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The Mana of Mass Society

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Introduction

A Certain Rush of Energy

A certain rush of energy. This is what the sociologist Émile Durkheim 1 wrote in his 1912 masterpiece, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*: “The stimulating action of society is not felt in exceptional circumstances alone. There is virtually no instant of our lives in which a certain rush of energy fails to come to us from outside ourselves.”¹ One of the names that Durkheim gave to this energy, this stimulating action of society, was *mana*—a Polynesian word meaning, roughly, supernatural force or efficacy. Although Durkheim’s book was ostensibly concerned with “primitive” forms of *collective effervescence*, with the ritual assemblies of Australian Aborigines and Northwest Coast American Indians, it was in fact a meditation on what one could call the *vital energetics* of all human societies, from the smallest to the most complex, from face-to-face interactions to mass-mediated networks. Mana, Durkheim argued, was “at once a physical force and a moral power.”² It was a name for that feeling of “genuine respect” that makes us “defer to society’s orders.”³ It might be embodied in a chief’s potency or in the aura of a sacred object. But it was also chronically unstable and leaky, perpetually and sometimes dangerously overflowing its containers: “Religious forces are so imagined as to appear always on the point of escaping the places they occupy and invading all that passes within their reach.”⁴

This book picks up on Durkheim's provocation and asks what it would mean, for social theory, to imagine the mana that powers an Aboriginal ritual as substantially continuous with the mana that infuses an urban crowd or even, differently modulated, a television audience or an Internet public. It asks how one might theorize the mana of mass society in a world where a certain rush of energy is as likely to be found in consumer brand advertising as in totemic signs, as likely to power a fascination with charismatic politicians as an affiliation with traditional authorities. Is mana different when it comes to us with the curious blend of intimacy and impersonality so characteristic of public address?

Durkheim tended to presume that the "stimulating action of society" was unambiguously vitalizing, that it was the source not only of our sense of commitment to life in common but also of our moral faculties, even our very ability to think at all. But what about the mana of, say, racist or nationalist ideologies that offer their adherents a sense of common energy and solidarity at the cost of objecting an other? Knowing what we now know about murderous forms of collective effervescence, from the centralized cults of fascism to the decentralized networks of global terror, do we need a different way to understanding the dynamic movement of what Durkheim's nephew, the polymath Marcel Mauss, called "the collective forces of society"?⁵

This book came together during a time of surging energies, light and dark. The energies of the worldwide Occupy movement, of the Arab Spring, and of Black Lives Matter. The energies of the migrant crisis in Europe, of gathering ecological catastrophe, of meandering militarism and the tense topology of terror. As I thought and wrote, I watched "that *mana* wave called Trump"⁶ morph from improbable to inevitable and back . . . and back again. As one commentator observed: "He is not trying to persuade, detail, or prove: he is trying to thrill, agitate, be liked, be loved, here and now. He is trying to make energy."⁷ Amid these surges, I pondered the questions that animate this book. What *powers* authority? What in us responds to it? How is *vital energy* turned into *social form*? Conversely, how do social forms activate new *vital potentials*? Why do certain times, people, places, and things feel *heightened* in relation to humdrum life? How are we to

understand not just the *meanings* to which we find ourselves attached but also their *rhythms*? What is the social basis of commitment, engagement, identification, and desire? In short: how is it that we have not only meaning, but *meaning that matters*?

Thinking the mana of mass society means reconsidering Durkheim's theory of ritual and collective effervescence, but also Max Weber's discussions of authority and charisma and Karl Marx's ideas about fetishism and ideology. Mana, I will be suggesting, marks the spot where vitality and its relation to authority and experience is at once acknowledged and disavowed. As such, it helps to bring together classic topics in social theory with more recent debates around affect, sovereignty, immanence, and emergence. Crucially, this is not just a story about large-scale phenomena. Spectacle can too easily overshadow less blinding events. After all, as Durkheim wrote, "There is virtually no instant in our lives in which a certain rush of energy fails to come to us from outside ourselves." An important question for me in the pages that follow is how the mana of mass society connects the macro-forms of ritual, publicity, and display with the micro-dimensions of experience.

This means at least two things. First, it means exploring the relation between the exceptional and the everyday, a key Durkheimian theme. If certain occasions or practices—for example important rituals—have to be *special* and yet also have to sustain the rhythms of ordinary life, then how is that specialness both maintained and diffused? This turns out to be a crucial question in democratic theory as well as in consumer marketing. In an age when the people are sovereign, and yet the people are, by definition, not a single body in a particular place, how is this sovereignty to be ritually represented in such a way that it can focus energies and commitments and yet also appear as the immanent substance of the collective?⁸ In marketing, brands do the work of "keeping-while-giving," of remaining proprietary repositories of heightened value, controlled by corporations, while at the same time being readily available for purchase.⁹

Second, Durkheim says that social energy comes to us "from outside ourselves," and one of my key preoccupations in this book is rethinking the relation between what is "inside" and what is "outside." Mana, I will be arguing, offers a handle on what the psychoana-

lyst Jacques Lacan called the *extimate*: that which is at once external and intimate, that which we experience, ambivalently, as part of the world that confronts us and yet at the same time as something that is palpably, intensely, at the very core of our sense of ourselves.¹⁰ Again one can see how this plays out in both politics and marketing once one asks what, exactly, is activated by the charismatic leader or by the desirable brand? Where is it? Is it inside us or outside us? Does it lie in wait somewhere inside us, fully formed, waiting to find its perfect match in the outside world? Or is it in a fundamental sense *actualized* by the encounter with the leader or the brand that turns out to be “just what I always wanted” (except I didn’t know I wanted it until the moment of encounter)? This sense of power as potentiality, of an efficacy that brings things into the world and makes them “work” is, as we shall see, one of the faces of mana.

Order and emergence: that is the double fascination of mana. Mana appears as a name for the transcendent force guaranteeing a moral order, a symbolic order, a cultural order. But it is also always a mark of excess, of the super-natural, the sur-plus, the “surcharge.”¹¹ It is the efficacy that exceeds and overflows basic requirements. And yet somehow this very excessiveness, this way in which mana always seems to embody a “something more” at the heart of any given social order, makes it both instrumentally and aesthetically indispensable. It is this emergent property at the heart of order that links mana to notions of mass publicity,¹² both in the register of charismatic politics (as Max Weber knew) and in the register of the auratic aesthetics of artworks (as Theodor Adorno knew).

I devote quite a bit of space, particularly in the second half of this book, to thinking about politics as marketing and marketing as politics. We live in a time when the lessons of consumer marketing have become *doxa* among political strategists, and the figure of the consumer-citizen has become the most readily accessible shorthand for the democratic subject. Thinking the mana of mass society across politics and marketing, then, at one level merely acknowledges a social fact. As an interpretive strategy, though, it has the added advantage of allowing me to revisit those debates in critical theory and aesthetics that, for almost a century now, have speculated on the fate of human flourishing in a world where what Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin called the *mimetic faculty*—a sensuous, transformative

ability to resonate with the world—has increasingly been harnessed by sovereign pretenders, whether political or commercial.

Constitutive Resonance: An Analytic of Encounter

Mimetic resonance may also be glossed as *constitutive resonance*, a term that I borrow from the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk.¹³ A variation on the more familiar *elective affinity*, constitutive resonance suggests a relation of mutual becoming rather than causal determination. Not all people or things are capable of resonating with each other (and one of the first tasks of the would-be mana worker—whether politician or marketer or just garden-variety magician—is to figure out what resonates with what). But resonance, once established, is a source of both actualization and anxiety. I become myself through you, but I also lose myself in you. By the logic of constitutive resonance, if “I” and “you” can appear as “subject” and “object” then it is only by means of a shared field of emergence in which no such boundaries can be taken for granted.

Resonant encounters, then, are *erotic* in the ancient sense explored by Anne Carson: on the one hand, “this heightened sense of one’s own personality (‘I am more myself than ever before!’),” and, on the other hand, a loss of self experienced as a crisis of physical and emotional integrity; Sappho called eros the “melter of limbs.”¹⁴ Resonant encounter is at once constitutive and destitutive. It’s a way of thinking about the making and unmaking of selves and worlds, as well as of the attachments of selves to the worlds in which they can feel alive, usually by means of some ambivalent combination of affirmation and refusal. Sometimes the pursuit of constitutive resonance is self-consciously “sacred,” such as in several recent ethnographic accounts of learning to hear and to receive the call of piety.¹⁵ Sometimes, as in the second half of this book, constitutive resonance is experienced as a more “secular” seduction: how to negotiate the siren songs of political and commercial publicity.

This book is based on a deceptively simple assumption: *encounter is primary*. What might that mean? Social theorists often talk and write as if people inhabit given, more or less bounded social structures and identities that periodically come up against challenges to

their coherence and integrity. From such a standpoint, difference appears from outside—an uncanny stranger or an inexplicable way of doing things. From that perspective, the important question is generally, how far must structure be stretched in order to make sense of this external intrusion?

But what if one turns this around? What if one starts with encounter rather than with structure? This may seem like a chicken-and-egg problem; surely, one always presupposes the other? Yes. Of course it's not as if people ever have encounters that are innocent of the contexts and histories that they bring to them. Nor is there any social structure free of more or less destabilizing encounters. So maybe I'm just proposing a different emphasis? Maybe I'm advocating paying attention to moments of difference rather than to structures of sameness? Not quite.

My premise is that it matters a great deal for how we understand key concepts like society, subjectivity, and ideology whether the inquiry starts with encounter or starts with structure. Again, it's not about choosing or valorizing one or the other. If the discussion starts with structure, then it's likely to become preoccupied with questions like "how is structure reproduced?" "How can we account for change?" Here, structure is the baseline and encounter is the potential interruption of structure. But if encounter is the starting point, then other kinds of questions appear. What resonates in the wake of the encounter? What doesn't? What is activated in an encounter such that it might feel like a moment of promise, of agitation, of potential, or of threat?

Rather than asking how structure is reproduced one might ask how it is that the world comes to seem structured at all. Given that, as Heraclitus observed, one can't step in the same river twice, it's really quite extraordinary that anyone is ever able to feel that they live in relatively continuous worlds and that they generally experience—or come to experience—encounter as iteration rather than as rupture or drift. What interests me is encounter as the resonant occasion and trigger for everything social theory understands as "identity," "culture," "desire," and so on; encounter as a moment of mimetic yielding that at the same time actualizes the intelligible differences that people then proceed to inhabit as "me" and "you," "ours" and "theirs."

Starting with encounter means starting with provocation—in two

senses. On the one hand, provocation mobilizes categories so that sameness and difference can be managed. Social scientists are used to talking about the provocation of difference: how do people deal with difference? Where do they put it? How do they “place” unfamiliar things, making sense of them—even when they don’t quite fit—in terms of familiar things? Such questions are of course fundamental to the operation of any kind of social life, from the smallest face-to-face relationships to the most extensive bureaucracies. Encounter provokes classification and routinization.

But the provocation of encounter may also be read as provocation—as, literally, a *calling forth*,¹⁶ an activation, a prompt to becoming. Encounter doesn’t just mean coming face to face with difference, the way an academic or a clerk might, and having to work out what to do with it. It also suggests a resonant (not necessarily pleasant) triggering of something unexpected: a potentiation, perhaps an actualization, but perhaps also a traumatic echo (in which case the constitutive aspect of the resonance is mediated by the scars of suffering). An encounter is what the philosopher J. G. Fichte called *Anstoss*: a trigger moment, an impact, an impetus, or an initiation. In any case, a moment whose affective tenor is not just one of a categorical challenge but also potentially one of fascination, seduction, identification, or desire.

Ritual—the central preoccupation of Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms*—is a crucial category here, because it so palpably blends both senses of provocation: on the one hand, ritual involves *Anstoss*, a live calling forth of “the collective forces of society” in a manner that aspires to be at once impersonal and exquisitely intimate. On the other hand, ritual reproduces form through the repetitive affirmation of categories. This, too, is one of the faces of mana: the potentiality that is always unstable, leaky, unpredictable, and, at the same time, the substance that powers and authorizes a reigning social order, lending it the weight of the sacred. The fascination and the power of ritual is that it at once activates and routinizes encounter.

But if there is provocation, then what is provoked? If there is activation, then what is activated? What is the *material*, the substance on which all these processes go to work? Anthropologists (particularly on the American side of the pond) have long been in the habit of invoking “culture” in order to explain the patterned ways in which

“the collective forces of society” move, as well as what I will gloss as the relatively predictable patterns of our *addressability* as individuals living in particular, meaningful worlds. Painfully aware of the compromised quality of the culture concept today—not least because of its hijacking by politics and marketing—I suggest an alternative concept, the *mimetic archive*: the residue, embedded not only in the explicitly articulated forms commonly recognized as cultural discourses but also in built environments and material forms, in the concrete history of the senses, and in the habits of our shared embodiment.

This residue, the mimetic archive, is preserved on two levels. On one level, it appears as incipient potential. On another level, it takes the form of all the explicitly elaborated discursive and symbolic forms through which the potentials of a mimetic archive have earlier been actualized, each actualization then proliferating and returning new potentials to the archive. Some of the archive is of course textual or signifies in other more or less overt ways. But by far the largest part of the archive exists virtually yet immanently in the nonsignifying yet palpably sensuous dimensions of collective life. In Deleuzian language, these immanent potentials are *infolded* as incipience. In a Benjaminian idiom, one could say that they are *innervated*. In a more directly anthropological register, one could invoke a figure like Marcel Jousse, a student of Marcel Mauss and Pierre Janet, who grounded both language and consciousness in the mimetic rhythms of the body. Memory, as Charles Hirschkind glosses Jousse, is built on “the reactivation of gestures, understood as the sensory sediments of prior perceptions.” These sediments become the basis for “latent tendencies, dispositions toward certain kinds of action operating independently of conscious thought.”¹⁷

Lauren Berlant writes of “a history of impacts held in reserve.”¹⁸ On that note I would like to stress two dimensions of the mimetic archive as I conceive it: its virtuality and its historicity. First, “impacts held in reserve” are, indeed, “latent.” They are virtual potentialities that at once embed a history of encounters and lie in wait for the future encounters that will actualize them in new forms. “Reactivation,” then, is not simply duplicative reenactment but always involves unpredictable transformations in the transition from the virtual to

the actual. The virtuality of the mimetic archive is therefore inseparable from its historicity. On the one hand, the archive embeds latent histories of encounter; on the other hand, its actualization *is* constitutive resonance awakened between these embedded encounter-histories and the triggers of the present.

For this formulation I am, as in so many respects, indebted to Walter Benjamin, who wrote: “this dialectical penetration and actualization of former contexts puts the truth of all present action to the test. Or rather, it serves to ignite the explosive materials that are latent in what has been.”¹⁹ Pasts, collective and/or intimate, are only at one level the stories we tell ourselves. At another level, they are the potentials, embedded, perhaps, in some apparently trivial object, much like Proust’s protagonist finds in his madeleine an unexpected and overwhelming sensuous prompt to the evocation of a whole world. Like Benjamin, I’m interested in constitutive encounter as a way of talking about how resonance — whether routinized or entirely surprising — makes and unmakes us through those decisive (although not always dramatic) moments of legibility that Benjamin called dialectical images:

It’s not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. . . . Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each ‘now’ is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time. . . . For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural.²⁰

Crucially, there’s no reason to assume that mimetic resonance necessarily points to liberation. Rather, the point is that mimesis, as Homi Bhabha has shown us, is as much a matter of discipline as it is about transformation — again, the two faces of *mana*.²¹ I use the term *mimetic archive* strategically, then, not necessarily in a bid to replace the culture concept, but rather as a reminder of what that concept would have to be capable of in order to do what it must.

Settlement and Symptom

The Mana of Mass Society is by no means a work of intellectual history. It is far too interpretive and idiosyncratic to deserve such a dignified name. Instead, I take as my primary methodological tool the concept of *settlements*. I discuss three: the empiricist settlement (chapter 1), the primitive settlement (chapter 2), and the aesthetic settlement (chapter 3). The list of settlements could—and I hope will—be extended. I use the term to suggest the tension between the appearance of a negotiated, reasonable compromise and the violence of the settler whose stability of residence depends on the displacement and disavowal of the one that his presence silences. My basic premise is that each of these settlements marks a moment of encounter in social theory and the consequent attempt to resolve an unstable yet seductive relation of ambivalence. So: the empiricist settlement establishes a boundary between modern fieldwork-based anthropology and its speculative-comparative precursors; the primitive settlement separates “primitive” practices from “civilized” norms; and the aesthetic settlement makes a safe place for magic in one privileged location within civilization—art.

By attempting the purification, as Bruno Latour might say, of a pro-vocative encounter, each settlement establishes an extimate relation: it draws a line of demarcation that constitutes a coherent discipline by abjecting its intolerably intimate and thus also irreducibly constitutive other. And as with all extimacies, it generates an inescapable symptom. No sooner has the line of settlement been drawn than the repressed starts to return. What unites the three settlements that I discuss in this book is their common concern with mana. In each case, mana is the name for a “primitive” potentiality—of energy, of magic, of the sacred—that at once is and is not the same as parallel potentialities in “modern” societies. By the same token, in each case mana is, as we shall see, the recurrent symptom.

Much of what mana is, does, or could become will sound very familiar to present-day readers of affect theory.²² Kathleen Stewart, in *Ordinary Affects*, writes: “Something huge and impersonal runs through things, but it’s also mysteriously intimate and close at hand. At once abstract and concrete, it’s both a distant, untouchable order of things and a claustrophobically close presence”²³—and she could

be invoking mana. Likewise, once one starts probing the mana symptom, it opens up onto something not altogether separable from what Terry Eagleton and W. F. Haug call the aesthetic: an ideological discourse that naturalizes domination *and* an emergent domain of palpable resonance that is both indispensable to power and refractory to its ambitions.²⁴

Rather than treating mana as yet another variant of something already known, however, I want to give it the benefit of a provocative encounter—just as thinking aesthetics requires a different kind of historical sensing. Berlant puts it admirably: “too often we derive a sense of a time, place, and power through historical archives whose job it is to explain something aesthetic without thinking the aesthetic in the sensually affective terms that conventions of entextualization always code, perform, and release.”²⁵ Because of the ways that mana haunts settled sites, then, I’m wagering that opening up those settlements may well also open up fresh ways of thinking affect and aesthetics.

Confessions of a Dialectical Vitalist

Perhaps this whole exercise is, in a way, motivated by a desire to revisit yet another settlement—the line that was drawn through anthropology in the mid-1980s right before my generation started studying it. This line, variably known as the “critique of representation” or, following the title of one of its key texts, *Writing Culture*, had the effect of demarcating a “before”—when anthropologists supposedly engaged in naively unreflexive modes of ethnographic description—and an “after”—when they were hip to critical theory, deconstruction, and a postcolonial politics of representation.²⁶ Hardly anyone really thought that it was as simple as all that, but the sense of a line having been drawn often did make our relation to the anthropological canon rather awkward. While we could certainly pretend that a genome sequencing lab or a television news production studio was a bit like a tribal village, ethnographic strategies developed for face-to-face societies were not in any obvious way very useful when it came to making sense of how even the most local field sites were now, thanks to increasingly ubiquitous electronic media, embroiled

in translocal circuits of images, goods, and knowledge, as well as in real-time communication with far-flung people and places.

I write from the standpoint of my own specifically located experience as a graduate student at Berkeley in the early 1990s, still suffering from something like a time-travel hangover after having been an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge. Of course things played out differently in other places. But as I recall it, introductory graduate seminars on anthropological theory often manifested the before/after split. Some professors tried a simple chronological exposition, with the result that many students, bored and restless, dutifully waded through structural functionalism, kinship models, and structuralist analyses of myth, before, with an air of now being superbly deserving of dessert, devouring more recent articles on globalization, NGOs, and biosociality. Other professors started with the critique of representation before arcing back through classic works in the discipline. This strategy tended to have the effect of producing in many of us students a supercilious (and, it must be said, naively historicist) attitude toward earlier anthropologies, since we thought we already possessed the tools with which to diagnose their irretrievable outmodedness and incurable pathology. Either way, the “after” was where things were happening, and the “before” was something that, at best, provided raw material for narcissistically indignant denunciations of anthropology’s colonial complicities.

To be sure, there were other students who took a more conservative path. Repelled by the posturing of their right-on peers, they saw themselves as custodians of a rich ethnographic heritage, one now at risk from the so-called navel-gazing theoreticism of the new, *soi-disant* “critical” anthropology. Only relatively few of us—most of the time I was not one—found ways of making the deeper anthropological heritage come alive in the present, not by insisting on the continued importance of small-scale village fieldwork (nothing wrong with that, obviously), but rather by exploring how emergent concerns in the present might activate hitherto unrealized potentials in the mimetic archive of the discipline. This book is my belated attempt at such an exercise. After a long and frequently fruitful detour through critical theory, thinking the mana of mass society feels like a homecoming more or less unencumbered by the cloying scent of nostalgia.

In an inaugural essay for *HAU*, the open access “journal of ethnographic theory” and book imprint, Giovanni Da Col and David Graeber lament the passing of a golden age of anthropology during which ethnographically derived concepts — totem, taboo, potlatch, mana — “were heated topics of intellectual debate; concepts that everyone, philosophers included, had to take seriously.”²⁷ Today, they charge, anthropologists have been reduced to second-rate exegetes of concepts from European philosophy, “and no one outside anthropology really cares what we have to say about them.”²⁸ Likewise, anthropologists, having fallen prey to “a colossal failure of nerve”²⁹ brought on in part by the critique of representation, have forgotten how to remind our fellow scholars of the long and deep conceptual archive we have to offer to areas of common concern: “Deleuzians and Speculative Realists write about the ontology and the elusiveness of *life* . . . and their reflections are gravely debated in other disciplines, without anyone even noticing the rich anthropological literature on *mana*.”³⁰

How could I not be sympathetic? Aren’t Da Col and Graeber invoking something like what I have sketched above under the rubrics of encounter and constitutive resonance when they call for “a conversion of stranger-concepts that does not entail merely trying to establish a correspondence of meaning between two entities or the construction of heteronymous harmony between different worlds, but rather, the generation of a *disjunctive homonymity*, that destruction of any firm sense of place that can only be resolved by the imaginative formulation of novel worldviews”?³¹ The project of *HAU* promises a renewal of an anthropology constitutively engaged with the concerns and imaginations of ordinary informants around the world rather than passively importing readymades from the Great Men of Theory. And I do sense a strong affinity between my own project in this book and Da Col and Graeber’s allegiance to those “who, acknowledging the analogies between philosophy and anthropology, are careful enough to think about what makes the two distinctive, and at the same time, bold enough to create their own conceptual repertoire.”³²

At the same time, if my own book is a small contribution to this larger project of “return[ing] anthropology to its original and distinctive conceptual wealth,”³³ then it proceeds not by reinstalling a lost integrity but rather by reencountering the symptoms that mark

the settlements that allowed, say, “anthropology” and “European philosophy” to begin appearing as distinct and autonomous projects. For there is a common mimetic archive here—an archive that is the condition of possibility for both anthropology and critical theory, an archive that lies half buried under the settlements that forced their separation. If “reading” a settlement symptom like *mana* is to help trigger new insights then it will not happen, I suspect, by means of an act of pure will, through a principled decision to correct the course of an anthropology that has drifted too far into dependence on outside centers of intellectual authority. Rather, the challenge, the opportunity, lies in acknowledging the resonant intimacy of that outside—its extimacy—and working back through a long genealogy of “almost-saying,”³⁴ of constitutive encounters that are already embedded in the sense making that has taken place between anthropologists, critical theorists, and psychoanalysts for a hundred years or more.

It is not unimportant to my engagement with *mana* that vitalism has made something of a comeback in anthropology—now most often, as Da Col and Graeber note, in a Deleuzian avatar. This renewed concern with the uncanny intimacy of impersonal processes of emergence has, moreover, been given a boost by a combination of posthuman and ecological engagements. While there is much that is urgent, rich, and sophisticated in these lines of inquiry, I have for some time been concerned that they often tend, as Slavoj Žižek notes, toward an undialectical (indeed, often proudly antidialectical) “preference for difference over sameness, for historical change over order, for openness over closure, for vital dynamics over rigid schemes, for temporal finitude over eternity. . . . For me, these preferences are by no means self-evident.”³⁵

In my book *Censorium* I admitted, in a coyly performative wording, that “I would not be altogether embarrassed, then, if someone accused me of being that rather peculiar monster: a ‘dialectical vitalist.’”³⁶ Some months later, a friend and senior colleague accused me, more prosaically but not unsympathetically, of “wanting to have it both ways.” On that score I remain unrepentant, if anything more insistent than ever. *The Mana of Mass Society* is, if not quite a manifesto of dialectical vitalism, then certainly an exercise in it. It’s not a question for me of choosing “ethnographic theory” or “critical theory.”

Rather, it's a question of how the particular road I have taken, by means of vehicles belonging to both, allows me to re-member them in ways that may illuminate the present.

The Ontological Need All Over Again

One example of what I mean by this re-membering is the object-ethics that I develop in these pages. Here, as ever, *mana* is the extimate symptom that marks a brittle settlement: in the case of the argument that I develop in chapter 3, the settlement that separates Adorno's aesthetic theory—which is fundamentally premised on constitutive resonance—from his furious denunciation of commodified cultural production. Thinking through this settlement, I realized that it offered something of an alternative perspective on what it means to be a human being, living in the world and theorizing that world—an alternative to much of what has appeared under the heading of the “ontological turn” that has brought anthropologists and philosophers into renewed conversation in recent years. My purpose here is neither to preempt chapter 3 nor to offer any kind of comprehensive review of an ontological turn that, in any case, is more of a resonant assemblage than a “position.” My purpose, rather, is only to offer some very general framing thoughts about why an object-ethics can also be a subject-ethics—why thinking in more complex ways about encounters with objects doesn't have to involve falling back on zombie constructions like “The Enlightenment Subject” or “The Kantian Subject” (undead straw concepts that can be relied on to return eternally so that posthumanist critics can keep shooting them down, all the while not hearing what the undead, from behind their zombie makeup, are trying to say).

The global ecological crisis as well as the explosion in alter-phobic (racist, misogynistic, xenophobic, queer-phobic) violence presses upon us urgently. How are we to reconnect with a world—and with our own and each other's organic emplacements in that world—from which, the ontophiles tell us, the Kantian tradition has exiled us? The Kantian tradition insists that we cannot know the world *in itself*, only the representations of the world that our brains (and latterly our cultures) permit us. Consequently, the anti-Kantian crit-

ics claim, we have effectively allowed an ethic of epistemological modesty (“we can’t ever be completely sure of our knowledge of the world”) to slip into an attitude of violent and arrogant mastery (“because we are separated from the world we need to find ways of controlling it”). Likewise, in anthropology a pose of relativist modesty (“all any of us have is our culturally constructed perspectives on the world”) has tended to slip into a kind of formalist universalism that permits difference only at the level of content (“anthropology is a master-survey of the range of cultural solutions to the universal natural predicament of being human”).³⁷

To remedy this supposed “Kantian catastrophe,” a range of thinkers are trying to find ways of reversing what one might call the human sciences’ epistemological humblebrag. The prize to be regained is, as the philosopher Quentin Meillassoux puts it, “the great outdoors”—the world out there in its ontological actuality.³⁸ Some of the more speculative variations on the enterprise are asking us to consider such enigmas as what it might be like to be a rock.³⁹ Anthropological exponents of the ontological turn have, however, tended toward comparatively more modest inquiries. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, for example, calls for an anthropology that allows the “form of the matter” of our informants’ discourse to reach into and transform the “matter of the form” of our conceptual work, an anthropology that is concerned with “determining the problems posed by each culture, not of finding solutions for the problems posed by our own.”⁴⁰

So far, so Georg Lukács, for didn’t the great Marxist philosopher diagnose, in the early 1920s, that the problem with what he called the “reified” forms of bourgeois knowledge was that they assumed at once a universalizing and a contemplative relation to an external world that they were thereby unable to understand as anything but a series of contents or variables to be slotted into transcendent formal structures? As Lukács wrote of the bureaucratic imagination, which he took to be a paradigm of reified thought: “objectively all issues are subjected to an increasingly *formal* and standardized treatment and . . . there is an ever-increasing remoteness from the qualitative and material essence of the ‘things’ to which bureaucratic activity pertains.”⁴¹ And just as Viveiros de Castro calls for an anthropological opening to the ontological alterity—not just the “cultural content”—of other ways of apprehending and organizing life, so Lukács imag-

ines a nonreifying relation to the world in which “actuality, content, matter reaches right into the form [of knowledge], the structures of the forms and their interrelations and thus *into the structure of the system itself*.”⁴²

Whereas Lukács’s critical aim is a dialectical overcoming of the antinomies of bourgeois thought, Viveiros de Castro seems to be defending a form of ethnographic encounter that transforms both anthropologists and their informants by leaving their preexisting differences suspended in a productive relation of integral nonidentity: “What would happen if the native’s discourse were to operate within the discourse of the anthropologist in a way that produced reciprocal knowledge effects upon it?”⁴³ Such an opening sounds exemplary, of course—who’s not in favor of being open? But just as the price of Lukács dialectical overcoming is a totalizing historical narrative in which there is only one destination (proletarian revolution), so Viveiros de Castro’s opening continues to rely on a figure of bounded cultural difference (“determining the problems posed by each culture”).

Must we end up with either unified destiny or integral islands? As Graeber points out in the course of a critical engagement with Viveiros de Castro and the ontological turn more generally: “Radical alterity applies [for the ontological theorists] only to relations between cultural worlds.” By contrast, Graeber’s own argument about a kind of Malagasy charm medicine called *fanafody* seems proximate to my own analytic of encounter. He suggests that the persistent Malagasy claim that *fanafody* is a quintessentially Malagasy practice has always been an outcome—and a negotiation—of encounter, such that the perceived Malagasy-ness of *fanafody* is fundamentally predicated on the routine incorporation of non-Malagasy elements. If I’m reading Graeber right—although he might well reject my terminology—*fanafody* is symptomatic of an ongoing and restless settlement. Rather than starting from the presumption of preconstituted, bounded cultural worlds, what would happen to the analysis if it started from the presumption that the making of such worlds and the discourses that defend them (us/them, ours/theirs) is a kind of immune reaction to pro-vocative encounters?⁴⁴

Adorno wrote scathingly of the “ontological need” that seemed to beset the Heideggerians of his day, by which he meant a longing

for an unmediated access to the world such that one might dwell in it “authentically.” For Adorno, part of the problem with this ontological desire for immediacy was its erasure of the mediations that produce the actual, historical worlds that we all inhabit, its desire “to delete the transmissions instead of reflecting them.”⁴⁵ Similarly, as Eduardo Kohn notes, the current ontological longing is in part a reaction to approaches ushered in by the critique of representation, “which draw attention to the constructed nature of anthropological representations and thus amplify the linguistic even as they incorporate more sophisticated analyses of power and history.”⁴⁶ Unlike many current ontophiles, Kohn is careful to note that representations—language, symbolic systems—are themselves ontological problems. Nevertheless, his discussion remains organized around an opposition between the promise of ontological access and a long-hegemonic linguistic-symbolic-constructionist “humanist” or “cultural” approach to knowledge, which is based on “a sharp division between the world of signs and the world to which those signs refer without an account of how these worlds may be connected.”⁴⁷ The ontological—and, crucially, the ecological—challenge, Kohn suggests, is “getting right this relationship of language to nonlanguage, especially via the route of the representational but not linguistic.”⁴⁸

Amid the indubitable urgencies of our global situation, Kohn offers two choices: either anthropologists acknowledge the integral difference of our informants’ worlds (the ontological option), or they insist that there is no longer any outside to the global sameness machine of neocolonial domination: “Anthropology surely has a nostalgic relation to the kinds of alterity that certain historical forces (which have also played a role in creating our field) have destroyed. To recognize this is one thing. It is quite another to say that for this reason there is no longer any conceptual space ‘alter’ to the logic of this kind of domination. For this would be the final act of colonization, one that would subject the possibility of something else, located in other lived worlds, human and otherwise, to a far more permanent death.”⁴⁹

But surely these are not the only alternatives. Why should we have to choose between external alterity and internal uniformity? What if difference itself is immanently emergent? And what if the totality out of which it emerges is not so much a totalizing imperial machine as a

network of encounters in which the logic of domination is not easily distinguishable from (but also not reducible to) that of the recognition of integral difference? What if the key problem is not how to establish ethical encounters between entities that must be allowed their difference, but rather one of attending to the long and ongoing making of difference as a response to/management of/disavowal of encounter?

Let me be clear. What I'm suggesting is neither that these differences "aren't real" nor that they are simply ideological media of some global system of governmentality. The worlds people produce and dismantle—by means of representations, discourses, and built environments—are artifacts as real and as vital as anything else they inhabit. And the fact that these worlds arise out of social relations that are not innocent of translocal power projects does not in any way automatically curtail their creative and transformative potential. My point is simply that we shouldn't have to choose between totalizing discourses of global capitalism/empire/governmentality/whatever on the one hand and quasi-essentializing discourses of cultural difference on the other.

I'm Still Here! (Or, What Enlightenment Subject?)

Mana, in one version, is the substance that holds worlds together and yet leaks out so as to blur the boundaries between one thing and another. Mana infuses and radiates from the people and objects that have the capacity to mark the boundaries of worlds and, above all, to be efficacious within and between those worlds. Mana is, as I noted at the outset, at once the palpable authority of canonical order and the volatile force that troubles order. As such, thinking mana means thinking the social ontology of objects.

But mana also needs to be considered from the side of the subject since, as Durkheim pointed out, mana feels, subjectively, like "genuine respect," like that which makes us "defer to society's orders."⁵⁰ Mana is, Durkheim says, the medium of collective morality; it's what makes a given social order feel necessary and legitimate. From a critical theory standpoint, one might say that mana is a medium of ideology, of subjectivation. Durkheim is quite explicit about what I would

call the extimacy of *mana qua* ideology: “we readily conceive of it in the form of a moral power that, while immanent in us, also represents something in us that is other than ourselves.”⁵¹ At one level, my project in this book is to reconsider what *mana* might help to clarify about world making, especially in terms of the mediation of social energy and social form. But the question of world making has never been separable from the question of how worlds recruit and condition the subjects that come to understand themselves through, and thus also reproduce, those worlds. As the section titles of this book suggests, *mana* is as much a problem of the social in the subject as it is a problem of the subject in the social.

So here’s something else I want to be clear about: it’s because I take seriously the problem of how we might produce, recover, and cultivate ethical relations with our broader ecologies (human and nonhuman) that I think the allegedly catastrophic Enlightenment Subject is worth a longer look. In particular, I’d like to suggest that it would be helpful to think two dimensions of the subject together: the subject’s resonant opening to others (what I will later call the subject’s *addressability*), and the subject’s susceptibility to ideological attachments and identifications. In making the case, I want to acknowledge my long and profound debt—to be sure, an ambivalent relation of allegiance and rebellion—to Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a pro-vocative text if ever there was one.⁵² But I would also note that what I’m offering in this book, especially in chapter 4, could be read as a modification of Louis Althusser’s theory of interpellation (which is also a story of encounter and constitutive resonance)—the theory of how we become subjects, how we come to identify with the names and identities that give us ourselves.⁵³ As Peter Sloterdijk has observed, something remains to be understood here concerning why certain encounters cause us to resonate and not others:

How can it be that for billions of messages, I am the rock on which their waves break without resonance, while certain voices and instructions unlock me and make me tremble as if I were the chosen instrument to render them audible, a medium and mouthpiece simply for their urge to sound? Is there not still a mystery of access to consider here? Does my accessibility to certain unrefusable messages not

have its dark 'reason' in an ability to reverberate that has not yet been adequately discussed?⁵⁴

Present-day posthumanists and ontophiles are absolutely right to lament the radical gap that Enlightenment thinkers imposed between humans and nonhumans. A majority of canonical texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries devote significant space to making the case for human exceptionality vis-à-vis all other animals, let alone other forms of life and nonlife. But as Horkheimer and Adorno point out, this "diremption" (violent tearing apart) of the human and the nonhuman didn't only lead moderns to reduce the entire field of the nonhuman to an object of (more or less successful) human mastery. Just as importantly, it also bequeathed to them a radically impoverished conception of the human itself. Central to Horkheimer and Adorno's story is the repression and co-optation of a human capacity for mimesis or constitutive resonance, such that modern humans exiled themselves into a position of alienated domination vis-à-vis natures both external and internal that allowed them to understand the world only insofar as they disavowed their mimetic continuity with it. One of the most remarkable things about the anthropological approach—participant observation—is the way it turns constitutive encounter into method, ambivalently both affirming and disavowing mimetic resonance.

One might add to this story another dimension that is all too frequently forgotten today. Many of the thinkers associated most paradigmatically with the Enlightenment were in fact not so much obsessed with how to master the world from a position of domineering externality (although that is how their thought often took practical form, once it was operationalized by political and commercial bureaucracies). Rather, they remained preoccupied with questions of affective resonance and human permeability. In the mid-eighteenth century, David Hume and Adam Smith tried, through the notion of "sympathy," to work out whether the human propensity for encounter-based mimetic response might be "scaled up" so as to provide a medium of moral orientation in a modern society of strangers.⁵⁵ A few decades later, Kant's third and final critique suggested that our capacity for aesthetic judgment provided a spontaneously sensuous foundation for human reason—an object-ethics

preceding and subtending his subject-ethics.⁵⁶ (Does this point to another settlement? One for which “the Kantian catastrophe” is the symptom marking the spot where one part of Kant’s thinking—his object-ethics—has to be disavowed in order to sustain the “injury,” the “loss” that justifies the ontological turn?)

The first principle of Kant’s aesthetic was, in/famously, his insistence that a true aesthetic judgment has to be absolutely non-interested—that we can only truly know beauty if our relation to the beautiful thing is completely free of any desire or instrumental motive. Much ink has been spilled on his apparently perverse demand. Is it even possible to separate desire from aesthetic pleasure? What kind of subject position, at once world embedded and world transcending, would that require? For the purposes of my discussion here, I only want to note one thing: Kant demands such a rigorous policing of desire because he’s tenderly conscious of our susceptibility to ideological seduction precisely on the terrain of aesthetic pleasure.

As such, Kant sets up a way of thinking about subjectivity and ideology that will have profound ramifications all the way down to the present. On the one hand, we are resonantly, vitally porous to objects. On the other hand, *because* we are resonantly, vitally porous to objects we must constantly be on guard against the manipulative uses that interested parties might make of our porosity. Beauty, Kant says, makes the good society possible by pulling people together freely in sense and sensibility. But beauty is also the treacherous lure that politicians and churchmen use to lull us into surrendering our autonomous judgment—in Kant’s terms, our capacity for enlightenment.⁵⁷ Here we have the matrix of most theories of ideology. The mana of mass society might be, as Durkheim claimed, a “moral power” of solidarity and reason. But it might also be the honeyed words of the charismatic leader inciting patriotic murder, a garden-variety discourse of prejudice in the naturalizing name of “values,” or just an advertisement promising youth and vitality for the price of a purchase. The question then becomes: why should one have to imagine autonomy and resonance in a zero-sum way? Especially if Kant himself, *alias* Papa Enlightenment Subject, understood constitutive resonance—the basis of our experience of beauty—as the very condition of possibility for autonomous reason.

This book reads *mana* as an extimate symptom of the settlements that establish more or less coherently inhabitable worlds, both at the level of the worlds in which we live and at the level of how social theory divides up its objects. As an extimate symptom it feels at once like the thing that makes those worlds matter, that solicits affective attachment, and the thing that troubles their edges, that calls their coherence into question. A key premise of my argument in these pages will be that these two dimensions of the *mana* symptom are inextricable, in fact mutually constitutive. This has major implications for how we think about subjectivity, the ways in which we are addressable as subjects, and thus what it means for us to inhabit the worlds in which we live and in relation to which we become who we are.

My proposition will, in its general outlines, be familiar from Freud: subjectivity is itself a settlement, made and remade, arising out of an ongoing series of encounters. Because it's a settlement, it's a space of familiar attachments (including attachments to habits of rebelling against those attachments). And yet it's also symptomatic, constantly generative of uncanny intimations—in dreams, in unexpected associations, in recurrent contradictions—of what has been disavowed in order to produce the appearance of coherence and stability. Sloterdijk observes: "Half of normality consists of microscopic deviations from the norms."⁵⁸ And so it is with subjectivity. Just as the human eye, in order to maintain the subjective appearance of stable objects, constantly has to move ever so slightly from side to side, so we engage in the constant, exhausting yet largely unconscious, labor of producing and reproducing the stability of our sense of ourselves.

And yet at the same time—and this is the crucial point—the *mana* of a relation to a world (an inner world, an outer world) is double. It appears as an attachment to order and stability, yet that attachment would be impossible were it not for the simultaneous sense that it contains something that is not yet clear, that is not yet settled, that is at once seductive and threatening. As G. W. F. Hegel once remarked: "What through art or thinking we have before our physical or spiritual eye as an object has lost all absolute interest for us if it has been put before us so completely that the content is exhausted, that everything is revealed, and nothing obscure or inward is left over any more."⁵⁹

Approaching the problem dialectically reveals that the mimetic excess that might be called *mana* does simultaneously constitutive and destitutive work vis-à-vis any given social order and, further, that both the constitutive and the destitutive dimensions of *mana* work are both part of the fascination (the *mana*) of a world. Jacques Derrida (whom I am hereby proud to induct into the Guild of Unwilling Dialecticians—better late than never) captures this effect beautifully, illustrating how precisely the *non*-closure that we sense in a discourse can often be what draws us further into its web. Here the plenitude of *mana* appears at the same time as an irresistible absence: “If a speech could be purely present, unveiled, naked, offered up in person in its truth, without the detours of a signifier foreign to it, if at the limit an undeferred *logos* were possible, it would not seduce anyone.”⁶⁰

The implications would seem to be significant. First and foremost, the need to move beyond the zero-sum drama of hegemony and resistance, of the co-opted versus the critical subject. What attaches us to worlds—to ideologies, to subject positions, to ways of being—is not a watertight and self-sufficient set of propositions that one might accept or reject, believe in or not believe in. Rather, it is, if anything, precisely the opposite. Worlds solicit identification and resonance—and thus also conflict—because of an unresolved lack that gives us a prompt for work, play, and desire. The Indian poet, scholar, and translator A. K. Ramanujan used to say that myths are like crystals: they grow where there’s a flaw—in other words, a symptomatic gap that triggers the creative work of imagination and interpretation. It’s the same with worlds; we need them because they need us. But this also means that resistance is not cleanly separable from attachment. Or to put it differently, that the weakness or vulnerability of an ideological formation is also its strength.

This is, obviously, not a Romantic position. There is no guarantee that the gaps, fissures, and internal contradictions of a worldview open onto resistance; they might just as well be the source of the fascination that draws us closer into the attachments that keep us in line. Difference and desire are built into power; they are the very conditions of its efficacy. And yet, as John Durham Peters notes, there is also something profoundly vitalizing in the knowledge that it’s not

just that our perspectives on the world will always be lacking but rather that vitally, generatively, *the world itself is lacking*:

Perhaps the past cannot be tapped in its full immediacy because the present is not fully immediate. There are vast patches of unobserved reality silently lurking in every moment—at higher and lower levels of magnification, for different organs of sense, for minds quicker or slower than ours. Even for the most acute observer, descriptions might be incomplete, not only because of limited tools but because reality is lacking. Just as we often do not know what we mean when we speak, so the universe might not always be so sure of itself. The cosmos is structurally incomplete, as gap-ridden as its file. Such wonderful conditions these are! The universe generously accommodates our every new act, word, or thought. There is still plenty to do. It is open for new events; it is a container with a gracious void.⁶¹

Ticking Clock: Organization

My reappraisal of *mana* is by no means a nostalgic exercise (although it will no doubt offer the fetishist some incidental antiquarian pleasures!). Nor is it some reactionary appeal for a return to anthropological fundamentals. What motivates me is, rather, a sense of unexpected contemporaneity. With Walter Benjamin, I believe that elements of our pasts, once liberated from the historicist burden of having to culminate in the present, may, like sparks leaping across time, illuminate novel resonances between then and now. If the *mana* moment in one sense ended about a century ago, it is in another sense perhaps only now becoming intelligible. Just as Benjamin once wrote to his friend and sponsor Horkheimer of his ongoing attempts to make the Paris arcades of the nineteenth century release their profane illumination into his own historical present, I now write in the conviction that *mana* “has something to say to us only because it is contained in the ticking of a clock whose striking of the hour has just reached *our ears*.”⁶²

The *mana moment*, the period spanning roughly 1870 to 1920, saw, in Euro-American social thought, an undoing of the energetic settle-

ment that had produced the nineteenth-century bourgeois individual and his (yes, paradigmatically *his*) social forms. I will have more to say about the mana moment in chapter 1. For now, it may simply be relevant to suggest that the ticking of the mana clock may have reached our ears today because we are all, once again, facing the undoing, at a planetary level, of the energetic settlements that have constituted long-reigning assumptions about the human and the social. In both moments, the question was, and is: what can be redeemed, carried over, translated, activated, so as to retheorize the social rewards and risks of our vital powers? Perhaps a previously impossible phrase—the mana of mass society—is now becoming intelligible.

In addition to this introduction, the book is organized into two parts, “The Social in the Subject” and “The Subject in the Social,” each comprising two chapters. The first two chapters deal predominantly with classic anthropological materials, as refracted through critical-theoretical concerns. The second two, inversely, engage critical theory in light of the earlier anthropological readings.

Chapter 1, “Modern Savagery: Mana beyond the Empiricist Settlement,” offers a genealogy of the mana concept, the better to show (a) that mana always pointed to an ambiguous kinship between the energetics of so-called primitive ritual and those of so-called modern or civilized powers, and (b) that the theoretical development of this insight was blocked by what I am calling the “empiricist settlement.” The empiricist settlement was the consolidation, around 1920, of the notion that legitimate anthropology consisted paradigmatically of single-sited long-term fieldwork in (what had to look like) a bounded, small-scale society, and the principle that all social phenomena should be interpreted in terms of, and referred back to, the social and cultural order of that bounded, small-scale society. What the empiricist settlement most strenuously disavowed was its relation to its immediate precursor, the speculative, comparativist, and progressionist models of the so-called armchair anthropologists. Chapter 1, then, has two main conceptual aims. The first is to push back beyond the empiricist settlement by interpreting its symptoms and ask what might be worth redeeming from the speculative impulse that it so strenuously repressed. The second, by way of a possible exemplification, is to move toward a fulfillment of the

lost promise embedded in a conception of mana that straddled the division between “primitive” and “modern” societies. What would it mean to speak of a mana of mass society? In what sense is the mana work of “primitive” magicians comparable to that of, say, “modern” orators or marketers?

The heart of chapter 2, “Ecstatic Life and Social Form: Collective Effervescence and the Primitive Settlement,” is a reconsideration of Durkheim’s classic theory of ritual, read as a theory of the social mediation of vital energy. I situate Durkheim’s discussion in relation to a long-standing tendency in anthropology to render questions of vitality secondary to questions of intelligibility, such that the energetic dimensions of world making are at once acknowledged and disavowed. The conceptual core of chapter 2 is the question of the relation between immanence and transcendence in the making of social worlds, a question that I consider in light of apparently defunct anthropological debates about “primitive” versus “modern” forms of thought. Here, too, mana emerges as a symptom of a settlement: the primitive settlement, according to which “primitives” engage the world by participation, whereas “moderns” manage it by means of representation. The energy/form dialectic of Durkheim’s ritual scenario offers me a way to point beyond the primitive settlement, but not before putting equal critical pressure on the primitivism of Durkheim’s own anthropological imagination. I move toward the concerns of part II by rounding off chapter 2 with a consideration of the charismatic settlements that establish and undermine the worlds we inhabit—and, as such, the potentially troubling indistinction between ideological subjection and human flourishing.

Chapter 3, “Anxious Autonomy: The Agony of Perfect Addressability and the Aesthetic Settlement,” moves the focus of my discussion from anthropology to critical theory, and from the social to the subject. The central concern of the chapter is to get to grips with a motif that structures critical-theoretical approaches to the seductions of ideology, from politics to marketing: the anxiety of the autonomous subject, who, at the limit, cannot distinguish being perfectly and completely recognized as *who he or she really is* from being perfectly and completely incorporated into an external order—that is to say, being completely extinguished as an autonomous and critically vigilant subject. I explore the current fascination with algorithm-

mically organized precision-targeted forms of marketing that are, like Homer's Sirens, supposed only to sing the singular song of the individual they're addressing. I ask what might be made of the fact that subliminal manipulation is currently being reconceptualized as a desirable good. Having pushed the figure of manipulation to the limit, I then return to the locus classicus of the paranoid style in mass cultural analysis, Horkheimer and Adorno's essay on the culture industry, and proceed to suggest, against the prevailing tide, that it is precisely by way of Adorno's dialectical aesthetic theory that one can get beyond Adorno's debilitating (and completely undialectical) dismissal of mass culture. Here, too, a settlement is at stake: the aesthetic settlement that permitted otherwise "primitive" mana a place in the order of "civilization," as long as that place could be called "art." The work of the latter part of the chapter consists in showing how Adorno's autonomously critical subject requires a parallel conception of an autonomous aesthetic object, and in asking under what terms what Adorno calls the "primacy of the object" might be allowed to do what Adorno insisted it must not: inform a dialectical theory of the mana of mass society beyond the sequestered space of art.

Finally, chapter 4, "Are You Talking to Me? Eros and Nomos in the Mimetic Archive," offers a theory of self- and world-making through constitutive resonance. Pulling together the threads of chapters 1 through 3, chapter 4 makes a case for the mimetic archive as an alternative to (or possibly a revitalization of) a culture concept that has been compromised not least by its ready adoption by state and commercial interests. I argue that constitutive resonance can usefully be understood in terms of a dialectical play between eros (resonance, love) and nomos (order, law) and sketch the outlines of a theory of addressability—not only a theory of interpellation (how do we become the selves that we are in moments of encounter such that we experience that becoming as "fated") but also a theory of the vital co-constitution of inner and outer worlds, and of the inseparability of self-understanding and object-resonance. I conclude the chapter by returning to Durkheim's theory of the sacred and Weber's theory of charisma in order to ask how one might understand the *fractalized*, distributed forms of these capacities and these intensities once one considers their life beyond their spectacular and exceptional concen-

tration in big rituals, monuments, or leaders. This becomes an occasion to reflect on some of the ways in which politics and marketing respond to a crisis in the self-representation of popular sovereignty by appearing, by means of constitutive resonance, to reconcile eros and nomos, love and law. Chapter 4 rounds off the book by returning to the question of how one might retheorize power and ideological interpellation starting from the ambivalent complicities and attachments of constitutive resonance.