

**COMMUNITY AT  
LOOSE ENDS**

**Edited by the  
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**COMMUNITY**

# Of Being-in-Common

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What could be more common than to be, than being? We are. Being, or existence, is what we share. When it comes to sharing nonexistence, we are not here. Nonexistence is not for sharing. But being is not a thing that we could possess in common. Being is in no way different from existence, which is singular each time. We shall say then that being is not common in the sense of a common property, but that it is in common. Being is in common. What could be simpler to establish? And yet, is there anything of which ontology has been more unaware up to now?

We are quite far from having reached the point where ontology would be directly available without any delay as something communal, where—according to the strict logic of its withdrawal and its difference—being would withdraw into the being-in-common of existing beings (and here I am bracketing the question of whether to extend “existence” to all beings or only to certain of them such as people, animals, and so forth). Henceforth the question should be the community of being, and not the being of community. Or if you prefer: the community of existence, and not the essence of community.

(Even so, it is not certain that the point of communitary ontology can be “reached” in the manner of a locatable stage in an incremental process of philosophical knowledge. The community of being is not merely some truth that has been unknown or rediscovered by an obstinately individualist, solipsistic, or monadic tradition. It is likely that the experience of this community is also buried in this whole tradition, and that for reasons that are surely fundamental, it is accessible only to a praxis whose “theoretical” burial is, in a manner of speaking,

constitutive. In a certain vocabulary, one could say that the experience of being-in-common is no doubt more self-evident and even more remote, even more “thoughtless” than the Cartesian experience of existence—an experience and a self-evidence that for Descartes are already *common*. But this “thoughtlessness,” as a praxis, has all the power of permanent subversion or revolution that constitute what we call “thought.” But be that as it may, today I am only proposing to discern the preliminary conditions for accepting “thought” in this sense.)

In imitation of a statement of Kant’s thesis on being, one could say: *Community is not a predicate of being or of existence. One changes nothing in the concept of existence by adding or subtracting communitary character. Community is simply the real position of existence.*

No doubt this imitation has pedagogical virtue. It should give us to understand that being-in-common, or being-with, cannot be added in a secondary and extrinsic way to being-oneself or being-in-solitude. Such an imitation should even give us to understand that Heidegger’s *Mitsein*, and even his *Mit-da-sein*, is not thought out as radically or as decisively as it should be. It would really need to be understood that the “mit” does not modify the “sein” (as if being could already sustain itself in some way, as if being *were itself*; that is, as if being *were* or *existed* absolutely); and it would need to be understood that the “mit” does not even qualify the “Dasein,” but that it constitutes it essentially. In a baroque German, I would point to a “*seindamit*,” or to the “with” as itself a modality, both exclusive and originary of “being-there” or of being-the-there.

But such an imitation of Kant immediately betrays its impropriety. For existence, conceived as a predicate, was supposed to link up with the concept of a thing (which Kant denies). Yet, by virtue of Kant’s thesis, existence itself is neither a concept nor a thing. Kant calls it a limit thesis. (And Kant’s thesis, once transformed, gives us Heidegger’s thesis on the ontological difference, which is itself a limit-thesis for any ontological thesis.) Existence is “the simple position” of the thing. Being is neither substance nor cause of the thing; rather, it is a being-the-thing in which the verb “to be” has a transitive value of a “positioning,” but one in which the “positioning” is based on nothing else but (and because of nothing else) than on (and because of) *Dasein*, being-there, being thrown down, given over, abandoned, offered up by existence. (The *there* is not a grounding for existence, but rather its taking *place*, its arrival, its coming—which also means its difference, its withdrawal, its excess, its “exscription.”)

In saying that community is the position of existence, we are saying that community is the position of the position. Indeed it is. We are saying that community is the decisive mode of the positing of position (and consequently, of being). How can that be understood?

That means: In existence and as existence, position (Kant's *Setzung* as distinct from his notion of *Position*) never posits *an* instance of existence as *a* distinct thing, independent, related to the unity and unicity of its essence. It is a matter of existence and not of essence. Existence is the essence, if you like, but insofar as it is posited. In the positing, essence is offered or given. That is, essence is exposed to being, or to existing, outside of being as a simple subsistence, or as an immanence.

In immanent subsistence, there is no *self*—in French, no *soi*. There is an essence, with its predicates, but no *self*, no *soi* of that essence or for that essence. If one is rigorous about it, one can not even say that it is “present to itself.” Or else, this presence is such that it becomes confused with the night of an absence where nothing can be distinguished.

In the position, that is—you are no doubt ahead of me—in the *ex*-position, in the being-abandoned-to-the-world, essence is exposed. To what is it exposed? To nothing other than itself. This could be formulated in a very Hegelian way. For that matter, the sole task for an ontology of community is, *through* thinking about being and its *différance*, to radicalize or to aggravate Hegelian thinking about the Self until it caves in. But as I was saying, this could be formulated in a very Hegelian way, namely, that essence is exposed to being *of* itself, *for* itself, and *unto* itself what it is *in* itself. (This is basically what Heidegger talks about in his thesis on the *Jemeinigkeit* of existence, but this enunciation has the drawback of veiling the Self under the Ego. It leads to the ambiguity of appropriations that are individual, subjective, and unilateral, despite the related theme of the *Mitsein*, which for this reason must also be radicalized.)

The Self to which existence exposes is not a property subsisting before that exposition and which then would be mediated dialectically. The reason is simply that there is not “Self.” (Grammatically speaking, *Self*—as in the French *soi*—is an object exactly like the reflexive pronoun *se* with which it forms a pair, and exactly like the French word for “others,” *autrui*, which, as Lévinas has pointed out, also has this particularity of being an “objective case.”) “Soi” has no nominative case, but is always declined. It is always the object or the complement of an action, an address, or an attribution. “Soi” is always only to “soi,” of “soi,” for “soi,” and so forth. And whatever paradox we must see in this, “soi” is not *subject*. To be *to* “soi,” and not to *be* “soi,” is the condition of the being of existence, as exposition. Stated another way, “soi” is being in the objective case, and there is no other *case* of being. That’s where it *falls* (*cadere*, *casus*), that is its essential accident (*accidere*), or it is the accident of essence insofar as essence *is*, and does not subsist. “Soi” is the arrival, the coming, the event of being.

Thus we will have to say that in itself—*en soi*—essence is not subsistence and property, but rather being *unto* itself, being exposed to the declension of existing. Essence is *in* itself existence. In the final analysis that is the meaning of Heideg-

ger's axiom that existence is the essence of the *Dasein*. I have had occasion to transcribe that by saying existence is without essence. Although that's probably a handy formula, it is more correct and precise—and also more difficult—to say that the essence of essence is existence. Meanwhile, to prevent this new essence from becoming a superessence, a foundation or a substance, we will have to make clear that the verb “is” in this formulation must take on the transitive value that Heidegger is attempting to give as its true value in *Was ist das, die Philosophie?* A “true value,” moreover, that cannot be semanticized, a transitive sense that transpierces all “sense.” All ontology is reduced to the transitivity of being.

Essence exposes *itself*—*s'*expose—essentially to existence. It exposes “soi” to being-unto-itself. The “unto-itself” defines the boundary, the limit or the fold of declension where “soi” is “on its own,” *other before* any assignment of same and other. (I could speak of it in terms of “relation,” except that “relation” is still too exterior for something which does not allow separation of interiors from exteriors.) Despite what Hegel maintained, “soi” is not just the “soi” of self-consciousness needing to be recognized in order to recognize *itself*. Nor is it merely, as Lévinas claims, hostage to others. It is “in itself” an objective case, the other of its declension. “Being-self” is being-unto itself, being-exposed-to-itself; but “soi” in itself *is nothing but the exposition*. Being-unto-itself is being-unto-exposition. It is being-unto-others, if “others” declines “in itself and for itself” the declension of “soi.” All ontology can be reduced to this being-unto-self-unto-others. Transitively, essence *is* nothing more than the exposition of its subsistence: the exposed face of what subsists, existing only insofar as it is exposed, forever unavailable and beyond appropriation for the interior of subsistence and for its thick, opaque, unexposed, immanent—in a word: inaccessible—for its inexistent center.

The unexposable (or the unrepresentable) is the inexistent. On the contrary, existence is only the presence to “self” in which the “to” declines, differentiates, and essentially alters the “self” for *being*, which is to say, for *existing*, which is to say, for *exposing*. The becoming-self “of” the self is a becoming-imperceptible, as Deleuze might say: imperceptible to any assignment of essence. Becoming-self is the undefined extension of the surface where substance is exposed. For that reason it is a becoming-other which includes no mediation of the same and the other. There is no alchemy of subjects. There is an extensive/intensive dynamic of the surfaces of exposition. These surfaces are the limits upon which the self declines *itself*. They partition and share being and existence.

This is what we will transcribe by saying that there is no communion, there is no common being, but there is being *in* common. Once ontology becomes this logic of being in itself as being *to* itself, all ontology can be reduced to the in-common of the *unto*-itself. This “reduction,” or this total reevaluation, or this revolution of ontology, though dimly perceived, is probably what has been happening to us since Hegel and Marx, since Heidegger and Bataille. The meaning

of being is not common, and yet the *in*-common of being transpierces all meaning. To put it in another way: existence *is* only in being partitioned and shared. But this partition, which we could call the “unto-itselfness” of existence, does not distribute a substance or a common meaning. It parcels out only the exposition of being, the declension of self, the faceless trembling of exposed identity: *we* are what it divides and parcels out.

At its limit, philosophy thus has to do with this: that sense does not coincide with being. Or, in a more difficult and demanding way, we could say that the sense of being is not to be found in a coincidence of being with itself (at least for as long as being is presumed to be the place of sense, and of a sense that is presentable in the ideal identity of a self-constituting signification, a privileged example of which would be in community, or in the common sense of common being). Philosophy thus has to do with the limit where community is also suspended. There is no self-communication of sense, and community perhaps has nothing, or above all is nothing common. Above all it does not even have any co-humanity and no longer any co-naturality or co-presence with whatever there may be of a world that community makes uninhabitable for itself to the degree that it invests it. At its limits—those of community, of philosophy—the world is not a *world*, it is a heap, and perhaps a foul one (*un monde immonde*).

This is where we are now, that is what makes our *era*, an era which can only think itself, in sum, as a limit to an era, if it is true that an “era” is a form or an aspect of the “world.” Significations are suspended. We can no longer say, “Here is sense, here is co-humanity, and here is its philosophy—or here are its philosophies, in their fertile competition.” And the gesture of philosophy offers itself nakedly and emptily, as if to be reinvented. Not reinvented in order to discover other significations, but henceforth to be only on the limit. Philosophy offers itself as a gesture toward the sense of sense, a gesture toward an unheard-of exteriority beyond appropriation. (The only thing we know is that sense cannot appropriate to itself the real, it cannot appropriate existence. It is not the meaningful self-constitution of the essence of the real.) Such is the “sense” of all the major “themes” of contemporary thought, whether one is speaking of “being,” of “language,” of “the other,” “singularity,” “writing,” “mimesis, “multiplicities,” “the event,” “the body,” or many others still. In so many forms, forms that are not necessarily compatible, it is always a question of what we could call, in the traditional lexicon of doctrines, a realism of unappropriable truth. Which above all does not mean “of absent truth.”

But in what way would truth be henceforth “present,” or would it come to presence, if the constitution of a common sense and of the common-being of sense is abandoned at its limits?

Community, perhaps, must give us a few indications. Or more exactly, it is the “end” of any attempt to appropriate the sense of community, which ought to give us indications (the end of attempts to appropriate “love,” “family,” “state,” “communion,” the “people,” and so on). At this end point, this limit where we are, there remains in spite of everything—and it shows therefore—that *we* are there. The era of the limit abandons us together on the limit, for if not, it would not be an “era” or a “limit,” and “we” would not be there. If we suppose that there was before (or elsewhere) something else, we can say that there remains this remainder of community that we are *in* common, within—or faced with—the disconnection of common sense. At least we are with one another, or together. Although that appears *de facto* obvious, we can pass no law in its favor (we can link it to no essence of co-humanity), but it persists and resists, *de facto*, in a kind of material insignificance. Can we, on the limit, try to decipher this in-significance?

We are *in* common, *with* one another. What do this “in” and this “with” mean? (Or to put it another way, what does “we” mean, what is the meaning of this pronoun which, in one way or another, must be inscribed in any discourse?)

It is not only, it is not so much, the question of *a* sense, but it is rather a question of the place, the space-time, the mode, the system of signification in general, if by definition sense communicates, communicates itself and causes communication. And that is why this deciphering can no longer be simply philosophical. That is why it can only take place at the end of philosophy—and of all logic, grammar, and literature in general. “We”: first-person plural. Let us try to represent to one another the difficulty of this simple designation. “With,” “together,” or “in common” obviously do not mean “in one another,” nor do they mean “in each other’s place.” That would imply an exteriority. (Even in love, one is “in” the other only outside the other. The child “in” its mother is also exterior in that interiority, although in quite another way. And in the most assembled crowd, one is not in the place of the other.) But “with” does not mean “next to,” or “juxtaposed,” either. The logic of the “with”—of the being-with, of the *Mitsein* that Heidegger makes contemporary and correlative with the *Dasein*—is the singular logic of an inside-outside. It is perhaps the very logic of singularity in general. And it would thus be the logic of what belongs neither to the pure inside nor to the pure outside. (Inside and outside in fact merge. To be purely outside, outside of everything [ab-solute], would mean to be purely in-itself, apart from itself, to itself, *without even* having the possibility of distinguishing itself as “itself.”) A logic of the limit pertains to what is between two or several, belonging to all and to none—not belonging to itself, either.

(It is not certain that this logic is restricted to man, nor even to living beings. Would not stones, mountains, the bodies of a galaxy be “together” seen from a certain perspective not ours? It is a question that we will leave here without an answer, the question of the community of the world.)

To begin with, the logic of being-with corresponds to nothing other than what we could call the banal phenomenology of unorganized groups of people. Passengers in the same train compartment are simply seated next to each other in an accidental, arbitrary, and completely exterior manner. They are not linked. But they are also quite together inasmuch as they are travelers on this train, in this same space and for this same period of time. They are between the disintegration of the “crowd” and the aggregation of the group, both extremes remaining possible, virtual, and near at every moment. This suspension is what makes “being-with”: a relation without relation, or rather, being exposed simultaneously to relationship and to absence of relationship. Such an exposure is made up of the simultaneous immanence of the retreat and the coming of the relation, and it can be decided at any moment by the least incident—or more probably, and more secretly, it never ceases being decided at each instant—in one direction or in the other, in one direction *and* in the other, in “freedom” and in “necessity,” in “consciousness” and in “unconsciousness,” the undecided decision of stranger and neighbor, of solitude and collectivity, of attraction and repulsion.

This exposure to relation/nonrelation is nothing other than the exposure of singularities to each other. (I say “singularities” because these are not only individuals that are at stake, as a facile description would lead one to believe. Entire collectivities, groups, powers, and discourses are exposed here, “within” each individual as well as among them. “Singularity” would designate precisely that which, each time, forms a point of exposure, traces an intersection of limits on which there is exposure.) To be exposed is to be on the limit where, at the same time, there is both inside and outside, and neither inside nor outside. It is not yet even to be “face to face.” It is anterior to entrapment by the stare that captures its prey or takes its hostage. Exposure comes before any identification, and singularity is not an identity. It is exposure itself, its punctual actuality. (But identity, whether individual or collective, is not a sum total of singularities; it is itself a singularity.) It is to be “in oneself” according to a partition of “self” (meaning both a division and a distribution), it is constitutive of “self,” a generalized ectopia of all “proper” places (such as intimacy, identity, individuality, name), places that are what they are only by virtue of being exposed on their limits, by their limits, and as these very limits. That does not mean that there is nothing “proper” to these places, but that the proper would be brought about essentially by a “cleaving” or by a “schism.” Which means that the proper is without essence, and yet, is exposed.

Can there be any other mode of being other than one in which *being* is never “being,” but is always modalized in the exposing? This mode of being, of existing—without presupposing that there is exposition (which is what “exposition” means in the first place), does presuppose that there is no common being, no substance, no essence, or common identity, but that there is being *in* common. If relation must be posed between two terms already provided, between two



given existences, the *in* (the *with*, the Latin *cum* of “community”) does not designate any mode of the relation. It would designate rather a being *insofar as it is* relation, identical to existence itself—that is, identical to the arrival of existence, to existence. And yet, neither the term “being” nor the term “relation” names that adequately, even when they are placed in this relationship of equivalence, because here there is not an equivalence of terms, which would once again make a relation exterior to “being” and to “relation.” Instead we will have to settle for the formulation that being is *in* common, without ever being common.

Nothing is more common than being: it is the self-evidence of existence. Nothing is more uncommon than being: it is the self-evidence of community. Both the one and the other reveal the self-evidence of thought without being philosophies of revelation. For each divides and shares the other, denying it its self-evidence. Being, by itself, is not its own evidence of itself. It is not equal to itself nor to its meaning. That’s what existence is, that’s what community is, and that’s what exposes them. Each is the bringing into play of the other. The *in* play of the *in* common: what gives play, and birth, to thought, even to the “play” of these words in which, in reality, nothing less than *our* communication is exposed (a communication that is itself exposed to the lack of commonality, to the absence of “common measure” between language and the translucidity that we are presuming in a “communication” that would be communicating a supposed common sense instead of communicating the sense of “us”).

*The in-play of the in-common.* To think that, without respite, is “philosophy,” or what is left of it at its end, if it remains communal; that is politics, that is art, or what remains of it that is walking in the street, that is crossing borders, that is celebration and mourning; that is to be hard at it, or sitting in a train compartment; that is knowing how capital capitalizes the common and dissolves the *in* (of *in* common); that is always to ask what “revolution” means, what revolution wants to experience; that is resistance, that is existence.

Being “is” the *in* that divides and joins at the same time, that “partitions and shares,” the limit where partitioning and sharing are exposed. (We should say: being is in the “in,” inside of what has no inside.) The limit is nothing: it is nothing but this extreme *abandonment* in which all property, all singular instance of property, in order to be what it is, is first of all given over to the outside (but not to the outside of an inside . . .). Can we think this abandon in which the *propre* happens, being first—that is to say from the start, beginning at the edge, from the border of its property—being first received, perceived, felt, touched, handled, desired, rejected, called up, named, communicated? In truth, this abandon is very much anterior to birth, or else it is nothing else but birth itself, the infinite birth unto the death that finishes it by achieving abandonment. And this abandonment abandons to nothing else but being-in-common, that is not to say,

to *particular* communication or to *particular* community—as if they were instances of reception or of recording. But abandonment itself “communicates”; it communicates singularity to itself by an infinite “outside,” *as* this infinite “outside.” It makes the *propre* happen (person, group, assembly, society, people, and so on) by exposing it. This advent is what Heidegger called *Ereignis*, that is, “appropriation,” but also and from the start, “event.” Event is not the event that takes place, but the coming of a place, of a space-time as such, the tracing of its limit, its exposure.

Can this exposition be exposed? Can it be presented or represented? (And what concept fits here? Is it a matter of representing, of signifying, of staging or gaming?) Can we present the sense of the *in*-common through which only sense in general is possible?

If we do so, if we assign and show the being (or the essence) of the *in*-common, and if as a consequence we present community to itself (in a people, a State, a mind, a destiny, a work), sense thus (re)presented immediately undoes the whole exposition and with it, the sense of sense itself. But if we do not do it, if the exposition itself remains unexposed, which means in fact that we represent that there is nothing to present of the *in*-common except the repetition of a “human condition” that does not even attain a “co-humanity” (a flat condition that is neither human nor inhuman), then the sense of the sense crumbles as well. Everything tips over into a juxtaposition without relationships and without singularities. The identity of the one or the identity of the multiple (of nonidentity) are identical, and do not affect the plural exposition of the *in*, do not affect *our* exposure.

Whatever we do, however, or whatever we don’t do, nothing takes place, nothing truly takes place but this exposition. Its necessity is the very opening of what, because we cannot linger over these words here, I will call liberty, equality, justice, fraternity. Even so, if nothing takes place but this exposure—that is to say, if being *in* common resists communion and disaggregation invincibly—that this exposition and this resistance are neither immediate nor immanent. They are not a given that could be affirmed by merely picking it up. It is certain that being-in-common insists and resists, otherwise I would not even have written this and you would never have read it. But that does not entail the conclusion that all we have to do is to say it to expose it. The necessity of being-in-common is not that of a physical law, and whoever wants to expose it must also expose himself (that is what we can call “thought,” “writing,” *and* their partition and sharing). On the contrary, the complacency that threatens any discourse of community (mine too, therefore) is this: to think that one is (re)presenting, by one’s own communication, a co-humanity whose truth, however, is not a given and (re)presentable essence.

What is given, what is signified today is much more on the order of a tirelessly dialecticized identity of identity and nonidentity (one/multiple, individual/

collective, conscious/unconscious, will/material forces, ethics/economics, and so forth). That is perhaps what we are including under the heading “technics”: the co-humanity of an an-humanity, a community of operations, not of existences. “Technics” could just as likely be the completed form of a reciprocal constitution of being and sense, as it could the hyperbolic form of their infinite disjunction. That may be what has made possible the recurrent and invariable alternation of valorizations and devalorizations of this same “technics” for so many centuries. But that may be the very thing—not what is happening in satellites or in fiber optics, but what we think of confusedly as “technics”—that the “given” is hiding from us even as it persists in being *offered up* as the *in*. We do not seize control, we do not appropriate what is offered up. Or rather, in the very appropriation that accepts and that receives the offering, one remains exposed to the suspense (and to the freedom) of the offering, and to what is not appropriable in it.

Henceforth, then, there may well be a task that is indissociably and perhaps even indiscernibly “philosophical” and “communitary” (a task for thought and politics, if these words fit without further examination), and that task would be to expose the unexposable *in*. To *expose* it, which is to say, in presenting or representing it, to make the (re)presentation itself, in turn, the site and the focus of an exposition; so that thought itself might risk itself and abandon itself to “community,” and “community” to “thought.” That might immediately conjure up the figure of a “thinking community,” of Rabelais’s Abbaye de Thélème or of a romantic literary society fancying itself a republic (a republic of kings), or something like a “literary communism.” (I recently used that expression; its equivocal character makes me reject it now. I am not speaking here of a community of letters. . . .) But it is not a question of everyone being a philosopher (as Marx hoped at one point), no more than it is a question of having philosophy “reign” (as Plato wanted). Or else, it is a matter of one and the other at the same time, of one against the other (then it becomes thinking on the limit, where we don’t know what the word “philosophy” designates); but what is at stake here is not to provide sense, nor even to pose the question as a question of being: What *is* the sense? What sense does being have, is it being-in-common? What is called into play here, not opposite to, but decidedly other than the question of sense, is exposing ourselves to the partition and sharing of the *in*, to this distribution of “sense” that first *withdraws* being from sense and sense from being—or else, does not identify one with the other, and each as such, except through the *in* of the “common,” through a “with” of sense that properly disappropriates it.

Not that I “have” sense, or some quantity of sense, but that I have a part *in* sense and I am in it in the exclusive mode of being-in-common. I am an *ego sum*, *ego existo* that would be actual only in exposing partition and sharing, distribution of this existing being, as its most intimate self-evidence. (But already self-

evidence is posited by Descartes himself as common evidence, shared by each and every one before any accession to the status of evidence and evidential thought, or rather, as having in this very sharing the obscure threshold of its self-evidence.)

I have a part *in it*: existence takes place exposed on this in, to *this in*. Inseparable, therefore, from a *we exist*. And more than inseparable: having its provenance in an enunciation *in* common where (rather than any subject determinable according to the concepts of philosophy) the *in* speaks and is spoken—presence coming to itself insofar as it is the limit and the partition/sharing of presence. Something that is exposing and inexposable which, nevertheless, *we* expose in common.

It will be tempting to say, “Here we have a description of the status quo, if not of all social and political arrangement, at least of democracy.” (Or else, and in a more cunning manner, one will be tempted to say that it is a description of a kind of democratic noumenon entrenched behind any sociopolitical phenomenon.) It is *nothing of the kind*. Whatever is not democracy either exposes nothing (tyranny, dictatorship) or presents an essence of being and of common meaning (totalitarian immanence). But democracy, for its part, exposes only that such an essence is inexposable. There can be no doubt that it is the lesser evil. However, the *in*-common, the *with*, withdraws its pretensions: from inappropriate exposition (no doubt enigmatically volunteered between the lines of the *Social Contract* despite Rousseau) we pass to the spectacle of general appropriation, through the logic of the inexposable and against it at the same time. (The word “spectacle” will have to do here to indicate an inside-out, appropriated, controlled exposition, what the situationists must have been trying to get at using the same word. As for general appropriation, clearly it cannot be general except by being immediately particular and privative.) Appropriation of capital, of the individual, of production and reproduction (of the “technic”) inasmuch as it is “*in*-common,” taking the place of the taking-place of the *in*-common. Democracy, therefore, lacks being—not a representation of the *in*-common (as if it were an exterior operation), but an exposition of it; that is, it doesn’t quite expose itself in it, or expose *us* in it, or expose us to “*ourselves*.”

History—a history that is not even “part of history” but is always our present interest—has taught us the risks that are linked to a critique of democracy (risks no less grave than extermination, pure expropriation, and boundless exploitation). Therefore, the task is no doubt to displace the idea of “critique” itself. But history also teaches us the risk of what we always call “democracy”: settling for violent and flat appropriation of the *in* of being-in-common, an appropriation that is not even identifiable (unless once again we identify it as “technics”—a bit like when we speak of “technical measures”). The risk of deserting the breach of the *in*. “Philosophy” and “community” have this in common: a categorical imper-

ative, anterior to all morality (but politically without ambiguity, for politics in this sense precedes all morality, instead of succeeding it or accommodating it), a categorical imperative not to let go of sense *in* common.

Translated by James Creech