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Malicious Objects,
Anger Management, and the
Question of Modern Literature

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Introduction

How (Not) to Do Things with Doors

----- Shut the door. -----

—LAURENCE STERNE, *Tristram Shandy*

FROM RECALCITRANCE TO MALICE

This study focuses on the obstinate obtrusiveness of what Martin Heidegger calls *Zeug*, a recalcitrant term that so thoroughly defies translation that only colloquial terms give some handle on what Heidegger is after. Often translated by “equipment,” the term is probably better understood as the underlying stuff of everyday life,¹ the tools and equipment that are at one’s disposal. Malicious objects refuse to disappear into their automatic, unconscious functionality and instead remain stubbornly conspicuous. Endowed with agency, these cunning and perfidious intruders into the lifeworld of the subject seem to actively interrupt his or her intentions, unleashing anger and rage against the object. The malicious object in any case is something the subject experiences as recalcitrant, obtrusive, and vexing. The very possibility of this experience is one of the constitutive features of experience in general: the possibility, that is, that the object will not simply be thrown out there, as the term *ob-ject* suggests, but will, instead, be thrust into the sphere of activity that is most fully the subject’s own, the place where the subject feels most fully its sovereignty. And the realization of the experience in question, this study argues, gives direction to some of the most probing texts of literary modernity.

By focusing on the minute details of everyday human life, as they are reflected in the literary texts under consideration, this study argues for a reevaluation of the seemingly irrational, that is, affective, qualities of

things. Why does the encounter with recalcitrant objects trigger such violent emotions as anger and rage? How is it possible to get angry at a tool, curse an instrument, or smash an object in rage? And what does this anger say, in general, about the affective character of the modern individual, who may have secured a certain freedom from social or political constraints but is then—ironically or pathetically—bound to the very objects that are the sign and seal of this freedom?

The object's recalcitrance, which resists the subject's intentions and calls into question the very idea of subjecthood, brings out the subject's anger, exposing a precarious junction of literature, epistemology, psychology, and ethics. This study concentrates on texts by four authors from the eighteenth through the twentieth century: Laurence Sterne, Jean Paul, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, and Heimito von Doderer. Despite their engagement with the philosophical and scientific thought of their respective times—ranging from Locke and Hume through Kant and Hegel to Freud and Heidegger—each of these writers represents a type of *literary knowledge* of the object in question,² an object that stubbornly resists integration into a discursive, systematic order. Thinking about malicious objects as a specific *poetics of knowledge* not only problematizes the relationship between the animate and the inanimate but undercuts clear divisions between different categories of discourse, so that fiction and science, literature, and philosophy meld into each other.³ The advantage of literature—or, more exactly, certain exemplary forms of literary representation—lies in its positive acceptance of a situation in which the distinctions between categories of discourse, like the difference between subject and object, tend either to disappear or to be reordered in an unfamiliar, disturbing, and often comical manner. In this sense, all of the novels discussed, insofar as they not only describe but also perform the object's malice on the formal level through digressive and fragmented narration, mixtures of different genres, or explorations of the visual characteristics of writing, could be described as *malicious literature*, the basic characteristics of which this study seeks to capture even as it acknowledges from the beginning that this literature conforms to the character of the object under investigation. In resisting an immediate, straightforward understanding, this form of writing produces frustrations and irritations for the reader that resemble those of encountering tools, instruments, and everyday objects that block, thwart, and upset the human subject's intentions. These tendencies culminate in Heimito von Doderer's "Short Preface to a Literary Conversation"

(Kleine Vorbemerkung zu einer literarischen Unterhaltung), in which he defines his writings as irritants: “Here the only aim is to present a basic foundation, made up of irritants and stimulants, i.e., medicines, irritants in the sense of to anger, to annoy.”⁴

CLOSING DOORS, OPENING THE OBJECT TO ITS HISTORY

In the reflection “Do Not Knock,” part of *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, Theodor W. Adorno discusses technology’s influence on human gestures and the impossibility of establishing a world of human interactions that would not be affected by the “demands of objects.” The example Adorno chooses is modern humanity’s inability to close doors properly:

Technology is making gestures precise and brutal and with them men. It expels from movements all hesitation, deliberation, civility. It subjects them to the implacable, as it were a-historical demands of objects. Thus the ability is lost, for example, to close a door quietly and discreetly, yet firmly. Those of cars and refrigerators have to be slammed, others have the tendency to snap shut by themselves, imposing on those entering the manners of not looking behind them, not shielding the house which receives them. The new human type cannot be properly understood without awareness of what he is continuously exposed to from the world of things around him, even in his most secret innervations.⁵

The inability to close a door properly shows the objectification of the subject in advanced capitalist society. Equipment does not facilitate and improve life but imposes limitations and restrictions. Hence the relationship between subjects and objects as well as the relationship between subjects is, in Adorno’s view, reduced to one of “mere operation,” equaling a loss of freedom. In modernity, according to Adorno, the “law of pure functionality” governs things as well as human beings.⁶ The inability to close doors deliberately is a symptom of the loss of a specific type of experience: a door snapping shut “precisely expresses the objectification of the subject, the reality of reification.”⁷ At the heart of Adorno’s brief reflection—and of the ensuing study—is the dismantling of the notion that objects such as doors are ahistorical because they are simply at the mercy of whosoever chooses to use them. The point is not, then, to develop a history of the object but to see the precise place where a door is opened to its historicity. One name for this door is *annoyance*.

Another is what Bruno Latour calls *object agency*.⁸ His essay “Where Are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts,” while attentive to the tradition of critical theory that culminates in Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*, attempts to delineate a history of things and their relation to humans that does not simply mourn the loss of the thing in processes of objectification, reification, and commodification; instead, it emphasizes those instances in which the thing returns as something grander than any mere thing, a thing that is forever unruly, resisting its domination and domestication, preventing what Adorno calls the “realization of peace” among subjects,⁹ which depends on a prior and often only implicit peace between subjects and the objects that they deploy without further reflection.

Latour introduces the notion of the recalcitrant object in his theory of the distribution of agency between subjects and objects, living human beings and inanimate things. Like Adorno, he argues for a conception of subject-object relations that would, in Adorno’s words, “neither [be] the undistinguished unity of subject and object nor their antithetical hostility.”¹⁰ It is perhaps no accident that Latour also uses the example of a door to explicate the stakes of his theory: “On a freezing day in February, posted on the door of La Halle aux Cuirs at La Villette . . . , could be seen a small handwritten notice: ‘The Groom is On Strike, For God’s Sake, Keep The Door Closed (‘groom’ is the Frenglish for an automated door-closer or butler).”¹¹ For Latour, the automated door is an example of a technological setup characterized by a “*distribution of competences* between humans and nonhumans” that does not discriminate between either side.¹² The act of opening and closing the door has been delegated from a human being, a real groom or butler, to a nonhuman, technological actor. As long as this network of relations between human and nonhuman actors functions without interruption, it can be described as “the technologist’s dream of efficient action.”¹³ But it becomes visible when the electric door malfunctions and won’t open and close properly, when equipment shows its “recalcitrance” and appears as a “disturbing object” or as a “troublemaker,” to use Latour’s terms.

For Martin Heidegger, whose late notion of the thing as “gathering” informs Latour’s actor-network theory, even as it exasperates Adorno, using a door properly exemplifies “the way in which everyday Dasein always *is*: when I open the door, I use the latch.”¹⁴ As long as the door, as “an item of equipment,” functions, it does not appear thematically; it is “ready-to-hand.”¹⁵ In the famous sixteenth

chapter of *Being and Time*, entitled “How the Worldly Character of the Environment Announces Itself in Entities within-the-World,” Heidegger examines how equipment discloses itself. The “non-thematic circumspective absorption in references or assignments constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment” appears “*when an assignment has been disturbed*—when something is unusable for some purpose—then the assignment becomes explicit.”¹⁶ The assignment of a thing to serve a certain purpose is disrupted when it shows recalcitrance. It “loses its readiness-to-hand” and announces itself as an object per se.¹⁷ This announcement of unusability takes place in the modes of “conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy” (*Auffälligkeit, Aufdringlichkeit, Aufsässigkeit*).¹⁸ Heidegger’s vocabulary seems to denote, not just resistance or recalcitrance, but almost an antagonistic intention by the failing or missing equipment. Obtrusive objects represent obstacles to *Dasein*, triggering not theoretical reflection but “circumspection of the dealings in which we use” them.¹⁹ This circumspection is highly ambivalent: on the one hand, it is the precondition of thinking the phenomenon under consideration as the very phenomenon it is; on the other, it tends in the direction of the theoretical attitude, which, in attempting to grasp the thing in itself, misses its own comportment and thus confuses the recalcitrance of the object for the obduracy of the world.

Heidegger’s peculiar use of the word *Aufsässigkeit* points to Friedrich Theodor Vischer’s by now proverbial phrase “die Tücke des Objekts.” Vischer introduced this expression to illustrate the anthropomorphic projections taking place when humans ascribe agency to inanimate objects at moments when they appear as conspicuous, obtrusive, and obstinate. As Grimm’s *Wörterbuch* points out, the noun *Tücke*, which can be translated as “malice” or “perniciousness,” is derived from an act of personification when used for inanimate objects: “*Malice* denotes the harmful behavior of various types of things, which the subject therefore experiences as malevolent. Originally based on a type of personification that is barely conscious anymore, *malice* [Tücke] maintains the meaning of lurking, ambushing mischief, ruin, bad luck, danger.”²⁰

In contrast to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s dismissal of the phrase “die Tücke des Objekts” as a “stupid anthropomorphism,” this study examines the philosophico-historical condition in which objects acquire agency and subjects engage in ever more “stupid” forms of personification and anthropomorphism in response.²¹ According to Latour,

anthropomorphism must be understood not as a sign of a primitive animism or as mere psychological projection but as a moment of translation that renders precarious the boundary between what is considered animate and inanimate. This study pursues Latour's work by asking: What projections—that is, “fictions invested with affect” (Freud)—translations, and rhetorical transfigurations in an assembly of animate and inanimate agents are necessary to ascribe malice to an object?²²

Equipment, appearing not only on the uncontrollable periphery but at the center of the human being's *Lebenswelt*, not only facilitates life but also adds another dimension of possible failures and disturbances. Therefore, the rise of technology and instrumental reason, cultivating the cause of enlightenment and rationality, also creates new mythologies. The disenchantment of everyday life goes hand in hand with its constant reenchantment. From this perspective, technology is neither a manifestation of a utopian promise nor an antagonistic force undermining any true human sociability. Latour condenses this insight and its implicit rejection of traditional histories of modernity into the statement that furnishes the title for one of his books, “We have never been modern.” “Our world,” writes Latour, “ceased to be modern when we replaced all essences with the mediators, delegates and translators that gave them meaning. . . . It has taken on an ancient aspect, with all those delegates, angels and lieutenants.”²³ The interaction between human beings and the contingencies of their environment needs acts of mediation, translation, and projection. On the basis of rhetorical modes of anthropomorphism and personification that ascribe agency, equipment appears to be possessed by vital forces responsible for its malice. The modern subject dealing with the disturbances of technology resembles a primitive, believing in spirits, demons, and other mediating agents between the realm of the physical and the metaphysical.

MANAGING ANGER, CARING FOR ONESELF

Already in Greek antiquity, a malfunctioning door could ignite a sudden emotional outburst. In *The Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul's Passions*, the Greek physician Galen of Pergamon remembers his youth and his training in anger control: “When I was still a youth and pursuing this training,” he writes, “I watched a man eagerly trying to open a door. When things did not work out as he would have them,

I saw him bite the key, kick the door, blaspheme, glare wildly like a madman, and all but foam at the mouth like a wild boar.”²⁴ In ancient Greece and in contemporary Paris, a dysfunctional door leads to sudden fits of rage. The everyday routines of human beings—from Galen’s childhood to the unknown person pinning his plea “The Groom is On Strike, For God’s Sake, Keep The Door Closed” onto the electric door—are being disrupted. For Galen, this episode leads to a moral reflection on the inappropriateness of anger: “When I saw this, I conceived such a hatred for anger that I was never thereafter seen behaving in an unseemly manner because of it.”²⁵ Latour, on the other hand, uses the “description of a door” (the electric door with the nonfunctioning groom) to discuss the relation of subject and object in epistemological terms as an example of the delegation of actions to nonhuman actors in modern everyday life.²⁶ This study attempts to bring the epistemological and the ethical discourse represented by Latour and Galen into conversation. All authors discussed in this study ask, not only *What is a thing?*, but also *How can one live with a thing?*

Jacques Lacan introduces the psychology of affects in relation to the breakdown of an artifact that produces anger in the moment of the “failure of an expected correlation between a symbolic order and the response of the real.”²⁷ Negotiating the precarious relations between the realms of the symbolic and the real is the task not only of psychology but also of ethics. It is no coincidence that Lacan’s brief reflections on anger can be found in a seminar entitled *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Discussing Heidegger’s notion of “das Ding,” Lacan claims that anger is “essentially linked to something expressed in a formulation of Charles Péguy’s— . . . It’s when the little pegs refuse to go into the little holes.”²⁸ To live the good life in a world of recalcitrant objects requires specific “technologies of the self” to cope with disruptions and the passions they arouse. Michel Foucault defines “technologies of the self” as practices and techniques that “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”²⁹ In view of the “little pegs”—whatever their symbolic or semiotic valence may be—otherwise uncoordinated theoretical inquiries find a common object: whatever resists the subject can be considered the object of theoretical study par excellence, the

object to which every theoretical inquiry must attend, even if only in the form of a passing glance of recognition.

Laurence Sterne's depiction of the Shandy household in *Tristram Shandy*, as analyzed in the first chapter of this study, marks the historical starting point for an analysis of different forms of anger management, understood as "technologies of the self," in a world of recalcitrant objects. The exponential increase of objects in bourgeois households of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries amplifies the chance of accidents as well as the opportunities to encounter malicious objects.³⁰ The more tools, instruments, and gadgets populate the domestic sphere, the more likely it is that life in the bourgeois household will suffer from the possible breakdown and malfunction of these different pieces of equipment. Not just large natural catastrophes like the Lisbon earthquake from 1755—which established the context for Voltaire's *Candide* and set the young Kant into a turbulence of activity that eventually gave rise to the *Critiques*—but the small incidents and confrontations of everyday life, abetted by a certain Humean-inflected skepticism, lead Sterne to a reevaluation of traditional concepts of morality, as anchored in the idea of divine duty, where every adversity can be understood as a divinely sanctioned trial of faith. Learning to live in an environment of accidents, mishaps, and calamities requires a new form of moral management.

For *Tristram*, Walter, Uncle Toby, and Dr. Slop the question of what is an accident cannot be separated from the question of how human beings deal with the painful, enraging effects of these disturbances of everyday life. Roy Porter characterizes the world of *Tristram Shandy* as one "where, in anthropomorphic parody of human disasters, window sashes lack counter-weights, knives sever thumbs not string, parlour doors creak on their hinges, medical bags, mimicking their owners, get tied up fast in knots."³¹ To live in this recalcitrant environment means being exposed to the contingencies of falling, cutting, and piercing objects. For Sterne, the small world of Shandy Hall represents the paradigmatic site to stage the emotional effects of contingency on the *Lebenswelt* of the individual. Hence the novel presents an ever-expanding range of methods to deal with these afflictions in order to remain in an emotional equilibrium. The novel's characters display a wide array of strategies—from Stoic programs of self-control, to ritualized curses of the object, to the venting of anger through whistles—in coping with the accidents of everyday life in England at the beginning of the industrial age. In this context,

this study undertakes an analysis of the novel with these questions in mind: What “therapies of desire” can be used to make living bearable while one is exposed to the demands of objects? How, in general, can one live the good life in a house of recalcitrant objects?³²

During the eighteenth century, moral management as a type of psychotherapy began to differentiate itself from the Galenic model of bodily humors as well as from purely mechanical models in the tradition of Descartes and la Mettrie.³³ Instead it perceived the human as defined by an interaction between mental and physical processes. It looked at the patient from the standpoint of an “anthropological physician,” who treats the *whole* human being.³⁴ Consequently, psychiatric treatment began to take into account the various interactions between body and mind, the physiological and the psychological. Treating a mentally disturbed person, for example, therefore involved the utilization of imagination. Michel Foucault, in *Madness and Society*, calls this method “theatrical representation”: “Insofar as it is of the essence of the image to be taken for reality, it is reciprocally characteristic of reality that it can mime the image, pretend to the same substance, the same significance. . . . If illusion can appear as true as perception, perception in its turn can become the visible, unchallengeable truth of illusion. Such is the first step of the cure by ‘theatrical representation’: to integrate the unreality of the image into perceived truth, without the latter seeming to contradict or even contest the former.”³⁵ In the realm of the imaginary the subject can create different strategies of self-control, self-governance, and self-regulation. Both anger and its management function according to the same principles as theatrical performances on stage. The irrationality of excessive passions is not simply extirpated from the human psyche; it is performed and enhanced, creating new images that are supposed to heal the rift between the real and the imaginary.

THE ETHICAL DIMENSION OF HUMOR

Why do we—and this is especially true of the German reception of Sterne³⁶—laugh at Walter Shandy? Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries *Tristram Shandy* presented a crucial model for various theories of the aesthetic in general and the comic in particular. This study not only explores Sterne’s influence on Jean Paul, which by now is commonly accepted,³⁷ but traces a tradition of humorous representations of malicious objects in literature from Sterne, to Jean

Paul, Vischer, and, finally, Doderer.³⁸ All of these authors not only give lucid and highly comical accounts of malicious objects but also depict the failure of various types of anger management. The reader laughs at the subject's desperate and eventually failed attempts to bridge the gap between the symbolic and real. Hence what is being perceived as comical is irreducible to the mere malfunction of equipment. Laughter—as well as anger—is the result of specific forms of projections, namely anthropomorphisms and personifications that allow the object or technical device to display malice and obstinacy.

One of the main sources of Sterne's humor consists in its repeated demonstration of the impossibility of applying abstract, scholarly knowledge of Stoic anger control to the concrete situation of the bourgeois household. Sterne quotes the philosopher, poet, and cleric John Norris, who, in *Practical Discourses upon Several Divine Subjects*, elaborates on the Stoic doctrine of the difference between inflictions that can be changed by the subject and inflictions that cannot. It is man's "inconsistent soul," according to Norris, that adds to the miseries of life. Sterne writes: "Inconsistent soul that man is!—languishing under wounds, which he has the power to heal!—his whole life a contradiction to his knowledge!—his reason, that precious gift of God to him—(instead of pouring in oyl) serving but to sharpen his sensibilities,—to multiply his pains and render him more melancholy and uneasy under them!—poor unhappy creature, that he should do so!"³⁹ Reason and knowledge stand in stark contrast to the urgencies of everyday life. Reason increases the vexations of everyday life instead of offering methods to alleviate them: the "sharper the sensibilities" of the subject, the greater the pain. The second chapter of this study discusses several literary as well as theoretical works of the German writer Jean Paul, who not only describes in minute detail the variety of interruptions and afflictions that anger the protagonist of his novel *Siebenkäs* but also considers the pleasures as well as the pains of anticipation.⁴⁰ What disturbs the writer *Siebenkäs* is not so much the actual noises of his wife working alongside him within the cramped confines of a petit bourgeois household but his own imagination anxiously reflecting back upon the last interruption and eagerly anticipating the next. As is the case for Laurence Sterne, man is an "unhappy creature" not only because of external pressures but even more because of a heightened form of attentiveness, a sharpening of reason that cannot be integrated into a practical ethics. Despite his intentions to oil the bad hinges, Walter Shandy cannot enjoy his

sleep because he constantly anticipates being awakened by the creaking door:

But the thing was morally speaking so very impracticable, that for the many years in which this hinge was suffered to be out of order, and amongst the hourly grievances my father submitted upon its account,—this was one; that he never folded his arms to take his nap after dinner, but the thoughts of being unavoidably awakened by the first person who should open the door, was always uppermost in his imagination, and so incessantly step'd in betwixt him and the first balmy presage of his repose, as to rob him, as he often declared, of the whole sweets of it.⁴¹

What is more vexing than the actual disturbances are thoughts of a disturbance, or what Norris calls “Phantastick and Imaginary Goods.” Famously, the novel *Tristram Shandy* begins with a motto from Epictetus’s *Enchiridion*: “We are tormented with the opinions we have of things, and not by the things themselves.”⁴² Again, as in the case of *Siebenkäs*, opinions, imagination, and fantasy introduce moments of interruption, misery, and sorrow instead of providing relief. Laurence Sterne and Jean Paul deconstruct the belief in a harmonious accord between humans and things, subjects and objects, nature and culture, based on art or philosophy: “There was not a subject in the world upon which my father was so eloquent, as upon that of door-hinges—And yet at the same time, he was certainly one of the greatest bubbles to them, I think, that history can produce: his rhetoric and conduct were at perpetual handy-cuffs.—Never did the parlour-door open—but his philosophy or his principles fell a victim to it;—three drops of oyl with a feather, and a smart stroke of a hammer, had saved his honour for ever.”⁴³ Neither philosophy nor rhetoric nor scholarly knowledge guarantees an undisturbed handling of the door. They are impractical, exposing a rift between theory and practice, knowledge and conduct, the symbolic and the real. None of Walter Shandy’s seemingly endless discourses can replace the simple application of “three drops of oyl.”

Ridiculous figures like the failing writer Siebenkäs in *Siebenkäs*, the prison chaplain Süptitz in *The Comet*, and the bailiff Freudel in *The Libel of Bailiff Josuah Freudel against His Accursed Demons (Des Amts-Vogts Josuah Freudel Klaglibell gegen seinen verfluchten Dämon)* exemplify, in a similar way to *Tristram Shandy*, how difficult it is for the modern subject to exist happily in a world populated by objects interfering with his intentions. Life, for Jean Paul’s tragicomic

heroes, is a constant struggle to establish an idyllic space of happiness. In this context, humor functions as one mode of reducing contingency. Laughing at the world enables human beings to distance themselves from the persistent, uncontrollable intrusions of reality. Humor allows them to turn quotidian annoyances into sources of pleasure by applying Epictetus's doctrine of treating life as if it were a play. In an addendum to *Life of Quintus Fixlein* entitled "On the Natural Magic of Imagination," Jean Paul offers a rewriting of the Stoic doctrines of ataraxia and eudaimonia, introducing a theatrically based "steadfastness" in the face of a recalcitrant world of objects that is "more sublime, rarer and sweeter than Stoic apathy."⁴⁴ In his reflections on the doctrines of the seventeenth-century neo-Stoic Alfons Anton de Sarasa, rendered as "Little Book of Joy or *Ars Semper Gaudendi*," Jean Paul explicitly relates poetics to ethics. For Jean Paul, the most originary poetic figurations are those of personification and anthropomorphism. They project the subject onto inanimate objects, thereby animating them. It is this "poetic animism" that relieves humans from the obtrusiveness of their surroundings—it soothes pain through the pleasures of fantasy.⁴⁵ But these pleasures, embodied in the trope of the idyllic and figurations of the comical, are always threatened by moments when animated objects aggressively turn against man's intentions, leaving "disturbed idylls."⁴⁶ Imagination functions as a pharmakon, in the double sense of poison and remedy.⁴⁷ What is supposed to heal the rift between subject and object and alleviate the human's vexations turns out to increase and intensify the painful antagonism between living human beings and inanimate objects.

For Albert Einhardt, the choleric protagonist of Friedrich Theodor Vischer's novel *Another One* (1878), a creaking door not only interrupts his concentration but actually speaks to him, uttering the Latin phrase *eo ipso*: "Now I do not have to listen to the creaking of my office door anymore. Lubricating was difficult and rarely successful. The whistling creak always spoke clearly: *Eo Ipsa!*"⁴⁸ The creaking door speaks Latin. Einhardt's imagination, rather than providing the means for coping with the disruption, increases his pain and misery. He obsesses about the squeaking door, listening for meaning. His anger, therefore, stems not from the actual sound but from an act of signification.

In the belief that objects are possessed by antagonistic demons actively impeding the subject's intention, as in the case of Vischer's

novel *Another One*, the border between paranoia, primitive animism, and modern scientific thought becomes porous. In the mode of projection, which creates a “fiction invested with affect,” human beings anthropomorphize and personify those contingent forces that threaten their lives.⁴⁹ For Einhardt, objects are possessed by malicious demons trying to counter his plans and intentions. The third chapter of this study interprets this metaphysics of malicious objects as the ironic reformulation of Vischer’s aesthetics and theories of the comical, which are based on the concept of projection. Einhardt does not represent a merely pathological case. His mythology of demonic spirits who possess objects pushes the universal human activity of symbolization, that is, anthropomorphization and personification, to a grotesque extreme. It seems that the more objects a subject possesses, the more possessed they appear; Albert Einhardt is being “possessed by possessions.”⁵⁰

In “My Autobiography” (Mein Lebensgang), Vischer relates his theory of projection as an act of “infusing manufactured objects with a metaphysical dimension” to its poetical incarnation in the figure of Albert Einhardt:⁵¹ “If one slightly increases and intensifies that foisting, lending, personifying play of imagination, which every living human being can recognize within him- or herself, then play almost turns into earnestness. It is as if someone who gets angry with a disruption almost believes in a lurking gremlin [lauernder Kobold] responsible for it. A. E. resembles such a figure halfway believing in the earnestness of imagination.”⁵² Not only does Vischer’s doctrine of projection, using the terms *anthropomorphization*, *personification*, and *symbol*, develop directly out of Jean Paul’s *School for Aesthetics* (*Vorschule der Ästhetik*), but it also partakes in an intense discussion of the notion of projection in such diverse fields as psychology, philosophy of technology, theology, ethnology, aesthetics, and literature during the nineteenth century.⁵³ All of these discourses are characterized by what Derrida calls “hermeneutical compulsion,” that is, a specific form of ascribing meaning to randomness and contingency.⁵⁴ Derrida’s example is Freud’s study *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, which, not surprisingly, narrates several instances of erroneously carried-out actions dealing with the difficulty of opening a door. Freud writes: “In former years I visited patients in their homes more frequently than I do at present; and on numerous occasions when I was at the front door, instead of knocking or ringing the bell, I pulled my own latch key out of my pocket, only to thrust it back again

in some confusion."⁵⁵ For Freud, this type of error is no coincidence but, upon further analysis, reveals an underlying desire. Hence, "The parapraxis was a symbolic representation of a thought which was not after all really intended to be accepted seriously and consciously."⁵⁶ Derrida identifies in Freud a "reintroduction of determinism, necessity, [and] signification."⁵⁷ Parapraxis, for Freud, is always a meaningful event. There is no erroneous action performed by the subject that does not signify. When it comes to human actions, there are no accidents, only symptoms. Freud, in an attempt to distinguish psychoanalysis from superstition, differentiates between external chance and internal determinism: "I believe in external (real) chance, . . . but not in internal (psychical) events."⁵⁸ It appears that Vischer's insistence on personification and anthropomorphism as anthropological necessities points directly to the difficulty of clearly distinguishing internal and external, randomness and necessity. In this sense, one could ask with Derrida, "What is the difference between superstition, paranoia, or animism and their literary representations on the one hand, and science on the other, if they all mark a compulsive tendency to interpret random signs in order to reconstitute a meaning, a necessity, or a destination?"⁵⁹ Is it possible, in encountering malicious objects, to maintain Freud's distinction between external chance and internal necessity? Does the creaking door speak? And what does it say?

CATHARTIC ERUPTIONS

In an essay discussing the significance of technology for Edmund Husserl's concept of *Lebenswelt*, entitled "Lebenswelt und Technisierung unter Aspekten der Phänomenologie," Hans Blumenberg points to the invention of the electric doorbell as an example of a specifically modern experience of technology. While older mechanical bells still guaranteed an immediate relation between the human hand and the creation of a sound, the electric bell, triggered by a button, introduces a different mode of causality: "There are old mechanical bells that need to be pulled or turned. Because there is an adequate nexus between hand and sound, their usage creates the immediate feeling of producing a specific effect. . . . This is different in the case of the electric bell, which is rung by pressing a button: the hand's activity and effect are unspecific and heteromorphic—one does not produce the effect anymore, one merely triggers it."⁶⁰ Advanced technology dissolves the immediate nexus between cause

and effect. The user of a mechanical doorbell knows not only what to do but also why and how his or her action creates a certain effect. This insight, according to Blumenberg, is lost for the modern user of an electric doorbell. Technology induces a “withdrawal of insight.”⁶¹ This lack of knowledge leads to various *parapractic* actions: “In a world that is increasingly characterized by igniting functions [Auslösefunktionen], not only the interchangeability of persons performing unspecific actions increases, but also the interchangeability of the triggers themselves. To stay with the example of the doorbell: How often does one press the doorbell in the stairwell when one actually ‘meant’ to switch on the light?”⁶² Technology tends to hide its inner workings, its “secret of construction and principle of function.”⁶³ The more functional, that is, straightforward and effortless, a tool or instrument becomes, the more it appears merely as a surface offering triggers, and the more prone to mishaps, dysfunctions, and accidents it becomes. Human actions and gestures become, to use Adorno’s vocabulary, unspecific, homogenous, interchangeable, and thereby susceptible to interruptions and disturbances. An increase in functionality equals an increase in disturbances.

Blumenberg’s usage of the verb “to ignite” (auslösen) to elucidate an action that cannot be integrated into a standard model of cause and effect points to Julius Robert Mayer’s short but influential essay “On Ignition” (Über Auslösung) from 1876. Mayer, a physicist and physician, is best known for formulating what was soon thereafter called the first law of thermodynamics, that is, the law of the conservation of energy. In “On Ignition,” published shortly before his death, Mayer introduces a new explanation of processes like ignitions, explosions, or catalyses that seem to contradict the law of *causa aequat effectum*, of cause equaling effect: “In the case of ignitions one speaks of cause and effect in a very different sense. Here, not only are cause and effect not equal or proportionate, but there is no quantitative relationship between cause and effect; instead, the cause in relation to effect generally has to be considered as a vanishingly small measure.”⁶⁴ The electric doorbell in Blumenberg’s description functions like a trigger in Mayer’s sense. The quantity of energy necessary to ignite an action seemingly lacks any direct relation to its outcome. The examples Mayer discusses include physical ignitions like explosions but also the psychological effects of “exploding anger”: “As much as mourning is a passive condition, rage is an active pain of

the soul. Venting it enormously increases ignition tendencies [Auslösungstendenz], especially those of the tongue."⁶⁵

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Mayer's doctrine of energetic ignitions appears, reconfigured as catharsis, in such diverse discourses as aesthetics (Bernays, Nietzsche), and psychology (Freud, Breuer). In the short study "On Catharsis: From Fundamentals of Aristotle's Lost Essay on the 'Effect of Tragedy'" (Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung des Aristoteles über Wirkung der Tragödie) from 1857, Jacob Bernays interprets the notion of catharsis in terms of an ignition that affords the abreaction of affects. He analyzes tragedy in decidedly medical (i.e., pathological) terms. Arguing against Lessing's moralistic reading of cathartic effects in the experience of drama, Bernays stresses the alleviating qualities of tragedy in terms of a "solicitation" of affects. Drama causes a sudden abreaction of affective energies of the audience that equals a cleansing and purification. Bernays describes this cathartic solicitation as follows: "The way fire lights up when in proximity of a combustible agent, tragic action, made up of sad and horrible events, must trigger in every healthy audience member an outburst of these affects."⁶⁶ Hence Bernays defines the notion of *katharsis* as follows: "*Katharsis* is a term transferred from the physical to the emotional sphere, and used of the sort of treatment of an oppressed person which seeks not to alter or to subjugate the oppressive element but to arouse it and draw it out, and thus to achieve some sort of relief for the oppressed."⁶⁷

Freud, the son-in-law of Bernays, uses a similar model of energetic discharge in his early studies on hysteria and in his work on the joke and its relation to the unconscious. For him, laughter as well as anger is conceptualized in terms of a sudden release of psychic energies. As in Mayer's theory of ignition and Bernays's doctrine of "solicitation," Freud posits the possibility of a disproportionate relation between cause and effect in comic situations. A small cause that itself has little effect can, if it is aided by other causes, create great pleasure (i.e., trigger an abreaction).

For Freud, the tendentious joke provides the often minute amount of psychic energy necessary to release otherwise blocked desires.⁶⁸ Freud cites the example of angry cursing to show how jokes can release repressed urges and desires:

Let us assume that there is an urge to insult a certain person; but this is so strongly opposed by feelings of propriety or of aesthetic culture that the insult cannot take place. . . . Let us now suppose,

however, that the possibility is presented of deriving a good joke from the material of the words and thoughts used for the insult—the possibility, that is, of releasing pleasure from other sources which are not obstructed by the same suppression. This second development of pleasure could, nevertheless, not occur unless the insult were permitted; but as soon as the latter *is* permitted the new release of pleasure is also joined to it. Experience with tendentious jokes shows that in such circumstances the suppressed purpose can, with the assistance of the pleasure from the joke, gain sufficient strength to overcome the inhibition, which would otherwise be stronger than that. The insult takes place, because the joke is thus made possible. But the enjoyment obtained is not only that produced by the joke: it is incomparably greater. It is so much greater than the pleasure from the joke that we must suppose that the hitherto suppressed purpose has succeeded in making its way through, perhaps without any diminution whatever. It is in such circumstances that the tendentious joke is received with the heartiest laughter.⁶⁹

In tendentious jokes laughter is symptomatic of repressed urges. The strength of the affect of laughter is caused, not by the joke itself, but by the sudden release of those psychic energies that were not allowed to manifest themselves in cursing. The decorum of “aesthetic culture” does not allow angry energies to appear as invectives; therefore the joke transforms these energies into a socially acceptable form. Freud calls the surplus of comic pleasure that allows for the repressed angry energies to be released “fore-pleasure” that succeeds in lifting “suppressions and oppressions.”⁷⁰ Laughter, to quote Samuel Weber’s reconstruction of Freud’s theory of the joke, must “‘break out’ or ‘explode.’”⁷¹

USING ANGER

The explosiveness of passionate outbursts in anger or laughter characterizes Friedrich Nietzsche’s existence as a philosopher who radically questions traditional ideas of subjectivity.⁷² His self-fashioning as a highly volatile catalyst for a new philosophy of the self that would destroy conventional (i.e., metaphysical) concepts of epistemology and ethics culminates in the infamous proclamation from *Ecce Homo*: “I am no man, I am dynamite.”⁷³ In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche explicitly relates the experience of energetic discharges in music to the ancient theory of catharsis. Music “was credited with the power of discharging the emotions, of purifying the soul, of easing *ferocia animi*.”⁷⁴ Abreaction, purification, and alleviation, for Nietzsche, are

elements of a medico-ethical therapy. Musical trance makes life bearable; it offers a treatment for the miseries of life.

For this “therapy of desire” (Nussbaum) to be successful, passionate discharges have to be activated, not suppressed. The first step in this treatment consists in intensifying and increasing the passions: “One sought to push the exuberance and giddiness of the emotions to the ultimate extreme.”⁷⁵ According to Nietzsche, the result of this escalation after its final eruption is soothing.

Nietzsche’s interest in the utility of psychic energies as an important element of the *art of living* stems to a large degree from his reading of Mayer’s essay “On Ignition.”⁷⁶ Living the good life, in this sense, would mean, not following abstract doctrines of morality that preach the extirpation of passions and drives, but igniting oneself.⁷⁷ Self-ignition consists in the proper discharge of energies. This release is experienced as pleasurable; it relieves the pain of blocked energies and ultimately creates happiness. Self-ignitions initiate not only a new “gay science” but also a cheerful, energetic morality. Letting off steam in a controlled, directed fashion therefore becomes the central principle of what the chemist and philosopher Wilhelm Ostwald, editor of Mayer’s “On Ignition,” in 1911 calls the “energetic imperative.”⁷⁸ Its main rule: “Don’t squander any energy, exploit it!”⁷⁹ With Ostwald’s energetic imperative, self-government and self-regulation as forms of caring for the self become, under the guise of self-improvement, modes of self-rationalization. The subject must submit to the same mechanisms of efficient action as machines. To reach a state of happiness one has to turn oneself into a technological artifact. Self-ignitions, instead of producing a sovereign and autonomous self, as imagined by Nietzsche, are put into the service of the human being’s subjugation to the demands of modern technological society.

The final chapter of this study analyzes the Austrian writer Heimito von Doderer’s description of psychological as well as medical therapies from the first half of the twentieth century dealing with the anger aroused by malicious objects in similar terms of self-ignition, self-governance, and self-fashioning. Doderer’s conception of anger as the paradigmatic psychopathology of modernity finds its most concise representation in one of the mottos of his 1962 novel *The Merowingians, or The Total Family*: “The wrath of the age is deep.”⁸⁰ *The Merowingians* focuses on variations of anger management that rely on artificially igniting outbursts of anger. The characters Dr. Horn and Dr. Schajo both develop forms of treatment that, in

contradistinction to psychoanalysis, do not attempt to determine (i.e., hermeneutically decipher) the causes of anger. Rather, they insist on purely mechanical forms of cathartic abreaction, relieving the patient of his or her distress, yielding to the *groundlessness* of rage. In *Repertory*, Doderer writes: "Fits of rage without apparent reason [grundlose Wutanfälle] have their reason [Grund] exactly in this lack of reason [Grund]. Therefore they are characterized by an abysmal lack of reason [abgründiger Grundlosigkeit]."⁸¹ Fits of rage without apparent reason/ground have their reason exactly in this lack of reason/ground. Therefore they are characterized by an abysmal lack of reason/ground. Groundless rage, like the phenomenon of ignition, questions the possibility of establishing a relation between cause and effect because it seems to contradict the model of *causa aequat effectum*.⁸² In contrast to hermeneutically based therapies, which read symptoms to determine the reason for psychic disorders, for Doderer the reason for pathological rage is indeterminable. What is the abysmal groundlessness of rage? How can anger be controlled if its eruptions appear to be groundless, without reason?

Doderer explicitly ties his grotesque phenomenology of anger ignition to contemporary moral and political discourses. For him, rage caused by malicious objects impedes the open, unprejudiced perception of concrete reality, which he calls *apperception*, and the ability to organize one's life accordingly. Exposed to the thrusts of contingency and blinded by rage, the subject is unable to distinguish between the essential and the merely accidental; he or she is unable to determine causes, reasons, and grounds. The angry individual enters a "pseudological space" that manifests itself either as a perversion (on the level of the individual) or as a totalitarian state apparatus (on the level of the collective). For Doderer, in "Sexuality and the Total State," the pathologies of the individual and politics are inextricably linked.⁸³ Hence anger management is an epistemological, an ethical, and a political imperative.

Doderer's notion of a "pseudological space," understood as a condition characterized by the universal inability to *apperceive*—that is, by the urge "to impose a preconceived picture on the world"—resembles Heidegger's rejection of a definition of the thing based on its utility.⁸⁴ While the analysis of equipment within the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time* focused on equipment that was produced to be used in a specific way, Heidegger's later texts equate this usefulness of tools—their "serviceability, conduciveness, usability,

manipulability”—with an “assault upon the thing.”⁸⁵ The thing in Heidegger’s thought after the so-called “turn” (Kehre) is not the product of a *techne*, understood as a technology of producing purposeful tools. In the epilogue to *The Merovingians*, the figure of Doctor Döblinger (a thinly veiled self-portrait of Doderer) quotes from Heidegger’s essay “The Thing”: “What does the philosopher say? ‘Aus dem Dingen des Dinges ereignet sich und bestimmt sich auch erst das Anwesen des Anwesenden,’ and: ‘Wie aber west das Ding? Das Ding dingt. Das Dingen versammelt.’”⁸⁶ While for Heidegger the thing, defined as a form of peaceful gathering, guarantees a smooth, uninterrupted experience of the world, Doderer conceives of it as a malicious object, triggering groundless fits of rage.

The separation of form and matter, privileging the former, induces, according to Heidegger, a technological philosophy of subjectivity and intentionality that can be overcome only by a different thinking of the thing. According to Doderer, Heidegger’s notion of the thing as a form of assembly not only “give[s] in utmost brevity and pregnancy a complete theory of the total family” but also allows for a grounding of ethics in the encounter of humans and things.⁸⁷ This different relationship between human beings and objects would not reduce things to objects—that is, perceive of them as means to ends—and thereby remain “committed to the precincts of representational thinking.”⁸⁸ Instead, answering the question “What is a thing?” leads to the “beginning of a change of questioning and assessment, of seeing and deciding, in short: of Da-sein in the midst of beings.”⁸⁹ It furthermore establishes a different relationship of human beings to equipment: that is, tools, instruments, and technical devices. In his *Discourse on Thinking (Gelassenheit)*, Heidegger asks how, in a world that has lost its grounding and rootedness, human beings can cope with the intrusion of technical artifacts. Instead of cursing and demonizing objects, Heidegger proposes a different attitude: “Still we can act otherwise. We can use technical devices, and yet with proper use also keep ourselves so free of them, that we may let go of them any time. We can use technical devices as they ought to be used, and also let them alone as something which does not affect our inner and real core. We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature.”⁹⁰ Being able to both affirm and deny technology makes possible a “releasement towards things.”⁹¹ Treating things as things in the mode of *Gelassenheit*—that is, “no longer viewing things in

a technical way”—lets them remain effectual without triggering destructive affects: they are part of the human *Lebenswelt* without disrupting it.⁹² If the “*releasement towards things*” as a form of anger management succeeds, objects will lose their malice and “our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed.”⁹³

Yet this wondrous tranquillity of a “new autochthony” can be described as the result of a technology, namely a technology of the self in Foucault’s sense.⁹⁴ The ability to use objects freely without submitting to their demands is the result of a specific way of questioning and interrogating the self. Despite Heidegger’s attempt to ground a new relationship to technology in an explicitly nontechnological, almost pastoral way that involves actively forgetting equipment’s conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy, he has to rely on specific quasi-technological procedures of self-governance and self-regulation.⁹⁵ Technology returns. The “*releasement towards things*” remains inscribed in the techno-energetic imperative of rationalizing self-improvement. For Heidegger, there is no restoration of a “natural” relationship of humans and things; the recalcitrance of objects cannot simply be erased. As a form of “meditative thinking,” *Gelassenheit* attempts not to deduce the essence of things from a notion of functional equipment but instead to create a disposition of serenity, composure, and imperturbability. In this regard, the disappearance of obstinacy and malice in Heidegger’s late philosophy—although not based in cathartic laughter—surprisingly resembles the two educational mottos of “Hulesch & Quenzel” (an organization that industrially produces malicious objects) from Doderer’s *The Merovingians*: “POST RABIEM RISUS” and “Take it easy!”⁹⁶

Epilogue

Much will be gained if [psychoanalysis] can succeed in transforming hysterical misery into common unhappiness.

—Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*

THE ENERGETIC IMPERATIVE

Around 1900, following Julius Robert Mayer's research on the laws of thermodynamics and his later discovery of processes of ignition, the German chemist Wilhelm Ostwald developed a general theory of *energetics*. It broadened and expanded the first two laws of thermodynamics, which state the conservation of energy and the general tendency toward entropy, beyond the realm of physics, mechanics, and chemistry to the life sciences and even the social sciences and the humanities, as the title "The Energetic Foundations of Cultural Studies" (*Die energetischen Grundlagen der Kulturwissenschaft*) from 1909 suggests.¹ Ostwald introduces a "classification of pure sciences"² that differentiates between sciences of order (logic, mathematics, geometry), sciences of energy (mechanics, physics, chemistry), and sciences of life (physiology, psychology, cultural studies). The latter two types of science (energy and life), according to Ostwald's schema, are ruled by a specific concept of energy.

In the programmatic article "The Energetic Imperative," Ostwald describes his approach as the "application of the second principle of energetics to all events and especially to all human actions."³ This universal application of energetics refers to a doctrine that classifies all life forms (plants, animals, humans), as well as inanimate machines, as energy-transforming entities: "All events in the world can be described in terms of a transformation of energy out of its present state into other forms."⁴ Energy is transformed, utilized for

“specific purposes of life.”⁵ The more efficiently this transformation is realized, the better the purposes achieved. Ostwald transfers this rule of efficiency in the process of energy transformation to human life:

For the person who sets himself this task—to treat the whole of nature and even his fellow man as efficiently and purposefully as possible—there follows a general rule for such comportment. This rule instructs him to convert free energy as efficiently, that is to say, as thoroughly, as possible into the form desired for the purpose and to check constantly on the configuration and settings and, where necessary, amend them so that the magnitude of purposive energy that is gained from a given magnitude of free energy in raw form is as large as possible. One can summarize this general tendency, or rather this general task of all human doing and acting, in a short phrase, which I, with reference to the Kantian categorical imperative, have suggested calling the *energetic imperative* and which reads: Don't squander any energy, exploit it.⁶

Ostwald's slight shift from “universal tendency” (allgemeine Tendenz) to “universal task” (allgemeine Aufgabe) demonstrates his move from a strictly descriptive model to a prescriptive one. Efficiency in utilizing energy provides a measure not only for hierarchically distinguishing higher from lower forms of life, and advanced technology from primitive tools, but moreover functions as the “most universal rule of all human action.”⁷ By explicitly referring to Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, Ostwald translates the descriptive laws of thermodynamics into prescriptive rules of morality. Ethics consists of relating to others (as well as to nature) in the most purposeful way. Therefore it is one's ethical task to convert energy as efficiently as possible. To relate to others ethically, that is, efficiently, one has to constantly control and correct one's own energetic economy. Living the good life requires modes of self-examination and self-correction, guaranteeing the most purposeful utilization of the limited resource of free energy. Rage and other emotional eruptions in this context must be understood as inefficient, useless conversions. The angry individual does not follow the energetic imperative: energy is squandered instead of being exploited. In the essay “Practical Philosophy” (Praktische Philosophie), Ostwald cites an episode from the life of one of his readers (a businessman) who was able to control his anger using the energetic imperative: “Since I have become acquainted with the energetic imperative, I've done much better business than before. For I am, unfortunately, a somewhat nervous man and used to react furiously in the conflicts that inevitably arise with my business associates,

and I lost in this way many valuable relationships. When I now want to get worked up, I say to myself: don't squander any energy! And can then settle the matter, which on many occasions has already afforded me considerable advantage."⁸ It is no coincidence that Ostwald narrates the story of a businessman to exemplify his energetic ethics. The development and application of the energetic imperative must be placed within a larger context of attempts to rationalize and improve the productivity of capitalist industrial society. The emblem of this ideology of efficiency is Frederick Winslow Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management*.⁹ Managing the self according to an energetic imperative, rather than being an abstract moral law, is part of a rationalizing program directed at making the life of the individual subject to economic imperatives. Self-government and self-regulation do not create a free, autonomous self but are in the service of practices that shape subjects to become more productive elements of capitalist society. Not surprisingly, in stating his generalizing claims, Ostwald highlights the relationship of science, aesthetics, and ethics to economy: "We should not have to switch over our spirit [Geist] when we move from science to art, and we should be able to apply the same principles for our ethical action as for our economic activity."¹⁰ From this perspective, the self is not an end in itself but always the means toward an end. Kant's definition of the categorical imperative states: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end."¹¹ In contrast, Ostwald's expansion of energetics into the realm of ethics calls for a treatment of humanity in oneself and in others as a means to increase the efficiency of energy conversion; human beings are therefore never ends in themselves. To act ethically means to preserve and utilize the scarce resource of energy as efficiently as possible.

PSYCHOTECHNICS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The applicability of energetic principles in the realm of ethics and all other "Kulturwissenschaften," as defined by Ostwald, stems from a fundamental analogy of human beings and other animals to machines. They all function as "transformers of energy" (Energietransformatoren).¹² In the essay "Machines and Organisms" (Maschinen und Lebewesen) Ostwald identifies the conversion of raw energy for specific purposes as the principle that governs organisms

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as well as machines: "Both machines and organisms are transformers of energy, and their purpose is to convert energies as efficient as possible."¹³ The less energy is wasted, that is, not used for a purpose, the higher the efficiency of a machine: "The more the use energy [Nutzenenergie] gained from the same amount of raw energy [Rohenergie], the better the machine."¹⁴ Humans and machines adhere to the same principle of making use of energy in the most efficient way. Just as there are more and less intelligent people, whom Ostwald differentiates according to their (in)ability to transform nutrition into mental work, there are more and less efficient machines, characterized by different energy efficiencies. Hence the development of technology and the evolution of organisms can be compared, "since we know that the same task is at stake in both cases, namely the most efficient transformation of energy, a task that is not accomplished all at once but over the slow course of a progressive approximation."¹⁵ "Social Energeticism" (Rabinbach), in this sense, must be understood as a form of Social Darwinism. The ethical imperative to use energy as efficiently as possible is a call for a process of adaptation. The full and complete transformation of energy is the unattainable telos that all machines and humans strive for: "One grasps that the thing *can* be better made and also, therefore, that it *must* be better made."¹⁶ Humans, animals, and machines exist under the constant pressure to improve, to increase their efficiency by minimizing the loss of energy. For Stefan Rieger, quoting Niklas Luhmann, this "capacity for enhancement of the human" (Steigerbarkeit des Menschen) marks a specifically modern moment in the history of subjectivity: "*Psychical capabilities, competences, cognitive complexity, achievements in developmental logic and so on* have come to be the focus of human's capacity for enhancement, which has its center in the concretion of discursive events and therefore beyond mere metaphors."¹⁷ Psychic abilities and competences are not natural to human beings; one must cultivate, train, and organize them according to specific rules and procedures. The self becomes an object of continuous reflection, intervention, and adjustment. These strategies of self-improvement can be described in terms of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* as a form of *care of the self*.

Around 1900, these *technologies of the self* manifest themselves most explicitly in the field of psychotechnics. Hugo Münsterberg, a German American psychologist, coined this term in *Basics of Psychotechnology* (*Grundzüge der Psychotechnik*) from 1914 to

describe the field of applied psychology, which aimed to determine and improve the mental and physical aptitude of workers to perform in their workplace. The goal of psychotechnics, according to Münsterberg, is a “transformation of the psycho-physical capacity for performance” of the worker.¹⁸ “The task of psychotechnics,” summarizes Andreas Killen, “was to bring about the closest possible meshing of the human with the mechanical agents of productivity, thus to better integrate workers into the social-technical circuitry of modern industrial civilization.”¹⁹

The improvement of the worker’s mental and physical capacities must not be misunderstood as a mere disciplinary force relation: it was also aimed at individualizing the self. The goal of psychotechnicians like Hugo Münsterberg and Fritz Giese was a transformation of the worker’s psyche that would not be experienced as limiting or encroaching. This aspect differentiated their theories from those of Taylor, for example, who represented for most European and especially German proponents of psychotechnology an approach that did not sufficiently take the individual human being’s abilities and needs into account. In fact, psychotechnics can appear as the exact opposite of merely disciplinary measures of regulation, namely as the realization of the individual’s potential, in that it aims at promoting self-fulfillment and the attainment and enjoyment of autonomy. To reach this state of happiness, living as a free individual, the self has to acquire certain “ways of inspecting oneself, accounting for oneself, and working upon oneself.”²⁰ Regulation and standardization are not applied from an outside authority but emanate from the self. The relationship between power and individual is not exclusively repressive but productive. Psychotechnics attempts to install a government of individualization by the self for the self. The subject becomes its own object on which it can perform different operations of control, regulation, and management. These individualizing technologies “enable one to construe a form of family life, education, or production that simultaneously maximizes the capacities of individuals, their personal contentment, and the efficiency of the institution.”²¹ As an ensemble of procedures of objectification and subjectification, psychotechnics expands the reach of applied psychology from the field of scientific management in the industrialized workplace to the “everyday individuality of everybody.”²² The whole human being in all its relations (to itself and others) falls under the imperative of self-government. Andreas Killen writes: “The German science of work would replace

the 'human motor' model with a concern for the 'whole person,' body and mind."²³ The production and codification of individuality do not take place only in specific disciplinary institutions like the jail, the asylum, or the clinic as analyzed by Foucault. Instead, as a psychotechnics of the self, "psychopower" extends to all aspects of the social as well as the psychic life of every human being.²⁴ To reach the goal of maximum efficiency, human beings must design their encounters with tools and machines of their work environment as well as of their everyday life in such a way as to produce as little friction and discontent as possible. Self-rationalization becomes a mode of training body and mind to prepare the self to interact with machines with the least possible disruption. For this to happen, man and machine have to resemble each other. Psychotechnology, according to Friedrich Kittler, "relays psychology and media technology under the pretext that each psychic apparatus is also a technological one."²⁵

In "Civilization and Its Discontents," published in 1930, Sigmund Freud discusses the possibility of technology to protect the life of the individual, among other things, "from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction."²⁶ Freud in this context defines technology broadly as an "art of living" (79) that includes techniques "recommended by the various schools of worldly wisdom" (77). Technology in this broad sense, therefore, refers not only to tools, instruments, and machines but also to various *technologies of the self*. In this sense, it is reminiscent of psychotechnics, another expansive concept of technology. Fritz Giese in *Psychotechnik* maintains that its method has "in no way only to do with technics, with industry."²⁷ Freud as well as Münsterberg, Giese, and others attempts to provide practical solutions and treatments for the deficiencies, anxieties, and discontents of modern industrialized society. Is happiness for the individual human being possible, and how can it be achieved?

In the second section of "Civilization and Its Discontents," Freud asks what human beings generally understand as the meaning of life: "We will therefore turn to the less ambitious question of what men themselves show by their behavior to be the purpose and intention of their lives. What do they demand of life and wish to achieve in it? The answer to this can hardly be in doubt. They strive after happiness, they want to become happy and to remain so" (76). As James Strachey reports, Freud had originally intended to give his essay the title "Das Unglück in der Natur."²⁸ Maybe one reason why Freud

became reluctant to give his essay this name can be found in the ambiguity of the German word *Unglück*. While Freud's text mostly deals with *Unglück* in the sense of misfortune and being unhappy, the word can also denote accidents, mishaps, or disasters. It is this catastrophic element of modern culture, understood as the uncontrollable intrusion of contingency, about which Freud, at least in this essay, is conspicuously silent.²⁹ The phenomenon Freud is interested in appears not only as *Unglück* in the sense of "accident" or "disaster" but as an experience of anxiety in the most *behaglich* (comfortable, homely) environment, as part of the everyday life of the *normal* human being. Much like the words *heimlich* und *unheimlich* as Freud analyzes them, *behaglich* und *unbehaglich* cannot be separated.³⁰

Freud's interest in the (im)possibility of happiness in modernity, switching from the realm of nature to that of culture, becomes even more apparent in a handwritten list of possible titles for the different sections of "Civilization and Its Discontents:" "Das Streben nach dem Glück" (The Striving for Happiness), "Die Quellen des Leidens" (The Sources of Suffering), "Glücksverlust bei Triebbeherrschung" (Loss of Happiness from the Control of Instinct), "Das Glück in der Liebe" (Happiness in Love), and "Die Kultur als Leidensquelle" (Civilization as a Source of Suffering).³¹ As Ilse Grubrich-Simitis notes, the one notion missing from this list is "Unbehagen."³² Despite all technological advances, the life of the individual human being is still characterized by feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and unhappiness:

During the last few generations mankind has made an extraordinary advance in the natural sciences and in their technical application and has established his control over nature in a way never before imagined. The single steps of this advance are common knowledge and it is unnecessary to enumerate them. Men are proud of those achievements, and have a right to be. But they seem to have observed that this newly-won power over space and time, this subjugation of the forces of nature, which is the fulfillment of a longing that goes back thousands of years, has not increased the amount of pleasurable satisfaction which they may expect from life and has not made them feel happier. (87–88)

Freud does not argue against technology's advances. On the contrary, "By his science and technology, man has brought about on the earth, on which he first appeared as feeble animal organism and on which each individual of his species must once more make its entry ('oh inch of nature!') as a helpless suckling—these things do not only sound

like a fairy tale, they are an actual fulfillment of every—or of almost every—fairy-tale wish” (91).

The omnipotence and omniscience that primitives project into their gods, modern man “almost” embodies himself:

Long ago he [man] formed an ideal conception of omnipotence and omniscience, which he embodied in his gods. To these gods he attributed everything that seemed unattainable to his wishes, or that was forbidden to him. One may say, therefore, that these gods were cultural ideas. Today he has come very close to the attainment of this ideal, he has almost become a god himself. Only, it is true, in the fashion in which ideals are usually attained according to the general judgment of humanity. Not completely; in some respects not at all, in others only half way. Man has, as it were, become kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times. (91–92)

It is exactly those auxiliary organs that make the human “truly magnificent” but that also “give him much trouble.” Avital Ronell observes: “The ‘almost’ in this sentence provides a space for a somewhat striking difference, marking the incompleteness of any subject’s ration of infinity. Freud’s rhetoric does not depict man attaining a “poore inch” of self-inflating divinity; rather, the detachable tool itself is inspired with divinity. Only the ‘almost’ belongs to man, whereas the ‘become a god himself’ attaches properly to his ‘auxiliary organs.’”³³

The human being as an ensemble of animate and inanimate matter, humanity and divinity, man and machine, itself becomes an uncanny being. As in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s tale “The Sandman”—Freud’s paradigmatic figuration of the uncanny—the various technological “extensions of man” do not lead to a harmonious amalgamation of man and machine. Despite the divine inspiration of the tool, writes Ronell, human beings remain in the realm of the “almost.” Anxiety, defined in a Freudian sense as an affective response to danger, caused by an uncontrollable environment, returns. The inability to project a complete image of the self that would harmoniously amalgamate the human being and technology can be traced back to Freud’s own prosthetic existence. Because of his oral cancer, which destroyed part of his soft palate, he had to wear a prosthesis. Ernest Jones reports on the pain and irritation caused by it: “The huge prosthesis, a sort of magnified denture or obturator, designed to shut off the mouth from the nasal cavity, was a horror; it was labeled ‘the monster.’ . . . Then for the instrument to fulfill its purpose of shutting off the yawning

cavity above, and so make speaking and eating possible, it had to fit fairly tightly. This, however, produced constant irritation and sore places until its presence was unbearable. But if left out for more than a few hours the tissues would shrink, and the denture could no longer be replaced without being altered."³⁴ Where human being and inanimate object, subject and prosthesis, come into contact, "sore places" occur. The technical artifact, inserted to improve the everyday life of the cancer patient Freud, becomes "unbearable": a "monster" has invaded his body. The prosthesis, in the sense of the Latin word *monstrum*, becomes a sign designating an aberrant occurrence outside the natural order. Furthermore, it is anthropomorphized and animated, taking the shape of a hideous creature on the border of life and death, causing—in addition to physical harm—emotions of anxiety, fear, and terror. The fairy tale of a complete fulfillment of all wishes turns into a nightmare populated by monsters, uncanny figurations, and fantastic incarnations of the repressed.

In this sense, the prosthesis inserted into Freud's jaw paradigmatically shows how technology cannot be reduced to the "outer" environment of human beings. As an "extension of man," it becomes part of the imaginary constitution of the human being's identity.³⁵ The self, in the Lacanian sense, is not a given but the product of a projection creating a specific imaginary body image. Analogously, the self as the product of self-regulatory and self-governing procedures, as analyzed by Foucault, constantly needs to produce images of itself, anticipating the future goals of self-sufficiency and autonomy. It becomes, in the literal sense of the words a project and a projection. *Technologies of the self* rely on specific imaginings of wholeness and identity and therefore create simulations of the self, virtual realities of a harmonious interaction between man and his extensions.³⁶ As Freud's use of "the monster" to describe his prosthesis indicates, these virtual realities can appear in the form of malicious objects, fantasies invested with affect. As much as one attempts to utilize one's imaginings so as to produce a stable relation between subject and object, psychic system and environment, it becomes clear that these anthropomorphized images can take on a life on their own. Like Michel Serres's parasite, phantoms, monsters, and other uncanny figurations infiltrate the imaginary mapping of the self.³⁷ They interrupt the psychic system, functioning as a "mischievous operator and, in the final analysis, provocative participator."³⁸

VIRTUAL ENGINEERING

Ostwald's theory of energetics and Freud's psychoanalytic conceptualization of psychic energies are symptomatic of a more general turn from a mechanical to an energetic worldview at the turn of the century. In *Ströme und Strahlen: Das langsame Verschwinden der Materie um 1900*, Christoph Asendorf has shown how in various fields such as art, philosophy, physics, medicine, and architecture "nervous geometries" of energetic flows and currents, vibrations and waves replace concepts of solid matter.³⁹

Nevertheless, it is the real, the resistance of matter (Benjamin), its obtrusiveness and obstinacy, that provokes the subject to produce virtual realities of the world and of him- or herself. Virtuality as a "conjectural practice" in this sense must not be misunderstood as a "Farewell to the Corporeal" (Abschied vom Körperlichen) or the absence of material reality; on the contrary, it follows from the interaction between subject and object, system and environment, body and world.⁴⁰ Things do not simply disappear, transformed into electric currents or abstract economies of exchange. As Asendorf notes of Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*, things transformed into circulating commodities leave "a light feeling of uncanniness in the face of the sheer 'quantity' of things—he [Simmel] speaks of the 'independence' of the things crowded around, of their service as fetishes, of a feeling that the things interfere with one's freedom."⁴¹ The seemingly fantastic ascription of malicious agency to inanimate objects can be interpreted as a reaction to this experience of the uncanny. It is a manifestation of a human tendency to produce virtual realities in the face of an antagonistic, inhospitable lifeworld. The turn from a mechanical to an energetic worldview, or, in Ernst Cassirer's terms, from substance to function, coincides with the recurrence of seemingly irrational, fantastic images.⁴² Fantasy in this context must not be misunderstood as a mere *terminus technicus* from the tradition of idealist aesthetics. Instead, one could, following Stefan Rieger, speak of the universalization of imagination, which he calls *virtuality*.

From Laurence Sterne to Jean Paul, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, and Heimito von Doderer, the interruption of daily routines by unexpected, random occurrences and the accompanying affects of anger and rage are compensated for by the production of fictions. These virtual realities can take such different shapes as Uncle Toby's hobbyhorse, Siebenkäs's humor, A.E.'s mythology of malicious objects, and

Dr. Horn's cathartic anger treatment. Imagination, which, in this tradition exceeds the realm of aesthetics, functions as therapy. Freud in "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" stresses the importance of "anticipatory ideas" in the therapeutic process of psychoanalysis: "In a psycho-analysis the physician always gives his patient (sometimes to a greater and sometimes to a lesser extent) the conscious anticipatory ideas by the help of which he is put in a position to recognize and to grasp the unconscious material."⁴³ According to Rieger's study of the history of virtuality in the early twentieth century, the various modes of anger management, projective humor, or aesthetic imagination discussed here expose a fundamental anthropological modality: "The way in which people interact with the world and with each other, the way in which they perceive things, in which things present themselves or make themselves visible, even to the way in which they shape their lives, . . .—all this is only comprehensively describable in terms of what is at once conceived of and called *virtuality*."⁴⁴ Central to these virtual modes of dealing with the world and dealing with oneself are the notions of imagination, fantasy, and projection.⁴⁵ The self is not a substantial entity but produces itself in a process of pro-jecting.

The ascription of malice to objects as a form of "metaphorical regulation" (*bildhafter Steuerung*), as a mode of coping with reality, is based on the ability to produce fantasies and simulacra.⁴⁶ The private mythology developed by the protagonist in Vischer's *Another One*, for example, not only provides an explanation for the series of accidents afflicting him but also depotentializes their threatening insistence. Accidents, although still painful, at least have a reason: they are based on the hostile intentions of evil spirits possessing the objects of everyday life. What is real and manifest, the resistance of matter, appears in the form of that which is merely possible, virtual.

The engineer Henry Petroski points out that what governs the invention and design of new objects is not the commonsensical principle "Form follows function" but the principle "Form follows failure": "What form does follow is the real and perceived failure of things as they are used to do what they are supposed to do. Clever people in the past, whom we today might call inventors, designers, or engineers, observed the failure of existing things to function as well as might be imagined. By focusing on the shortcomings of things, innovators altered those items to remove the imperfections, thus producing new, improved objects."⁴⁷ By focusing on the "shortcomings of

things,” the engineer can envision a new and improved object. The failure of a tool makes the engineer imagine a better model. Failure, accidents, and catastrophes trigger the invention of new, improved objects whose former flaws and imperfections have been eliminated. The idea of an “evolution of things” contests the Platonic model of *techne*, which perceives of every object only as the manifestation of a stable, unchanging idea. For Ernst Cassirer in the 1930 essay “Form and Technology” (Form und Technik), technology exposes the principal difference between idea and its manifestation, the ideal and the real. The act of invention requires the inventor to compare what is with what is possible. The evolution of things “does not simply take place under the constant supervision, the regulation and tutelage of the real; rather, it demands that we constantly go back from the ‘real’ to the realm of the ‘possible’ and regard the real itself under the image of the possible.”⁴⁸

To develop a new tool, for example, the inventor must compare and measure the actual artifact with his or her idea of it. The “adequatio rei et intellectus” is not immediately given but needs to be produced in a process of continuing adaptation between idea and reality. Hence engineering could be characterized as a technique of the virtual, a project directed toward an open future, imagining what could be. Cassirer writes: “Technical production never binds itself to this pure facticity, to the given face of object; rather, it operates according to the law of a pure anticipation, a foresight, that reaches into the future and brings about a new future.”⁴⁹ What the engineer imagines and eventually produces are not mere subjective fantasies, detached from reality, but instead things that appear as objective, that are virtual but by no means indeterminate or vague: “Technology does not ask in the first instance about what is, but about what *can* be. But this ‘can’ does not indicate any mere supposition or conjecture; rather, it expresses itself as an assertive claim and an assertion of certainty.”⁵⁰

The history of things is always also a history of virtual things, imaginary artifacts without which there would be no technological progress. In an essay entitled “The Concept of Reality and the Possibility of the Novel” (Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Möglichkeit des Romans), Hans Blumenberg mentions one type of “Wirklichkeitsbegriff,” based on the resistance of matter: “Reality,” is understood as “that which is not compliant to the subject and offers him resistance. . . . Reality is here the completely and utterly unavailable, that which does not allow itself to be treated as mere material for manipulation and so

subordinated to the constant regulation of appearances. Instead, it is only apparently and temporarily taken into the service of technologization, in order then to reveal itself, according to its own overwhelming laws [überwältigende Eigengesetzlichkeit] and its tyrannizing power over its producers, as a *factum brutum*.⁵¹ Although Blumenberg develops this characterization of a specifically modern relationship between reality and virtuality in the context of a discussion of the genre of the novel, he nevertheless points out a more general anthropological insight. His *pointe* consists in showing that resistance is not reducible to sheer matter and that one's own projections, imaginations, and constructions gain independence. The human being as a "phantom-producing animal" (Rieger) falls under the tyranny of his or her own fantasies. Instead of alleviating the pains of everyday life, constructs like malicious objects gain a life of their own. Virtuality produces its own resistance. Virtual reality is anything but the phantasmatic space in which everything is possible. To quote Anselm Haverkamp's reconstruction of the relationship between latency and representation: "Not everything is possible; rather, everything shows in this kind of possibility the unreality of every possible realization. In reality, this flood of the possible is the flood of unrealized afterimages, a postmodern gallery of the phantasms of modernity, upon the backside of which reality becomes real in another way."⁵²

In *Traces (Spuren)*, a collection of short stories, reflections, and observations, Ernst Bloch identifies the "backside of things" as the specific site that allows for the perception of the unrealized potential of things in modernity. Bloch examines an "ungeheuerliches Gefühl" (uncanny feeling) that accompanies the human being's encounter with everyday objects. This experience of the uncanny expresses itself in questions like: "What do things do without us? How does the room look once we have left?"⁵³ Where one is most at home is where the uncanny often lurks. Tools and instruments that are hiding in their smooth functionality reappear in uncanny, anxiety-inducing forms as malicious objects. They not only have an unfulfilled potential to improve and increase their functionality but are also characterized by an ability, lurking on their backside, to turn into demonic, uncanny figures.

In the vignette "The First Locomotive," Bloch narrates an incident during the invention of the first locomotive by George Stephenson that brings out the uncanny character of technology that is hidden beneath its smooth surface: "Only the accident recalls it [the uncanny

character of technology] to memory: the crack of the crash, the bang of the explosion, the screams of crushed people, in short an ensemble that lacks a civilized railway schedule."⁵⁴ In accidents, the idyllic harmony between human beings and inanimate artifacts, between idea and reality, is violently disrupted. The "backside of things" appears suddenly and violently, turning against human beings.⁵⁵ While the gothic tradition of ghost stories is irrevocably over, for Bloch, in modernity uncanniness appears within the technological artifacts themselves.⁵⁶ In the everyday, normal functioning of modern urban society is concealed a "*magical sphere*" of demonic, uncanny apparitions: "Nonetheless, the more advanced and unfrivolous technology is, the more mysteriously it mingles with the realm of taboo, with mists and vapors, unearthly velocity, golem-robots, and bolts of lightning. And so it comes into contact with things that were formerly conceived of as belonging to the *magical sphere*."⁵⁷ After witnessing the physical destruction his invention caused as well as the psychological devastation (several people, among them a priest, went mad), Stephenson improved the locomotive by putting it on tracks, thereby channeling and directing its otherwise uncontrollable force: "But Stephenson had understood everything and built a new machine on tracks and with a driver's cab. In this way its demonic power was set on the right track; indeed it is, in the final instance, almost organic. The locomotive now runs as if on blood, hisses as if out of breath, a tamed cross-country animal in the grand style [ein großes Überlandtier großen Stils], which makes one forget the golem."⁵⁸ Putting the locomotive on tracks not only controls the movement of the machine but also has a psychological effect. It appears as an animal. Technology becomes "almost organic," its demonical underside tamed. It does not appear as a golem, as the product of a human inventor, but as a *natural*, living being. Coping with the violent, often traumatic intrusion of technology into the lifeworld of human beings (as in Bloch's presentation of Stephenson) does not consist only in the improvement of technology itself but also always implies psychological as well as rhetorical modes similar to those of anthropomorphization and personification. Technological progress, far from overcoming seemingly primitive beliefs and mythical explanations, instead reenchants the world. The demons of technology cannot be extirpated or dissolved by rational discourse but produce new "fantastic" ascriptions and projections. Hence not only the engineer whose machines fail but even more the successful engineer feels a certain

uneasiness with regard to his inventions: "And although no inventor acts like a magician in terms of either character or method, still the inventor's *successes* are not only wonder-inspiring but *uncanny*."⁵⁹ Successful technological invention and magic, although not identical, show a certain affinity. The engineer's technique resembles that of magic, causing wonder and fear. Technological projects, much like visions and literary fantasies, gain a life of their own. The "demon" of technology is given a face, its violence tamed. Nevertheless, the success of technological projections and prosopopeias carries with it an irreducible experience of the uncanny. Every invention implies, according to Paul Virilio, the invention of an accident.⁶⁰ Every object threatens to become malicious. Virtuality, understood as a mode to cope with the resistance of matter, cannot escape a different form of obstinacy—that of its fantastic imaginations.

UNCANNY CYBERNETICS

During the middle of the twentieth century, cybernetic programs of self-regulation introduced a model of feedback control to cope with disruptions, accidents, and mishaps. This cybernetic turn installed a program of general reciprocity that is applicable to physical and social systems, to organisms and human beings. Self-governing systems are all "constructed by a common move—the translation of the world into a problem of coding, a search for a common language in which all resistance to instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment and exchange."⁶¹ What appears as disruption, disturbance, or blockage, because of the system's self-reflexive flexibility, can be translated (i.e., integrated) into a process of equalization. Its stability rests, not on inelastic rigidity, but on flexible adaptation and correction. These methods of self-observation and self-improvement, characterized by Foucault as modes of caring for oneself, reappear—minus their subjective overtones—as technological implementations of self-governance. Technologies of the self, understood as the "task of testing oneself, examining oneself, monitoring oneself in a series of clearly defined exercises," are, according to Foucault, "central to the formation of the ethical subject."⁶² It is exactly these modes of testing, examining, and monitoring that not only define methods of caring for the self but reach their apex in the processes of cybernetic self-regulation.

Norbert Wiener, in *The Human Use of Human Beings* (1950), emphasizes the importance of effective communication to achieve a satisfactory degree of control for psychic as well as social systems:

The process of receiving and of using information is the process of our adjusting to the contingencies of the outer environment, and of our living effectively within that environment. The needs and the complexity of modern life make greater demands on this process of information than ever before, and our press, our museums, our scientific laboratories, our universities, our libraries and textbooks, are obliged to meet the needs of this process or fail in their purpose. To live effectively is to live with the adequate information. Thus, communication and control belong to the essence of man's inner life, even as they belong to his life in society.⁶³

Living, for Wiener, means adjusting to the “contingencies of the outer environment,” so as to function “effectively.” This cybernetic vision of governmentality relies on systems functioning according to the principles of feedback control. Rosenblueth, Wiener, and Bigelow, in their groundbreaking paper “Behavior, Purpose, and Teleology” (1943), define feedback as follows:

In a broad sense [feedback] may denote that some of the output energy of an apparatus or machine is returned as input; an example is an electrical amplifier with feed-back. The feed-back is in these cases positive—the fraction of the output which reenters the object has the same sign as the original input signal. Positive feed-back adds to the input signals, it does not correct them. [. . .] The term feed-back is also employed in a more restricted sense to signify that the behavior of an object is controlled by the margin of error at which the object stands at a given time with reference to a relatively specific goal. The feed-back is then negative, that is, the signals from the goal are used to restrict outputs which would otherwise go beyond the goal.⁶⁴

The models of positive and negative feedback loops allow the subject to conceptualize exceptional emotional states like anger, as well as strategies to cope with them. If a small disturbance enters a positive feedback loop, it leads to a rapid increase of the emotional intensity, causing an escalation of rage. If, on the other hand, the psychic system functions according to the principles of a negative feedback model, small disruptions do lead, not to an intensification or escalation of the disturbance, but to a corrective adjustment. Emotional equilibrium is restored. Cybernetics as a form of ethics proposes modes of living the good life and therefore primarily focuses on negative feedback control as a means of stabilization.⁶⁵ While negative feedback

loops progressively adjust to the uncontrollable contingencies of the environment, positive feedback amplifies those disturbances, creating instability and eventually loss of control.

The proximity of self-regulation—as conceptualized in cybernetics—to more wide-ranging theories of governmentality in general, and to ethics in particular, can already be found in theories of biological regulation from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁶ Like Ostwald's energetic imperative, the concept of homeostasis allows for the description of self-regulatory systems in organisms, the psyche, and social systems. Homeostasis, as defined by the American physiologist and biologist Walter Cannon, represents a "general principle of stabilization," constituted by "devices for maintaining constancy." In organisms, "the corrective agencies act, in the main, through a special portion of the nervous system which functions as a regulatory mechanism. For this regulation it employs, first, storage of materials as a means of adjustment between supply and demand, and, second, altered rates of continuous processes in the body."⁶⁷ Georges Canguilhem summarizes the influence of these biological models of regulation in cybernetics as follows: "The line of descent is well known: Claude Bernard *qui genuit* Cannon *qui genuit* Rosenblueth *apud* Wiener."⁶⁸ Already in its title, Cannon's most influential text, *The Wisdom of the Body*, first published in 1932, attempts to bridge the gap between the physiological and the psychological, between biology and ethics.⁶⁹ For Cannon, the body represents a specific type of wisdom; it not only has knowledge of itself but also is able to apply and make use of this knowledge. Much as a sage might use principles and philosophical doctrines to order and rule over his life, the body possesses an ability to regulate, govern, and stabilize itself.

In the last chapter of *The Wisdom of the Body*, Cannon explicitly calls for an application of the concept of biological homeostasis to society at large. For him, the "body physiologic" and the "body politic" cannot be separated. In the very last sentence, Cannon declares: "Just as social stabilization would foster the stability, both physical and mental, of the members of the social organism, so likewise it would foster their higher freedom, giving them serenity and leisure, which are the primary conditions for wholesome recreation, for the discovery of a satisfactory and invigorating social *milieu*, and for the discipline and enjoyment of individual aptitudes."⁷⁰ Jacques Lacan criticizes Freud precisely for his uncritical use of a homeostatic concept of the psyche. In *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique*

of *Psychoanalysis, 1954–1955*, Lacan states that Freud conceptualizes psychic reality as follows: “There is a close precinct, within which a certain equilibrium is maintained, through the action of a mechanism which we now call homeostasis, which absorbs, moderates the irruption of quantities of energy coming from the external world.”⁷¹ According to Lacan, Freud believes that the psychical and physical systems of the human being function according to the same laws, namely those of “inertia” (Freud’s term for homeostasis, a concept he does not invoke explicitly): that is, a dynamic model of charges, accumulations, and discharges of energy. But this regulatory model of the psycho-physical organization of the subject, which Lacan compares to the “equilibration of a machine,” poses problems for Freud, which he addresses in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.⁷² Here the symmetrical, complementary relationship between physical and psychical processes becomes questionable. What interrupts, according to Lacan, “has something disturbing about it. It is dissymmetrical. It doesn’t quite fit. Something in it eludes the system of equations and the evidence borrowed from the forms of thought of the register of energetics as they were introduced in the middle of the nineteenth century.”⁷³ It is precisely the unconscious that insistently returns in the form of a compulsion to repeat. This “insistence”—Lacan’s enigmatic translation of Freud’s notion of *Wiederholungszwang* (compulsion to repeat)—disrupts the belief in the establishment of a stable identity of the self. All attempts at (self)-regulation are affected by the insistence of the unconscious. In other words, the “law of regulation” as “discharge and return to the position of equilibrium” cannot account for the (re)emergence of uncanny, anxiety-inducing phenomena like *Unbehagen* (uneasiness) or *Unglück* (balefulness). Freud in “The Uncanny” explicitly ties the insistent experience of the compulsion to repeat to that of the uncanny:

How exactly we can trace back to infantile psychology the uncanny effect of such similar recurrences is a question I can only lightly touch on in these pages; and I must refer the reader instead to another work [i.e., *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which he was writing at the same time]. For it is possible to recognize the dominance in the unconscious mind of a “compulsion to repeat” proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts—a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their demonic character. . . . All these considerations prepare us for the discovery that

whatever reminds us of this inner "compulsion to repeat" is perceived as uncanny.⁷⁴

As the Sandman, an uncanny specter and *revenant*, returns to terrorize and finally destroy the life of Nathanael, the protagonist of Hoffmann's tale *The Sandman*, the malice and mischief of everyday objects continues to haunt a figure like A.E. from Vischer's novel *Another One*. Here it is the "insistence of the familiar which gives rise to what is uncanny."⁷⁵ Although in Vischer's demonology Hoffmann's terror is domesticated and ironized, the repetitive, returning quality of the uncanny remains. The compulsion to repeat beyond the pleasure principle disturbs the logic of an equilibrium produced by an organized series of charges and discharges. The uncanniness of malicious objects is beyond the pleasure principle insofar as it represents "the principle of regulation which enables us to inscribe the concrete functioning of man considered as a machine in a coherent system of symbolic formulations."⁷⁶ An object that "doesn't quite fit" intrudes into the regulatory system of the pleasure principle, repeatedly cropping up. As "when the little pegs refuse to go into the little holes," these instances of interruption, resisting their smooth integration into a symbolic order, cause anxiety.⁷⁷ This anxiety can manifest itself in feelings of horror (in the case of the uncanny), laughter (in jokes), or anger (in the experience of malicious objects). Rather than overcoming demonic chance, the circular logic of self-regulation creates phantoms, monsters, and demons, uncanny figurations of the repressed. They are the representations of that which refuses to be regulated and governed by "mechanisms of equilibration, of harmonization and of agreement."⁷⁸ It is in literary phantasms, slapstick routines, or pathological emotional outbursts like computer rage, that malicious objects crop up, disobeying the laws of presence and absence, the human and the machine, the animate and inanimate.

INTRODUCTION: HOW (NOT) TO DO THINGS WITH DOORS

1. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 96–97: “The Greeks had an appropriate term for ‘Things’: *pragmata*—that is to say, that which one has to do with in one’s concerned dealings (*praxis*). . . . We shall call those entities which we encounter in concern ‘equipment.’ In our dealings we come across equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement.”

2. See Hörisch, *Wissen der Literatur*.

3. For a discussion of the term *poetics of knowledge*, see Vogl, *Poetologien des Wissens*.

4. Doderer, “Kleine Vorbemerkung,” 17.

5. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 40.

6. Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” 140.

7. *Ibid.*, 147.

8. The notion of “object agency” has lately been developed in such diverse fields as the sociology of scientific knowledge, anthropological aesthetics, and literary theory. See Latour, “Where Are the Missing Masses?”; Gell, *Art and Agency*; Brown, “Thing Theory.”

9. Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” 140.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Latour, “Where Are the Missing Masses?,” 227. For a discussion of the similarities and differences between Adorno and Latour, see Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*, 67–72.

12. Latour, “Where Are the Missing Masses?,” 235.

13. *Ibid.*, 236.

14. Heidegger, “Thing,” 172; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 96.

15. *Ibid.*, 97.

16. *Ibid.*, 107, 105.

17. *Ibid.*, 104.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, 102.

20. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1528.

21. Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, 136: “Die ‘Tücke’ des Objekts ist ein dummer Anthropomorphismus.”

22. In this sense, the belief in the magical powers of malicious objects resembles—in reverse—forms of fetishization. Recently, theories of the fetish have been read as a paradigm for a new and different history of modernity. See Apter and Pietz, *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*; Böhme, *Fetischismus und Kultur*.

23. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 129.

24. Galen, "Diagnosis and Cure," 38.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Recently Latour has expanded his epistemology into the realm of politics. See Latour, *Politics of Nature*.

27. Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 103.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 18.

30. See Brewer and Porter, *Consumption*.

31. Porter, *Flesh*, 291.

32. Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire*.

33. On moral management as psychotherapy, see Porter, "Shaping Psychiatric Knowledge"; Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*. An important figure in the tradition of mechanical models is John Brown, for whom diseases originate in an imbalance of human excitability. See J. Brown, *Elements of Medicine*, 126.

34. For a discussion of the relationship between philosophy, anthropology, and medicine, see Riedel, *Anthropologie des jungen Schiller*; Koschorke, *Körperströme und Schriftverkehr*. On treatments of the whole human being, see Schings, *Ganze Mensch*.

35. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 187–88.

36. Duncan Large gives an account of Germany's fascination with Sterne. He writes: "The German-speaking world took Sterne to its bosom in the late 1760s in the waning of the late Enlightenment period, and the two have never ever really fallen out since. Sterne has proved somewhat of a man for all seasons, constantly reperceived, reinvented, reappropriated by successive generations of German intellectuals and the broader reading public." See Large, "'Sterne-Bilder,'" 70.

37. See Michelsen, *Laurence Sterne*.

38. Uwe C. Steiner, although not mentioning Doderer, proposes a similar genealogy of the "literary knowledge of the thing," from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. See Steiner, "Widerstand im Gegenstand," 245: "Es gibt also ein Wissen vom Ding, das (noch) kein wissenschaftliches bzw. literaturwissenschaftliches ist. Das erhärtet ein Blick auf die epische Tradition. Ich beziehe mich hauptsächlich auf jenen Traditionsstrang, der sich mindestens zu Laurence Sterne und Jean Paul zurückverfolgen lässt und der 1878 kulminiert, als der gewesene Hegelianer Friedrich Theodor Vischer seinen bis in die 1920er Jahre eminent erfolgreichen Roman *Auch Einer* veröffentlicht."

39. Sterne, *Life and Opinions*, 646.

40. See Fleming, *Pleasures of Abandonment*.

41. Sterne, *Life and Opinions*, 184.

42. *Ibid.*, 2.

43. Ibid., 182–83.
44. Jean Paul, "Über die natürliche Magie."
45. Müller, *Jean Pauls Ästhetik*, 81–86.
46. Cf. Tismar, *Gestörte Idyllen*.
47. For a discussion of the ambiguous status of the term *pharmakon*, see Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy."
48. Vischer, *Auch Einer*, 509.
49. Jacques Derrida, "My Chances," 26.
50. Brown, *Sense of Things*, 5.
51. The quote here is from *ibid.*, 4.
52. Vischer, "Mein Lebensgang," 511.
53. For a discussion of Jean Paul's influence on nineteenth-century aesthetics in general and Vischer in particular, see Müller, "Zur Bedeutung Jean Pauls." On the nineteenth-century discussion of projection, see Müller-Tamm, *Abstraktion als Einfühlung*.
54. Derrida, "My Chances," 25.
55. Sigmund Freud, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, 163.
56. Ibid.
57. Derrida, "My Chances," 20.
58. Freud, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, 257.
59. Ibid., 20.
60. Blumenberg, "Lebenswelt und Technisierung," 35. For a discussion of the technical artifact of the door as a cultural signifier, see Siegert, "Türen."
61. Blumenberg, "Lebenswelt und Technisierung," 36.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., 37.
64. Mayer, "Über Auslösung," 12.
65. Ibid., 16.
66. Bernays, "Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung," 74.
67. Bernays, "Aristotle," 160.
68. One subcategory of the tendentious joke is the so-called *Aufsitzer* (shaggy-dog story), which etymologically is connected to *Aufsässigkeit* (obstinacy), the notion Heidegger uses to illustrate recalcitrant equipment.
69. Freud, *Jokes*, 136.
70. Ibid., 137.
71. Weber, *Legend of Freud*, 126.
72. Nietzsche's breakdown in Turin, compassionately embracing a horse, uncannily resembles the scene in Vischer's *Auch Einer* in which Albert Einhardt gets fatally injured while trying to protect a horse from being beaten. See Grimm, "Embracing Two Horses."
73. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 326.
74. Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 139.
75. Ibid.
76. Cf. Mittasch, *Friedrich Nietzsche als Naturphilosoph*; Brusotti, *Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis*.
77. Nietzsche's theory of self-ignition not only is rooted in his reception of Mayer's "On Ignition" but also can be traced back to rhetorical models

of self-affection. For a reconstruction of these methods of self-affection in rhetoric, see Campe, "Affizieren und Selbstaffizieren," 135-52.

78. See Ostwald, *Energetische Imperativ*. See also Rieger, *Individualität der Medien*.

79. Rieger, *Individualität der Medien*, 13.

80. Doderer, *Merowingians*, 5.

81. Doderer, *Repertorium*, 273.

82. In this context, *The Merowingians* can be read as a variation of Heidegger's interpretation of the doctrine of "nihil est sine ratione" in *Der Satz vom Grund* [*The Principle of Reason*]. See Heidegger, *Principle of Reason*.

83. Doderer, "Sexualität und totaler Staat."

84. Luft, *Eros and Inwardness*, 158.

85. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 97; Heidegger, "Origin of the Work," 26.

86. Doderer, *Merowingians*, 412. For an English translation of Heidegger, see the translator's notes: "From the thinging of the thing it comes to pass and just then determines also the presence of the present.' 'But how does the thing present? The thing things. The thinging assembles.'"

87. *Ibid.*, 413.

88. Heidegger, "Thing," 179.

89. Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?*, 38.

90. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 54.

91. *Ibid.*

92. *Ibid.*, 25.

93. *Ibid.*, 54.

94. "New autochthony" in *ibid.*, 53.

95. See Hörl, "Offene Maschine," 54.

96. Doderer, *Merowingians*, 168. Doderer, using Latin and English to represent ancient Rome and Anglo-American modernity, gestures toward an uncanny correspondence between Stoic anger control and the industrialized production of objects.

I. "WHEN THINGS MOVE UPON BAD HINGES": STERNE AND STOICISM

1. Sterne, *Life and Opinions*, 10-11; this and subsequent citations in the chapter are to Melvin and Joan New's edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

2. Cf. Brewer and Porter, *Consumption*. Michael Rosenblum points out Sterne's importance for the history of literary representations of the everyday. See Rosenblum, "Why What Happens," 171: "Unlike Fielding and Reynolds, Sterne sees that the quotidian is compatible with having a story worth the telling. Although the representation is not fully 'promiscuous' in the sense that Johnson fears and contemporary critics admire . . . , it nevertheless makes a contribution to the history of the everyday, a beginning at least in giving representation to what Lefebvre describes as 'the immense wealth that the humblest facts of everyday life contain.'"

173. For Doderer, the underlying psychological structure of a generalized refusal to apperceive did not disappear with the end of the Nazi regime but remained to exercise an “uncanny insistence.” The project of “humanization” (*Menschwerdung*), therefore, must be understood as a way of overcoming this insistence. All of Doderer’s comments on the Third Reich have to be read against the background of his own involvement with Nazism and his anti-Semitism in the thirties and forties. He joined the Austrian branch of the German Nazi Party as early as April 1, 1933, and remained a member until 1945. In the context of this study, all of the manifold political as well as biographical implications of Doderer’s own “refusal to perceive” and his attempts in the fifties and sixties to come to terms with them (and whether they were successful or merely superficial) cannot be analyzed sufficiently. For a discussion of Doderer’s political involvements, see Sommer, “In die ‘Sackgasse,’” and Sommer, “Entbehrliche Dr. Hartog.”

174. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1273. See Koller, “Von Abergel bis Silken”; McInnes, “Literary Onomastics”; Winterstein, “Torpedierung und Apologie,” 319.

EPILOGUE

1. For the prehistory of Ostwald’s concept of *energetics*, see Rabinbach, *Human Motor*.

2. Ostwald, “Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Stellung der Energetik,” 100.

3. Ostwald, “Energetische Imperativ,” 83. See Rabinbach, *Human Motor*, 182: “No area of human endeavour was untouched by the laws of energy. The entire effort of civilization, Ostwald maintained, was devoted to converting raw energy into available energy. . . . All progress can thus be measured by the efficiency of energy conversion, by the elimination of waste, and by the coordination of energies to maximize efficiency.”

4. Ostwald, “Energetische Imperativ,” 83.

5. *Ibid.*, 84.

6. *Ibid.*, 85.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Ostwald, “Praktische Philosophie,” 126.

9. See Rabinbach, *Human Motor*, 254: “Significantly, the German reception of Taylor’s ideas was smoothed by their presentation in the language of energetics. The German translation (1912) of his study, *Principles of Scientific Management*, was introduced as a ‘system of budgeting human labor power,’ and its translator, the Berlin engineer Rudolf Roesler, remarked on many parallels between Taylor’s ideas and those of Wilhelm Ostwald, whose *Der energetische Imperativ* appeared the previous year.”

10. Ostwald, “Wie der energetische Imperativ entstand,” 14.

11. Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics*, 30–31.

12. Ostwald, “Maschinen und Lebewesen,” 135.

13. *Ibid.*, 130. Against traditional histories of technology that attempted to explain organisms in terms of technology—most famously represented by

Ernst Kapp's *Organprojektion*—Ostwald reverses the perspective and conceptualizes machines in terms of organisms.

14. *Ibid.*, 131.

15. *Ibid.*, 132.

16. *Ibid.*, 133.

17. Rieger, *Individualität der Medien*, 12.

18. Münsterberg, *Grundzüge der Psychotechnik*, 389, quoted and translated in Rabinbach, *Human Motor*, 192.

19. Killen, "Weimar Psychotechnics," 60.

20. Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*, 17.

21. *Ibid.*, 114.

22. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 191.

23. Killen, "Weimar Psychotechnics," 60–61.

24. The term *psychopower*, analogous to Foucault's notion of *biopower*, was coined by Jackie Orr. See Orr, *Panic Diaries*.

25. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 160.

26. Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents," 77. Subsequent citations to this work are given parenthetically in the text.

27. Giese, *Psychotechnik*, 7.

28. See Strachey, "Editor's Introduction," 59–60: "The original title chosen for it [*Das Unbehagen in der Natur*,] by Freud was 'Das Unglück in der Natur' ('Unhappiness in Civilization'); but 'Unglück' was later altered to 'Unbehagen'—a word for which it was difficult to choose an English equivalent, though the French 'malaise' might have served. Freud suggested 'Man's Discomfort in Civilization' in a letter to his translator, Mrs. Riviere; but it was she herself who found the ideal solution of the difficulty in the title that was finally adopted."

29. See Brunner, "Naked Mother."

30. See Freud, "Uncanny." "What interests us most in this long excerpt is to find that among its different shades of meaning the word 'heimlich' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, 'unheimlich.' What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*."

31. Grubrich-Simitis, *Back to Freud's Texts*, 168.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Ronell, *Telephone Book*, 88.

34. Jones, *Life and Work of Freud*, 3:95. For a discussion of Freud's prosthetic existence, see Wills, *Prosthesis*, 92–129, and Ronell, *Telephone Book*, 88.

35. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*. In the chapter "The Gadget Lover: Narcissus as Narcosis," McLuhan discusses technology in terms of amputation and prosthesis.

36. See Johnson, *Persons and Things*, 89: "Organic form might always have been a fantasy."

37. Cf. Serres, *Parasite*.

38. Assad, *Reading with Michel Serres*, 18.

39. Asendorf, *Ströme und Strahlen*, 119.

40. Jacques Lacan suggests replacing the notion of human sciences with that of "conjectural sciences." See Lacan, *Ego in Freud's Theory*, 296. On

the "farewell to the corporeal," see Kamper, "Corpus absconditum," 445, quoted in Rieger, *Kybernetische Anthropologie*, 108.

41. Asendorf, *Batteries of Life*, 133.

42. Cassirer, *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*.

43. Freud, "Analysis of a Phobia," 104.

44. Rieger, *Kybernetische Anthropologie*, 108-9.

45. On the history of the term *projection* in nineteenth-century philosophy, physiology, ethnology, and psychology, see Müller-Tamm, *Abstraktion als Einfühlung*.

46. Rieger, *Kybernetische Anthropologie*, 109.

47. Petroski, *Evolution of Useful Things*, 20.

48. Cassirer, "Form und Technik," 176.

49. *Ibid.*, 177.

50. *Ibid.*, 176. In a similar vein, Blumenberg perceives rhetoric as a technique dealing with what is possible, not with what is. See Blumenberg, "Anthropological Approach."

51. Blumenberg, "Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Möglichkeit," 53-54.

52. Haverkamp, *Figura Cryptica*, 17.

53. Bloch, *Spuren*, 172.

54. *Ibid.*, 161.

55. For a discussion of the traumatic experience of the railway accident in the nineteenth century, see Fischer-Homberger, "Eisenbahnunfall." See also Harrington, "Railway Accident." For the cultural significance of the railway and especially the railway journey in the nineteenth century, see Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*.

56. See Bloch, "Technology and Ghostly Apparitions," 315: "Whereas the failure of an electric bulb does not betray the existence of any spirit world acting to suppress the light, but only the existence of a short-circuit or a power-station shutdown."

57. Bloch, "Anxiety of the Engineer," 310.

58. Bloch, *Spuren*, 161.

59. Bloch, "Anxiety of the Engineer," 312.

60. Virilio, *Original Accident*, 10: "To invent the sailing ship or steamer is to *invent the shipwreck*. To invent the train is to *invent the rail accident* of derailment. To invent the family automobile is to produce the *pile-up* on the highway."

61. Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto," 164.

62. Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 68.

63. Wiener, *Human Use of Human Beings*, 17-18.

64. Rosenblueth, Wiener, and Bigelow, "Behavior, Purpose, and Teleology," 18.

65. See Foerster, "Ethics and Second-Order Cybernetics."

66. See Foucault, "Governmentality."

67. Cannon, *Wisdom of the Body*, 303. On Cannon's concept of homeostasis, see Tanner, "'Weisheit des Körpers.'"

68. Canguilhem, "Development of the Concept," 82.

69. See Cannon, *Wisdom of the Body*, xiv–xv: “In 1923, the late Professor E. H. Starling, of University College, London, gave the Harveian Oration before the Royal College of Physicians. . . . His oration he entitled ‘The Wisdom of the Body.’ Only by understanding the wisdom of the body, he declared, shall we attain that ‘mastery of disease and pain which will enable us to relieve the burden of mankind.’ Because of my own convictions coincide with those of Professor Starling, and because the facts and interpretations which I shall offer illustrate his point of view, I have chosen to give the title of his oration to the present volume.”

70. *Ibid.*, 324. Tanner, in “Weisheit des Körpers,” 144–45, summarizes this interaction of physis and thesis, nature and culture, in Cannon as follows: “Menschen sind biologisch auf Kultur angewiesen. Sie sind nicht nur ein Körper—sie ‘haben’ auch einen, sie verwenden ihn als ursprüngliches Artefakt und machen ihn zum Gegenstand von Reflexion und Intervention.”

71. Lacan, *Ego in Freud’s Theory*, 60. See also Laplanche and Pontalis, *Language of Psycho-Analysis*, 342: “When Freud—as well as Breuer—postulates a law of constancy as part of the groundwork of psychology, he is only confronting in his turn a requirement which was very widely acknowledged in the scientific circles of the latter part of the nineteenth century—namely, the call to extend the most general principles of physics, in so far as these stand at the very basis of all science, to psychology and psychophysiology.”

72. Lacan, *Ego in Freud’s Theory*, 60.

73. *Ibid.*, 61.

74. Freud, “Uncanny,” 237.

75. Cixous, “Fiction and Its Phantoms,” 542.

76. Lacan, *Ego in Freud’s Theory*, 62.

77. Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 103.

78. Lacan, *Ego in Freud’s Theory*, 90.

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