ENGLISH SUMMARY
A CLOUD OF DARK KNOWLEDGE, Writings about Urban Design and the History of Urbanism
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In three relatively independent ‘Books’, this study explores the potential of the Foucauldian ‘genealogy’ and ‘aesthetics of existence’, in relation with the ‘dromology’ of Paul Virilio for the critical writing on current affairs in urban design and the history of urbanism.

BOOK I
An Archaeological Invention (an essay)
The actual ‘dispositive’ of modern urbanism with its ethical code, its emphasis on the normative dimension of the design, the importance of civic survey and its focus on urban public space, is put in the light of its provenance: the practice of urban management in the nineteenth century city of Rotterdam, where politics of the population correlated with politics of the street and where the civic engineer with his unique type of knowledge emerged out of the military predecessor. It is shown that his position relied on the formation of the street into an institution.

The provenances of the rational streetplan and the sense of order of modern urbanism are searched for in the so-called ‘Mauritsdiagram’ in the seventeenth century. This ‘diagram’ denotes a historical formation of knowledge in which the classical ‘mathesis’ merged with neostoic philosophy and military science. This amalgamation sheds a new light on the thesis of regular urban history; that the grid like rational streetplan originates from the tradition of the ideal city in the renaissance. It turns out that the thesis of regular urban history relies upon the continuity of formal characteristics in urbanism like the circle, the square and the rectangle.

These confrontations are complicated with several reflections: on the genealogy of Foucault, its origin in Nietzschean philosophy and its implications for the writing of history; on the philosophy of Kant and its implication for modern ethics and the structure of the modern subject; on the importance of the neostoic philosophy regarding the constitution of the modern subject and its discipline and the proposals of Foucault to constitute our own subjectivity in ‘practices of the self’.

BOOK I Chapter I
The engineer and the street
The Coolpolderplan, a grid-shaped city expansion plan, presented to the municipal council of Rotterdam in 1858 is discussed. As stated in its explanatory notes, the plan aimed to improve public order and public health, but its main concern was the traffic system and the performance of the city as a space of trade and labour.

Urbanism in that time, it is argued, takes the street as its main locus of intervention. Comparisons are made with proposals for Amsterdam at that time and the ideas of Cerdà for Barcelona and Haussmann for Paris. Following and enriching the thesis of Giedion in Space Time and Architecture (1941) about the origins of modern urbanism and the centrality of the street in the project of Haussmann, the relationship between street and politics is investigated. Apparently the street in the first half of the nineteenth century was not so much a public space where ‘democratic’ political actions took place, as an political object in the sense that parties struggled for the power to shape its form and to control its space.

The politics of the street between 1740 and 1850 is analysed as this struggle for the legal authority. The main effect of this struggle has been to cast a new light over existing
situations. The street turns out to be part of a gradual transformation from a feudal and particularistic view to the instrumental and collective view of modernity. The public bodies, not to forget the engineer, thus create the notion of ‘public space’, and at the same time, they increase their scope to act within it.

The emergence of the engineer and his type of knowledge (concerning the street) is seen as a historical event. In the light of Foucault’s thinking, it is argued that the change of meaning of the street should be approached as the result of a micro-cellular transformation within a social balance of powers in the Nietzschean meaning of the word. This event can be made visible by an ‘archaeology’ that addresses differences and that affirms a polygon of origins.

The Coolpolderplan (1858) in Rotterdam is considered in its operationality. With their plans, the engineers have influenced the social balance of powers by means of text and image. In accordance with the philosophy of Foucault (and Deleuze) the assumption of the mutual representation of text and image is abandoned in favour of the view that they work towards the same end simultaneously (in this case towards the power of truth). It appears that the proposals formed a ‘dispositive’ composed of heterogeneous elements in the sense that the textual part was of a different origin than the representation in image.

The question as to what it is that controls, or wished to control, this constellation is answered by outlining the process. It turns out that the engineers did not understand the city as a form. They saw it as a process of dwelling and destruction in which they wanted to maintain a certain shape. Therefore, they tried to influence a given state of the social balance of powers, a state that threatened to destroy the shape of the city as it had come to existence in the course of history.

In the light of Kant’s moral philosophy it is argued that the plan finally was controlled by the subjectivity of the designer, that in its turn was controlled by its faculties: the remembrance, the conscience and the self-discipline. The aim of the plan was to strive for a consensus that it would need to function. In this sense, the plan turns out to be an aesthetical-norm idea that was meant to influence a given social field.

BOOK I Chapter II

The Mauritsdiagram

Where does the formal aspect of this specific aesthetical-norm idea come from? The neoclassical, orthogonal town plan, its notion of order included, traces back to Dutch seventeenth-century town planning. Simon Stevin’s treatise Vande Oirdeningh der Steden (1599) concerning a rectangular shaped ideal city is discussed. His plan, however, proved not to be based on instrumental thoughts concerning economics and aesthetics, as was the case in the nineteenth century, but on theories about order as the right interpretation of a cosmic truth (the infinity of God) and about creating the legibility of a form by means of an immanent structure, that consists of mathematically calculated divisions. Therefore, it is argued, the plan also does not belong to the renaissance way of gaining knowledge through resemblance. Exactly this characterises the greater part of the treatises about ideal cities, as is stated by regular urban history. In contrary, it turned out to belong to the classical way of gaining knowledge through ‘mathesis’, that not only informed the thought of Simon Stevin, but also that of the philosopher René Descartes. The main difference with the renaissance way is the shift from the formal resemblance, as is the case in the scheme of the micro- and the macrocosms, and the centrality of the human body to the proportional division and mathematical equation that finally were based on measured and calculable forms of difference and identity.
The unbridgeable gap between epistemological spaces is the main argument why the rectangular form of Simon Stevin’s ideal city cannot be absorbed in any kind of ‘tradition’ or historical series. The very structuring of phenomena in series is discussed as central to the way the science of art history codes reality. The unifying construction of series is compared to the ‘archaeology of knowledge’ and its search for differences. ‘Art history’ turns out to be an invention of the nineteenth century. As it descends from art history, the history of urbanism did not originate from its object – the problematic nature of the metropolis in the nineteenth century –, but from a cultural rupture in metaphysics and aesthetics. Cultural politics in the beginning of the nineteenth century turns out to be inspired by ‘history’ in the meaning of historicism. The engineer that designed the Coolpolderplan in 1858 proved to be one of the main protagonists of this. In the centre of his considerations about aesthetics and ethics the theories of Winckelmann and Kant are found.

The unification of the two similar city plans in one series is obstructed by the fact that the rectangular and orthogonal shape of the plan from 1858 stands in the Time of History, and the ideal city of Stevin stands in the Space of the Mathesis.

A much more dominant relationship than the series of the ideal city, has been found between Stevin’s rectangular grid plans and the philosophy of Justus Lipsius (1600) that represents the Neo-Stoic tradition and its values of the imperturbability of the subject and (self) discipline. The main ethical work of Lipsius, *De Constantia* (1584), is extensively quoted and analysed. It reconciles Seneca’s fate with Christian free will.

Lipsius’ interpretation of Seneca is compared with the interpretation of Foucault that puts more emphasis on Seneca’s technique of the self-made subjectivity. He radicalised this technique into the ‘aesthetics of existence’ and the stylisation of the self. These thoughts of Foucault trace back to the second Nietzschean wave in France that started with Georges Bataille and Pierre Klossowski between 1937 and 1969. The neo-Nietzschean quest for vitality is discussed in its consequence for critical writing. Among others, concepts like *Vital Ascetics*, *Hyper- or Hypocritique*, *Self Transformation* and *Transitorily Subjectivity* are developed in the field of tension between the Stoic technique of the self and the Kantian subject with its ethics of responsibility.

Stevin himself contributed to the ethical discussion of his time with his book *Vita Politica* (1590). It clearly shows his effort to conform his thought to the demands of the ‘mathesis’ and how he strives to overcome the uncertainties of the renaissance mode of knowledge. In an attempt to exclude the renaissance indifference towards simulation, Stevin promotes the modern figure and language of the expert. This figure still rules the scientific discourse, the moral issues of urbanism and the history of urbanism. Here the concept of the hypermodern dilettante is introduced. He compensates the exactitude of the isolated facts of the expert with combinatorial fantasy.

In the Netherlands, the Neo-Stoic philosophy and its doctrine of (self) discipline became the basis for the famous army reforms by the Nassaus. In the practice of warfare and siege, this discipline became a technique that focussed more and more on the human body. It generated rules and exercises to get control over its very movements. In the army the image of the self disciplined citizen changed into that of the disciplined man-machine, first to produce order, finally to produce functional escalation in the army and finally in civil society. In relation to the social construction of order, the military camp developed in a scientific way. It became the example where social order and spatial order merged and influenced each other. This is why the ideal city of Stevin in times of peace is like the military camp of Prince Maurits of Oranje Nassau in times of war.

These elements merged in the 'Duytse Mathematicque' (1600) the first Dutch school for engineers where Simon Stevin developed his ideal town model.
The knowledge of the order and the camp found its application in the practice of urbanism. In the seventeenth century all urbanism focused on the city frontier. The shape of the rampart often determined the shape of the town expansion plan. A rectangular street plan had to be reconciled to an often-circular fortification plan. The reason for town expansion was often economic: an attempt to bring potentially valuable land within the town walls and make them a source of revenue by levying taxes on them. The rectangularity was motivated by the wish to maximise the number of houses to be built. Seventeenth-century town expansion plans of Leyden, Amsterdam and Harlem are briefly discussed.

Salomon de Bray’s involvement in the town expansion plan of Haarlem in 1661 appeared to differ from the pragmatic solutions and the mathematical based theories descending from Stevin because he attempted to apply an aesthetic theory. In spite of the rupture of Stevin, these proposals once again seemed to be based on the doctrine of proportional representation in which formal similarity played an important role, because the model to be represented was the Temple of Salomon. The seventeenth century fashion to imitate the Temple of Salomon in town planning is discussed as a Protestant attempt to anticipate the coming of New Jerusalem. The attempt was rarely successful, but it adds to our insight into seventeenth-century thinking.

Wealth, mathesis and representation turn out to be the main topics of seventeenth-century town planning. The seventeenth-century grid plans are compared to those of the nineteenth. In the seventeenth century dimension and order prove to be the signs of truth and beauty. Seventeenth-century thinking was governed by the classical epistème of mathesis and the consciousness that the sign (i.e. the representation) was dissociated from the thing. It could represent a thing, and at the same time, it could evoke the idea of the thing. Beside this, the sign was recognized as material and could as such be experienced and studied. We recognise all this from our personal experiences with maps. The meaning of aesthetic thinking in the classical time was not given by history, nor by geography but by the way, it related to the infinity, the absolute form and holiness of God. Everything on earth was nothing but pure restriction that reached out to the infinity by means of mathematical series and spatial continuities.

**BOOK II**

**Prophetic Interventions**

The writings of *BOOK II* underline the notion that in our culture intuitions and evidences about the reality of the city and the territory are influenced by the media and the techniques of real time. They offer new experiences to the urban population and we may expect that greater parts of our culture will identify with them, thus creating a process that will involve urbanism, architecture and the writing of history and critique. The issue at steak is the reflexivity. Unjustified representations of reality are combined with expectations and (non)activities that will influence the perception of reality. Up to now this cycle of reflexivity finds its apogee in the distortions the real city is subjected to by the visual media and the real time representation. The media has improved the transparency of the representation beyond probability and real time will complete the absolute transparency with absolute simultaneity. Mind and emotion are entangled in this process and new types of expectation and (non)activity will arise. Perhaps the media representations will finally break down in face of their natural boundaries, but the Prophetic Interventions do not want to wait for this to happen. Averse from every appeal to verification by reality, they grasp the chance offered by the situation to launch strategic and senseless theses about the actual state of urban reality that all converge in the attempt to discourage actual trends and that are therefore prophetic.
BOOK II  Chapter 1
The image of the city and the planning process
The contributions of the humanistic movement in Dutch architecture in the 1970s, that made a rupture with technocratic modernism in urban planning, are enumerated. Some of the theoretical backgrounds to design principles concerning the image of the city and its social, psychological and political effects are discussed. Special attention is given to the importance of the mental image. A brief description is made of its role within the strategy to attach the population to a place, as was the case within the city reconstructions in Groningen and Rotterdam.

The dispersing and disengaging effects of traffic and the media thwarted this strategy. The humanistic trend was opposed by the so-called autobiographic architecture of Aldo Rossi, introduced in Holland by Umberto Barbieri, Joost Meeuwissen and Jo Coenen. Rem Koolhaas is quoted in as far that he argues for the abandonment of town planning and its attempts at control over urban space and social construction.

Or. Lecture at the University of São Paulo in 1988. The text is published in Brazil as: 'Produção e dissolução da imagem da cidade', in: Progetto 151 (1992)

BOOK II Chapter 2
Cities' frontiers and their disappearance
With Walter Benjamin's thesis on the history of philosophy in mind, an actual problem is historicized. The current nostalgia for city frontiers and the melancholy caused by the loss of urban form is placed within the context of the historical conflict between the fixed and the movable. There has always been a precarious balance between the (stable) form of a city and the encroaching power of traffic and flow. It is argued that currently the social values of safety and increase in wealth are guaranteed by means of techniques and mentalities, which are antagonistic to the ideals of security of form and place. Inevitable they will transform the city and the world into a global object. The fear and the will to fix form it arouses, are seen as aspects of a paranoia inspired by a compulsion for self-preservation. This compulsion finds its origin in a view of the world, which is controlled by a fixed, i.e. conceptual discourse. We should leave this structure of discourse behind us.

Or. Public Lecture, Jan van Eyck Academy at Maestricht in 1990. It has been published as: Gevers, I. (ed.), De Grens/the borderline, Amsterdam: De Balie i.c.w. the Jan van Eyck Academy at Maestricht 1990 and as: 'City frontiers and their disappearance', in resp. Assemblage 16 (1991) and under the same title in: 'The Periphery' Architectural Design Profile no. 108 (1994)

BOOK II Chapter 3
An architecture of solidity
An elaboration is made of the thesis that architecture should pay attention to the alien: the world of flow, traffic, and electronic communication. This does not imply that the traditional Euclidian foundations of architecture and urban design should be abandoned. It is argued that architecture and urban design should develop a heterological body of knowledge, which does not allow for any kind of internal reconciliation. Two kinds of architecture are presented.

Very briefly, the architecture of the media is compared to that of the Baroque. This is in line with the Italian post-modern fashion to present the Baroque as a style of distortion, which could make a significant contribution to the value of imagery in our time. It is stated that the architecture of the media is the baroque architecture of today because its
distortion of forms and systems of orientation is superior to all architecture that has to rely on fixed forms.

On the other hand, there is also the architecture of measure and territory. Not in the tradition of Heidegger and Norberg-Schulz but in the tradition of the seventeenth-century French military architect Vauban and his project of the determination of the territory of France. The ground is seen as a tectonic relief that might provide information for a connection with architecture.


BOOK II Chapter 4
The passion for the hiatus
From the days of the Hellenic civilisation, we have known a culture of appearances. Myths and, at a later stage, philosophy were concerned with appearances. Our present culture seems to be informed by a passion for disappearances. It is shown that the power of cinematographic and virtual images is enhanced by the technique of cutting in film that produces ‘tricks’ and special effects. Cinematographic and virtual images derive their ‘magic’ from the element left out: chunks of reality are re-assembled by means of time-space gaps. Thus, the passion for the cinematographic and the virtual actually is the passion for the hiatus, for what has disappeared.

The passion for the hiatus (the empty ‘in between’ that has disappeared) will ultimately become the passion for the disappearance of the self. The common thesis that we build our self-consciousness by mirroring the image of ourselves will have to be reversed. The person focused at the void of the hiatus will not be present but absent. Along with this, a culture will arise where the characteristics of the territory are no longer the base of human experience. Time will also change: it will become trans-finite, meaning that it will be able to carry changes in perspective and to present conflicting representations of historic progress. Time then becomes empty and indifferent, which is a precondition for our present culture of commutation of values, theories and representations.

As the time factor is the core of the modern notion of process, an inquiry into the possibilities of a politic of time becomes necessary. A meditation is started upon post-historical melancholy and the possibility of Machines of Gravity. An answer is found in a new relationship between apocalyptic thought, fantasy, the human body and the affirmation of the relativity of perception. Perhaps time is nothing but a grammatical effect that can be dealt with by a transhistorical discourse.

Or. ‘De passie van het hiaat’, in: Oase 28 (1990)

BOOK II Chapter 5
The information mass and the omnipolis
The essay is a meditation upon reality, city and information. Reality, that used to consist of mass and energy, recently extended with information, now consists of information-energy that will transform the human body into the last mass and the city into an omnipolis.

Under the influence of information, the social mass will be transformed in a technological informed epidemic cloud. It will have lost its spatial density in favour of interconnectivity and simultaneous action.

Electronic information is cybernetic energy that consolidates the human body when it hits it. The experience of gravity helped us to define up and down and informed our perspective view, the desire to overcome distances that came along with it and finally historical time. Real time attempts to erase this world and to eliminate the perspective. The absence of world, distance and perspective will create the so-called spherical time that has
no direction whatsoever. The human body will come to rest in its final site of impact. All utopias are bent and folded in into this last place to long for. The proper body will be like the whole world and the centre of it at the same time.

These developments will give rise to the omnipolis, that will become the topological and interconnective ‘home’ of the global real time community. The omnipolis will be reigned by spherical time and will be composed of information mass, cybernetic energy and ‘planet people’. Like a radioactive cloud, it will destabilize the old territorial city and, around the holy axis of glocalization, it will produce a whirlwind of global migration.


BOOK II Chapter 6
The solidification
The apocalyptic metaphysical thesis about the solidification of a society as the condition, in which there is no ‘event’ possible, is reconstructed and put in the light of the real time technique.

Solidification is a catastrophe. It is produced by the technique to represent the moment, as we know it from photography, cinematography and television. These constitute a new type of reality that is characterized by elastic time and repetition of the same: the desert form.

In the solidified society, there can be no event and therefore there can be no meaningful ‘dialectic’ representation of the other, as was the case with the critical movements in art and architecture in the second half of the twentieth century. This impossibility is caused by the spherical time that absorbs past and future. Spherical time is the product of representation in real time. It brings about the reign of syncretism that absorbs dialectical negation without any exchange of value.

The proposal is made to develop techno metaphysics by reshaping the ancient techniques of Gnostic Apocalyptic writing. The search for metaphysical truth should be abandoned in favour of the construction of metaphysical fiction and the tendency towards a technological informed absolute through fully transparent and simultaneous information, should be contested by a fantasy dimension, that does not wish to ‘overcome’ a given situation and that does not rely on ‘creativity’ (that still would be historical and humanistic). It is also proposed to develop an accidentology, an archaeo-technological inventiveness that focuses on the technical means and their proper action. It is suggested that perhaps an event is still possible, all be it an event in writing and therefore in knowledge.


BOOK III
Monographs and letters
This chapter presents two monographs about the ‘dromology’ of Paul Virilio and three letters concerning critical writing about urbanism and the history of urbanism.

The monographs meditate upon the problem that our cities and our urban culture are overruled by the power of a technological process that is largely governed by speed. On the one hand, the mobilisation of territory and perception profits from the advantages of this, but technological progress also takes its toll. In order to develop a critical understanding, traditional categories of the architectural knowledge of the city and the urban culture are discussed and new concepts are proposed.

The letters meditate upon concepts to be developed concerning the description of urban realities, urbanism and historical facts, and upon methods of writing like the tech-
nite of blending fragments, as well as upon theories concerning the relationship between scriptural representation and reality.

**BOOK III 1**

*The dromological point of view*

Paul Virilio’s ‘dromology’ is introduced. Some of Virilio’s principles concerning the social significance of speed and its implications for the perception of the form and status of the architectural object and the city are discussed. The modern process is not governed by class struggle, but by speed, which has become the new standard for the community. Over and against the ‘argument’ of the Enlightenment, Virilio proposes an allusive and cinematic writing, which in combination with the technique of interdisciplinary composition is an attempt at making the ‘text’ work according to the rules of our cinematographic culture. The city is seen as the victim of a mobilisation, which has gained the upper hand and is rushing along independently. Memory, too, is mobilised by the effects of film and television. These effects will have a large impact on all calculations concerning the effect of the architectural image. In accordance with this he proposes new concepts like: dromocracy, dromocratic city and inhabitable circulation.

Or. ‘Town-planning and the death revolt, the dromology of Paul Virilio’ (a selection from the first part up to ‘technique and theology’) in: *Archis 11* (1987)

**BOOK III 2**

*The compulsion to sit down*

The faster the information, the faster environments and signs rush past, the more immobile the human body becomes. We read a book lying down or sitting comfortably, we lounge in front of a television. The consumption of signs requires passivity of the body. This puts pressure on some central paradigms of architecture, in so far as architecture wants to be sign and communication, and on the theories of the panoptical control. The senso-motor mode of perception and the attendant circulation in the public domain will change drastically. Moving in order to see and been seen while moving are replaced by the comfort of sitting down in front of a screen. This ‘sitting down’ has numerous consequences for politics, identity, the social, the public domain, town planning, the monument and the panoptical mechanisms of social control.

Why should the house of the future be transparent now that the media and video monitoring systems provide us with the trans-appearance of the most distant environments? Video techniques open up the possibility of a merger between the house and the vehicle: the habitacle. It is argued that in the near future time, space and matter will assume metaphysical characteristics. The spectator’s perception becomes ubiquitous, time becomes intensified, i.e. it assumes the characteristics of eternity and the human body will become as motionless as the mass of a planet.


**BOOK III 3**

*Letter to Edward*

In this letter some concepts are discussed like: panique as the source of progress, realized utopia and a-topia as contestations of utopian thought, humility of thought as successor of the omniscience of modernity. It is proposed that openness be defined as withdrawal from the critical time-space of the media and from the powers of a theoretical super ego.
Concerning the city and urbanism, concepts like global object and theoretical hypocrisy are discussed, followed by a meditation on the possibility of machines of gravity as a tool to produce identity and meaning.

BOOK III 4
Letter to Johannes
The letter reflects on scriptural modes of critical and historical writing. Who actually is the author of a scripture? Is the subjective intention capable of mastering the product? The figure of the double is shown in the example of the shaman, who has the ability to change into another identity and another reality. Given that there is a conflict between the art of writing and the correct representation of object, writing is like archaeological interpretation: a mixture of fact and fiction. Poetic intelligence is meditated upon as a possible origin of the metaphysics of history and as a suitable tool for a writing that again respects the distance between sign and thing. Jünger is introduced as an example because he reversed the origin of history to the end, proclaiming the attractive power of a phantasmagoric time wall situated in the future.

What are the role of myth and legend in writing history? Legends want to placate a public with true stories. Urban historiography often creates evolutionary legends. Strong legends tend to make use of mythological symbols.

The two orientations of a text (towards the object and towards the reader) can be granted by the construction of interweavings. The technique of blending opposes the modern synthesis. Chinese blending techniques and the bricolage of Claude Levi-Strauss are discussed.

To acknowledge the double genesis of the text supports its liberation from the tyranny of the factual. Nevertheless fantasy contributes to reality. How to write in a culture devoted to hyperreality? By affirming the radical illusion of the world.

The secret partner in writing is recognized as the diabolical principle that utters itself in mistakes and anomalies. This fact can be affirmed by the theory of a complete that is additional and endless, as was the case in mannerism. The principle is shown in the example of two mannerist villas.

The problem of the centre within infinite interweavings is solved by entangling the subject in the work. The endlessness of interweavings can function as a model for our era, if we consider them as a series folding in time and define them as delimited-limitations, following Gilles Deleuze. Now there can be inventiveness in the repetition of the same, as is proposed by Borges in his essay: *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*.

Interweavings find their correlative in ideas about architectural composition. Composition opposes design and especially a type of design that attempts at forming a style that should express its time.

Seen in this light many architects in Holland remain modern. They stick to a kind of retro modernism that is shown to be nothing more than a dissident idealism. They rely on the hypergenesis of a post-modern type of creativity and have not been able to deal with their fear for post historical oblivion. This dissident idealism is confronted with Gnostic notions about the active and creative potential of matter and their joyful strategy to submit their minds to it. This means that Kant should be left behind; in as far he proclaims the superiority of the mind over matter.
The author qualifies himself as a guest who visits the dissertation at hand. The shamanism mentioned in the previous letter turns out to be submitted to tourism but at the same time it is still a remarkable cultural phenomenon that exceeds its religious successors like Christi- 

Hitler’s Third Reich appealed to shamanism by its cross and its desire to conquer Russia and Siberia.

The author criticizes the viewpoints of Ernst Jünger on history. Jünger would have promoted the heroic soldier-worker and would have relied on a doubtful astrology. Above all, however, he is depicted as a pessimist and a melancholic. Jünger inspires the author to tell a magic story about the Second World War, his father, a German pilot, strange encoun-

Contrary to our western civilization shamans do not recognize the distinction between matter and mind. They avow a non-duality and strive for magical control over a mind they see as material power.

The concept of poetic intelligence as mentioned in the previous letter is disputed with a broad view on creativity, defined as the space offered to social potencies to express themselves. In spite of their severity, computer languages have caused a tremendous creativity because there was no power to discipline them. A belief in unrestricted creativity however is considered to be dangerous.

The end of history is meditated upon with the aid of personal experiences in post communist Russia. The city of Samarkand is mentioned as the forgotten origin of the Jewish-Christian culture, as refuge of the last Manicheans and as the focus of many Shaman tales during the last 3 millennia. The Soviet utopia is considered to have been the profane realization of the Orthodox Christian dream of the Holy Jerusalem. Reflecting on the writer Bulgakov, it is argued that unbound creativity always escapes the efforts to tame it.

Today the public is the referent. Attention is the new object of desire and public figures are bound by the necessary attention of their public. Shaman language can undo these subtle power effects. They never submitted to any people and power, let be to the play of public and hero. They were ultra-autonomous and that’s why they attract us, post historians searching for something incomprehensible in this world of growing consensus and the endless repetition of what already has been.

The author confesses that in his writings he opposes Baudrillard and his notion of hyperrealism and favours Merleau Ponty’s method of phenomenological description and dealing with shocking experiences in reality.