinking is mere thinking. The facts of human being seem to necessitate no constraint to human thinking. Thinking is often contentedly at odds with phenomenality. Intelligibility and lucidity, by contrast, though characteristics of thinking, suggest thought wading into the surging sea of immanence.⁶

7

We can view it in the register of thought itself, for “What is at all familiar and cognitively understood is not really understood for the very reason that it is familiar. The most common form of self-deception and deception of others is to presuppose

something as familiar and then to drop the subject. Such knowledge, with all of its back and forth chitchat, never gets anywhere, without ever knowing why.” We do know why, of course. Thought seeks the consolations of familiar certainties, even if they are mere positive abstractions, and thus refuses to “linger, to “tarry” with the infinite negativity that constitutes both the subject and his conceptions. Such tarrying is experienced as death—ideological, subjective, and always with premonitions of the impending actual. “Death ... is the most terrifying thing of all, and to hold fast to what is dead requires the greatest strength. Powerless beauty hates the understanding because the understanding expects of her what she cannot do. However, the life of wakefulness is not a life that flinches from death and saves itself from ruin; rather, it bears death, and in death, it sustains itself.” That life, the life of wakefulness, is not found in the refuge of our abstract positives. It is found only in “absolute disruption” that is this lingering, this tarrying in the negative. “This lingering is the magical power that converts it into being ... The activity of dissolution/analysis is the force and labor of the *understanding*, the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute power.”⁷

8

Is there an organon of dissolution? I believe that there is. But unlike the inflated flights of fancy roused by the ghostly shades of familiar representations (abstractions), the organon entails relentless deflation. The voiding of imaginary plenitude requires unflinching commitment to the banalities of immanence. The organon is thus rooted in our shared sensorial embodiment. Even thinking appears, in its midst, as physicality—as materially immanent fact itself. The organon is the laying-bare of phenomenal display, along with the display’s ideological matrix. The organon is to consciousness what skin is to the body: organic interface, exposure to, and coalescence with environment. Like skin, it is a tool, a means of apprehension, an organ. It is the laying bare of body to body in and of itself, of sensation to sensation in and of itself, of thought to thought in and of itself, of each to the other, of each to the whole, and of the whole to environment. This organon, like skin, is rooted in the surface of things.

9

The organon consists of two modes: the anthropotechnic per se and the conceptual calculus. What is this figure, the calculus of the organon? I am

using “calculus” in three distinct but related senses. A calculus purports to model change. It is concerned both with the tangent or trajectory of continuous instantaneous change and the area or space that ensues, even if only momentarily, from that change. As such, a calculus is concerned with the quantification of real-world limits. Newton’s use of the calculus allowed a mathematical description of physical phenomena. The calculus of the organon allows for a conceptually deflated, qualitative, description of a noncomponent of the nonphysical world: dissolution. What the calculus describes is precisely a “noncomponent” and is “nonphysical” because “it,” unlike the persevering bodies described by physicists, names those continuous instantaneous instants when physicality is dissolved. Dissolution—the phenomenon tracked by the calculus of the organon—is a nonexistent proxy for what *was* but *is* no longer. Glowing like phosphorescence where the “no-longer” had just been, dissolution is evanescent but immanently real. Another meaning of “calculus” is in play here. This sense is derived from the original Latin present active infinitive *calculāre*, “to account, to reckon.” It is surely clear that the calculus results in a perspicuous account and reckoning of a profoundly consequential feature of human existence. The clarity of this reckoning puts in play the third sense of “calculus.” A *calx* (of which *calculus* is the diminutive) was the pebble used for actual accounting. From this usage is derived the connotation of a hard lump produced by the concretion of minerals. Kidney stones are an example. Tartar and plaque are other examples. A calculus thus names an infinitesimally minute quantity of matter that has aggregated and hardened into a quantifiable lump. Such calculi are found in the body’s hollow organs and ducts. They are generally painful. The calculus of the organon is similarly jarring. It is unflinching, precise, and unequivocal. Most crucially, it is conspicuous, manifest, and verifiable. The logic of the calculus is unsparing.

10

What is this figure, the anthropotechnic of the organon? Merely taking seriously the conceptual calculus renders transparent the *imaginaires*, the salvific big Others, that we so craftily conjure—with the complicity of “the others”—out of our suffering and desire. How much more damage is done by pushing the calculus to its limit. Doing so shatters the accord that the *imaginaire* presumes to sustain, inducing quite literally chronic, incurable *disenchantment*. Application of the calculus, to any degree, renders childlike all of what is paraded before us as

idealist “spirituality” and religion. Still, subjectivity, identity, *habitus*, ideology, etc., being as inevitable as they are indispensable as features of human formation (“man produces man”), we have to ask: is not *practice*, is not a training regimen, unavoidable? “Wherever one encounters human beings, they are embedded in achievement fields and status classes.” It becomes a question, then, of whether to settle content within one’s given field and class, losing sight of the very fact of *habitus*, or to exert oneself, like Nietzsche’s acrobat, in continuous horizontal “self-forming and self-enhancing behavior.” Recognizing “the immunitary constitution of human being”—this is Sloterdijk’s *Homo immunilogicus*—we can no longer ignore the fact that we live in “symbolic immune systems and ritual shells.” Our *imaginaires*, that is to say, are erected as refuges against biological, psychological, and social contingency. This is why, as Rilke noticed, “*The creature gazes into the open with all its eyes.*” Not settling content with the merely received, with the accidents of our personal history, we seek a new sublime. And so, to that end, we employ an anthropotechnic of verticality—of upward overcoming, of self-mastery, of tension from *above*. I call it sublime because it is, of course, impossible to realize. The vertical line is tethered to nothing. It is suspended in a void. Its peak is unattainable. And yet: “*don’t give up on your desire!*” For, *jouissance*, the enlivening surge that spews forth from the erotic embrace of pain and desire satisfies to the very extent that it wounds. Even if such consummation of the sublime were possible, we are far from cause for jubilation. The sublime, recall, is monstrous. “The sublime moves us ... The expression of a person in full thrall of the sublime is serious, at times fixed and amazed ... The sublime is at times accompanied by some horror or melancholy, sometimes merely by tranquil admiration, and sometimes by the beauty of a sublime vista. The first I want to call the terrible sublime, the second the noble, and the third the magnificent. Deep loneliness is sublime, but in a terrifying way.” And yet we lace our boots, and set out for Mount Impossible.

11

Let us first consider some consequences of the organon’s calculus for an anthropotechnic. If, for instance, the calculus models the trajectory of dissolution, if it reveals that everything is always and perpetually dissolving-dissolved (instantaneously from the side of subjective apprehension, glacially from the side of objects themselves), are not certain possibilities that we so dearly hold to be woven into the very fabric of human existence obviated, or

at least disastrously impeded? Employing the calculus in good faith implies a willingness to replace belief with knowledge; it implies a will to know. What if this will to know, to paraphrase Ray Brassier, is driven by the traumatic reality of dissolution itself? Can the organon of the traumatic reality of dissolution “become equal to the trauma ... whose trace it bears”? Brassier, whose concern is the relation between philosophy, which he insists is the very “organon of extinction” since extinction is the very condition of life that makes thought (of which philosophy is a concerted instance) possible, and the fact of extinction, concludes that philosophy does become equal to the trauma that it traces; and, in so doing, “achieves a binding of extinction, through which the will to know is finally rendered commensurate with the in-itself.” I likewise suggest that our organon binds with dissolution, rendering the practitioner’s knowledge commensurate with dissolution itself. The organon is the instrument, the knowledge, of ruin. The calculus is the model of what we come to apprehend (the “in-itself”).⁸

12

What do we come to know? Can we allow for a moment that “Eros alone can fulfill life; knowledge, never ... knowledge is empty infinity”? Here, our knowledge concerns recognition and attraction; it concerns unison, carnality, and consummation. (“Adam knew Eve, his wife; and she conceived.”) Knowledge of what? Can we not permit—indeed, as decisive—into the sphere of our thinking “this thought in its most terrible form: existence as it is without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale, into nothingness”? Those readers who balk might prefer to place a statement like this within the circle of affirmation that so aggressively rings our Western culture of “wellbeing.” Affirmationism: the transubstantiation of even the basest, darkest, most realistic conceptions of human life into nodes of creativity, novelty, progress, and goodness. Affirmationism insists: celebrate! Even Nietzsche felt such a need: “We have created the weightiest thought—now let us create the being for whom it is light and pleasing!” Stepping outside of this intoxicating circle, we hear the stammering voices of the ruined: “What would be my—how should I call it—spontaneous attitude towards the universe? It’s a very dark one ... There is nothing, basically. I mean it quite literally. Like, ultimately there are just some fragments, some vanishing things. If you look at the universe, it’s one big void. Ultimately, there are just ... some vanishing things.” The buddha: she whose

gnosis frightens even Mara. The ruined: he who has come to terms. “To the eyes that have dwelt on [dissolution], there is no thorough repair.”⁹

13

Come to terms with what? Let’s try this out. Come to terms:

- With the human subject as the night of the world: “The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity—an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none belongs to him—or which are not present.”
- With the fact that our loveliest ideologies, *unending riches of representations* as they are, are at odds with the spirit that haunts this night.
- That our conceptual riches toil to hold reality together as a unified whole, as an integrated totality, yet everywhere the fragmentary, contingent shrapnel of reality gashes our scalp.
- That the incantatory *vibrato* plucking the soul’s heartstrings struggles to stave off of the traumatizing threats of the looming Real.
- That the soul’s symphonies are trembling, unrhythmic, and fitful to the very extent that they are emotionally virtuosic.
- That we, the in-human, hear, and, with gnostic exhaustion, move forward in the dark.¹⁰

14

The components of the calculus name the contours of coming-to-terms. We take as our material ruins of the buddhist Real, cloned fragments of the barred One-in-One. Already, I feel that we are frolicking in the eternal sporting fields of our happy religions, spiritualities, and even humanist secularizations. So, to give yourself a chance, remember—*remember!*—to recast these ruins as decimated (transcendentally minimalized) first names. This *remember!* is the buddha’s practice. Hereby posited as immanent materials, these ruined clones become fit for the in-human subject: *disenchantment, ancestral anamnesis, vanishing, phenomenal identity, nihilism, thinking, contingency, world, surface, lucidity, extinction*. The genealogy of the x-buddhist progenitor articulates this most

exigent human knowledge thus: *nibbida*, *sati*, *anicca*, *anattā*, *suññatā*, *papañca*, *paticcasamuppāda*, *loka*, *sabba*, *paññā*, *nirvāṇa*. I honor this genealogy of ruin. Such honor entails, initially, approbation; then, annihilation; and finally, annexation or appropriation.

15

Approbation: We find value in the concepts. They possess a *vibrato* that purrs so purely. Annihilation: Yet, we hear a clanking ruiction alongside the whirring *vibrato*. That sound is a magisterial big Other forcefully wrenching the heartstrings of the yearning soul. So, as Laruelle says of the world-splitting specular pretensions of philosophical difference, “we must invalidate [the concepts] in one blow and without remainder. We must presuppose every conceptual term to be already divested of all power.” Appropriation: In this way, we will make use of the material, annexing it to the always, and already, in-human.¹¹

16

The annihilated-annexed concepts, decimated via transcendental molting, are rendered, simply, first names: “Fundamental terms which symbolize the Real and its modes according to its radical immanence or its identity.” “The Real” we take as an axiomatized function. Let’s think of it as the *for-real!* Or the *get-real!* We all know the effects of the Real, or should. The effects are those of the “sheer lived.” The Real does not concern atoms—it is not matter. It is not an empirical plane. It is not given to phenomenological analysis. It can be symbolized and conceptualized interminably—just consider the infinity of human ideologies, those peculiar mixtures of facticity and fiction. The Real can be symbolized because it constitutes the sine qua non condition for thought. And it is constituted unilaterally, from its side only, given without being given by thinking or theory, closed to the longing phantasms of the human *imaginaire*. It can be symbolized; but it cannot be adequately represented. Though exiled due to the Real’s undying indifference, there might be some strangers among us, some who hew closely to the Real’s mute and dumb effect. The stranger, “the identity of the Real is non-reflected, lived, experienced, consumed while remaining in itself without the need to alienate itself through representation.” If an adequate (non)relation to

the Real is not the point, then we are wasting our time. Or, in another register, what if the negation were the core? To show the kind of the labor that might be required, I provide an example from the beginning of the non-buddhist dispensation.¹²

17

Disenchantment. The x-buddhist term is juiced up with the value of an ancient ascetic religious regimen: *nibbida*: revulsion, aversion, disgust. Disenchantment solemnly declares: through insight born of extensive contemplation, the mature practitioner comes to see the unsatisfactory nature of the “aggregates,” the porous self-structure that conditions individual subjective experience. So seeing, he becomes disgusted, turns away from the contents of sensory data, and achieves an apocalyptic peace, a peace outside of time and place. Disgust: the ferry of *homo religiosus*, crossing the lake of fire to the silver shore. Disgust is the vehicle to numerous spiritual way stations: degradation of the flesh; valorization of sexual abstinence; hostility toward food; deprivation of desire; antipathy toward pleasure; suspicion toward noncompliers. Catherine of Genoa claims eternal satiety in the presence of the Lord, yet licks her plate like a feral bitch. Today, too, the Young Girl, regardless of gender or age, “struck by sudden vertigo whenever the world stops revolving around her,” wills on her mystical prepubescent body the holy stigmata—self-mutilation, emaciation, protection and devotion tattooed into the flesh. It is a quest for purity and perfection. Disgust caws “withdraw and shrivel!” The non-buddhist first name quells this ascetic siren call. We hear instead the in-human a priori of disenchantment. To the buddha subject, disenchantment is *prima causa*. It beckons “enough already!” It is the base disposition that prepares the cognitive and affective apparatuses for the unflinching, “trained ruthlessness in viewing the realities of life.” Disenchantment is born of an irrefutable discovery: the fact that no system of thought and no single person, not even a phantasmagoric protagonist-as-thaumaturge, can identify an ultimate refuge. It entails banishment from the sunny climes of the human affirmation-agreement system, being, as that system is, “incompatible with the reality of the organs.” Disenchantment catalyzes aversion toward the World. It is disgust, it is aversion, but disgust and aversion cauterized by compassion. Compassion itself is the unavoidable outpouring of a buddha’s gnosis. Think of the painful, disillusioning, disenchanting compassion of the Wizard of Oz. *Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain! What*

you are seeking already lies within you! Here, the German word *Entzauberung* illuminates. The atmosphere is crackling with the perilous promise of a thaumaturge. Oz is a priestly healer, the one who is *supposed to know*, and so who employs, to conjure his cure, the enchanting spectacle of high ritual pageantry. And then, all of a sudden, as if utterly deflated by his clownish bombast, Oz skulks from behind the curtain, and hunches before Dorothy's retinue as plain and simple as the overalled farmer in "American Gothic." Oz's act is one of *Enlightened Entzauberung*: demagicfication, despellification, disconjuartion, disenchantment. Indeed, *there is no place like home*. There is no place like home. Disenchantment augurs passage.¹³