



Introduction

The sociologist Max Weber identified the historical tendencies and cultural trends of the 20th century as those primarily guided by a process of rationalization. Unlike many other social thinkers of his day across the political spectrum who believed that increased rationalization was the process underlying Western progress, Weber could only agree to the extent that it would culminate in a society more complex than any previous social order. Beyond this point, Weber split radically from the social theorists of progress in believing that the apocalyptic sacrifice of human well-being inherent in the process would create a state of general misery that would also exceed any that had come before. The idea of reducing cultural dynamics and human activity to a principle of instrumentality for the sake of increased political and economic efficiency is a disturbing notion

when considered in the light of the hope for happiness and satisfaction in an age obsessed with management systems. Certainly, the hostile management systems which currently structure people's everyday lives—production management, urban management, resource management, leisure management, and expression management, to name but a few—all require bureaucratic administration. These systems (whether corporate, governmental, or military) solidify the boundaries between segments of the division of labor (whether based on race, ethnicity, gender, or class), and cause a profound sense of separation and alienation in individuals who share no solidarity beyond their common rationalized social roles and ranks in society. The feelings of alienation continue to intensify in proportion to the degree of isolation one feels from those outside one's social segment.

Weber's notion of an "iron cage of bureaucracy" that exists as a construct of purely functional imperatives (the maintenance, expansion, and perpetuation of its structure) has come to pass, so it is little wonder that the only representation of the social that seems to have any descriptive or explanatory value is the machine system. The two key machinic schemata that have captivated the minds of resistant cultural producers are the war machine and the sight machine. These intersecting liquid maps have been used to build an understanding of the structure and dynamics of the current sociopolitical management apparatuses, and in the best of circumstances have been used to develop strategies to resist the hyper-rationalized state of pancapitalism. In this work, Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) offers a contribution to the development of a third machinic map—the flesh machine. The flesh machine is a heavily

funded liquid network of scientific and medical institutions with knowledge specializations in genetics, cell biology, biochemistry, human reproduction, neurology, pharmacology, etc., combined with nomadic technocracies of interior vision and surgical development. The flesh machine intersects at many points with the other two machinic systems, yet it also has an autonomous sphere of action and its own particular agenda. It has two primary mandates—to completely invade the flesh with vision and mapping technologies (initiating a program of total body control from its wholistic, exterior configuration to its microscopic constellations), and to develop the political and economic frontiers of flesh products and services.

While the war machine and the sight machine are useful devices for understanding the management of the structure and dynamics of social environments, they are less helpful for guiding resistant vectors through the new interior frontier of body invasion (the autonomous space of the flesh machine). The body is on the verge of being placed under new management, and like all exterior cultural phenomenon, it will be made to function instrumentally so that it may better fulfill the imperatives of pancapitalism (production, consumption, and order). Currently, pancapitalist power vectors' attempts to inscribe these imperatives directly onto the code of the flesh are initiating a new wave of eugenics. Under this new bio-regime, physical perfection will be defined by an individual's ability to separate he/rself from nonrational motivation and emergent desires, thus increasing he/r potential devotion to varieties of political-economic service to perpetuate the pancapitalist dynasty.

Just when it seemed that eugenics could not return to the forefront of the social arena, it appears once again, although its spectacle has been modified to suit the times. Eugenics, at least on the surface, is only implicitly attached to issues of race improvement or gene pool cleansing. Now it hides under the authority of medical progress and the decoding of nature. This latter association is primarily what makes it palatable once again. The Western intellectual history of the 20th century is marked by an obsession with coding, whether with cultural codes (linguistic or iconic representation), machine codes, or biological codes. Power vectors have been swift to take advantage of this transition to once again begin the project of totally rationalizing organic territories. The last terrestrial frontier is about to fall to pancapitalist authority.

In order to further distract the literate nonspecialist public from the development and ideological inscription of this new technological apparatus, the sight machine has consistently directed public perception toward new developments in telecommunications. Of particular importance is the idea that new telecommunication technology will make the body (if not the entire organic world) superfluous, and that human organics will “evolve” into a posthuman state of being. If such a belief is successfully deployed, questions about the goals and intentions of flesh rationalization become unimportant. After all, if the body is being done away with anyhow, and the Cartesian dream of freeing consciousness from the dead weight of the organic is on the verge of coming to pass, who cares what is done to the body or what becomes of it? Unfortunately, no virtual utopia is awaiting, nor is one even in an advanced stage of development. The current techno-

revolution is designed to keep the body, but in a redesigned configuration that helps it adjust to the intensified rigors of pancapitalist imperatives and to adapt to its pathological social environment. Once the goals of the flesh machine are factored into the machine world equation, little doubt is left that power vectors have no desire to abandon or even undermine their material empire—all that is desired is *better*, if not *total* control over their dominion.

Perhaps the greatest problem revealed in this collection of essays is the difficulty of knowing what to do to resist the current body invasion. While there is rapidly growing critical knowledge about the development of the flesh machine, strategic and tactical plans of resistance are few. Since the flesh is a frontier zone in the development of pancapitalism, and the situation and apparatus of invasion change with every passing moment, strategic commitment requires a very radical gamble on the part of resistant forces. Skepticism among specialized sectors of resistance regarding the quality of the critique of the flesh machine is running rampant, and to make matters worse, there is no significant history of resistance to organic colonization to look back upon (only scattered traces) to make possible an educated guess about the probability of strategic or tactical success. In addition, by attacking the flesh machine, which has been presented as a progressive boon to humanity, the attacker is immediately put in the position of a neo-luddite. Science and technology in and of themselves are not the problem, nor have they ever been. The real problem is that science and technology are developed, deployed, and controlled by the predatory system of pancapitalism. The mainstream development of knowledge and technology is guided by increased efficiency in militarized production of

violence and/or by potential corporate profits in civilian markets. If a scientific producer cannot demonstrate a connection with at least one of these two possibilities, little if any investment in scientific initiatives will be forthcoming. Pancapitalism has yet to offer any sense of science in the public interest, and shows no sign of doing so in the future.

Unfortunately, we are left with only more description and more critique. At best, narratives counter to the “official story” are being created. Counter-spectacle aimed at the nonspecialist public is a significant step forward, since the mandates and methods of the flesh machine are kept as far away as possible from the scrutiny of the nonspecialist public, and because it is a step beyond the narratives of the bureaucratic ethicists whose teeth are not even the quality of dentures. However, since the flesh machine no longer works solely within the realm of the production of violence and has shifted its strategic fulcrum to the realm of seduction, much more is needed from resistant forces. What is needed is still the most elusive of all things to conjure, since this circumstance of resistance requires that the unspeakable be spoken and that the impossible be done.