

HAND AXE AND SMARTPHONE

(Notes on the Hybrid, 2018-2023)

Beyond Hegel, we must see the dramatic culmination of the opposition between spirit and nature as just that: a drama that takes place on a stage and in a theatre whose architects, playwrights, stage technicians, and actors belong neither solely to the category of spirit nor to the category of nature. That which 'plays' the Hegelian spirit is elsewhere called 'culture,' that is, a hybrid of human and non-human beings, and that which plays nature is itself a cultural product of its time. But the question of negativity remains, only it is relativized. It is now: What degree of negativity is inherent or contained in a particular concrete 'hybrid'. Certainly there are only different mixing ratios between "Yin and Yang" but no more either-or. It remains questionable whether a higher portion of human beings in a certain hybrid also automatically leads to a higher portion of potential negativity. What about, for example, nuclear weapons of destruction or, because of me, an insecticide pesticide? They are there - and for nothing else but to destroy, to nullify.

The Yes and the No. The 'Yes' that art promises is not the Yes BEFORE the No (the mythological beginning), but the Yes AFTER the No - thus again negation of negation. But perhaps with a small shift of emphasis compared to Hegel. While Hegel et al. celebrate negativity as that which distinguishes man from the animal, I see in this distinction still no reason to celebrate. To face death, the horror of one's own non-being - perhaps this can really only be celebrated, but please with the best bottle of wine from the cellar! The traditional art, the tragedy or the catastrophe thriller cultivate the shudder of annihilation to the highest refinement. Nothingness becomes pleasure, becomes positive quality. Is the human being perhaps only completed when it has gone beyond the horror of nothingness? When I realize that this all-too-human nothingness is, so to speak, nothing, does not exist at all. That the concept of negativity was an "idealistic" illusion, that even death is only a (positive) fact... Maybe it remains: The nothing is only a language mistake, a freak, a misconstruction. Man was taught to distinguish 'something' and 'nothing' from each other. But this 'nothing' does not exist. But nothing in his language construction shows him the difference between giving and non-giving things. The higher cultural achievement than experiencing horror is probably that of recognizing horror as an illusion - or is that just petty-bourgeois, pseudo-religious appeasement, a helplessly trivializing "Think positive!"? At the very least, the idealistic drama weakens, its horror no longer quite pulls. The absolute opposition between yes and no is no longer absolute. What can perhaps be seen most clearly in the

detachment from the old subject/object dichotomy. The "end of history" is a thing of the past. The human being who breaks away from the subject/object dichotomy is no longer the old human being of idealism. In fact, something disappears (in man, in the image of man). The Latourian hybrid is never more ONLY human in contrast to the non-human, he is always a mixture of both. Being a mixture is the new paradigm that replaces that of the opposition of man and nature, or man and technology, etc.

Anti-alienation. The combination of man and technology has often been portrayed as alienation. However, man is only man since he connects with technology. The connection with technology is more fundamental for being human than the use of language. A human being is a human being BECAUSE he takes a hand axe or a smartphone in his hand. However, it turns out that in the history of philosophy the human being, the subject, is mostly treated in contrast to the machine. There is talk about the "mechanization of the subject". Thereby is overlooked: the subject IS not yet a subject without this mechanization. (And therefore we can also do without a "subjectification of the machine", or at least "sublate (*aufheben*)" it in man, who is always already a machine). And from this it follows: The subject is a metaphysical error. There is no man without also being machine. There is no subject independent of the machine.

Human/non-human. This distinction is basically as artificial as nature/culture, subject/object, etc., but how to call it? How to call it something that does not and never has claimed a classical subject status? Latour thinks this might work if we don't use difference as a conceptual tool, so that it doesn't become a descriptor, but rather make it an object of inquiry. We might do this by attaching to each side of the distinction attributes of the (so far) other side. By making the human a passive object and subject of investigation, and letting the non-human speak and act: Non-human voices: Refrigerators, dogs, toads, printers, quartz watches, water drops, circular saws.

A "subject" is at most that which has lost its power to act in relation to the "objects".