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# Avant-garde and Mission

D. Caboret — P. Garrone

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1999

Retrieved on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010 from [tiqqunerie.jottit.com](http://tiqqunerie.jottit.com)

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1999

And so it fails to show the intimate bond that unites capitalism and economism, and to what extent Marx's critique remains marred by what it intended to deny. We arrive then at the paradox that when the economy and its principles *physically* [really] dominate everywhere, they are totally absent when approached from a purely *metaphysical* perspective.

- XI. One must render to Tiqqunery its due: aside from the handful of disoriented professors and students that they'll take in without much trouble, all that their desperate attempts at intellectual credibility will earn them will be a well-stewed ubuesque guffaw... and the rest is nothing but college kids bullshitting.

the Spectacle is so fond of, like the one for the year 2000, for example, don't turn into a disaster one day or another." Whether big or little, Tiqqunery is still too much in love with church services to admit that "god is dead."

- IX. The spectacle (in the sense of a historical phase of capitalism) has always worked to make the historic and social foundations of its domination, as well as the nature of the social relations it engenders, into something mysterious and opaque. This is therefore not, as Tiqqunery believes, because the "social illegibility" of an aimlessly wandering world today rediscovers itself as such that it will ensure the clear unfolding of the Heideggerian project or the promised coming of Tiqoun. On the contrary, it is because these theories refuse to consider the world in terms of its historical and social development that, by going back to the roots of mysticism, they reinforce its confusion and mystery. Thus there's nothing surprising about Bloom's appearance within Tiqqunery as the most abstract replacement for the old figure of the proletarian worker; there's also nothing surprising about Tiqqunery's considering that the brutal return of the lumpenproletariat will proceed not from the historical, economic, and social contradictions proper to capitalism itself, but will instead arise from a frightfully simple machiavellian project of commodity domination: the voluntary recreation of a destitute social class so as to keep the middle class in a state of fear and exploitation! The speech of the God of metaphysics, like that of the Crucified one, is desperately slurred.
  
- X. In their perfectly just desire to combat the economism that has dominated a certain marxism and the evolution of revolutionary struggles, Tiqqunery merely ends up making an *abstract* negation of socio-economic relations: there is no capitalism, and the commodity world is but an interpretation.

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against a certain “interpretation.” Astray in its perilous scholarly exercises, Tiqqunery can only announce to humanity its liberation in the form of moral postulates: swapping out their present consciousness for a “true” consciousness, and doing so, abolishing its limits with a “leap”: “critical metaphysics is a synonym for transfiguration.” In a reading of history in terms of “the fall” and “the redemption,” the unfortunate situation of humanity appears to be that they have remained sunken in the mud of immanence instead of progressing towards the forgetting of being. That’s why Tiqqunery tries to cut a path for its new gospel by setting an example or by a handful of limited experiences which are supposed to allow the conversion of everyone’s consciousness.

VIII. Because it systematically refuses to consider the present world in any way other than in terms of idealist and abstract postulates, Tiqqunery logically elevates its philosophical development to a plane of pure autonomy. Regarding millenarianism itself, a fundamental fact escapes its vision: when religion still dominated the reality the world entirely, revolts and subversion could not come about outside of the material and ideological framework set by religion. To the extent that all the revolts of the Christian heretics of the middle ages and the Jewish Sabbatean movements were part of *that reality*, the dissolution of which they gave rise to little by little, they had a subversive basis far more concrete than any return to eschatological times arbitrarily decreed today. Though Tiqqunery is bitterly upset about the fact that the spectacle easily integrates this kind of hackneyed “messianic return” fetish, it’s not so much because it would be able to understand that this “return” is in itself *historically* threadbare, but rather because it lacks the explosive spiritual surplus that it boasts that it is regilding and prophesying: “We’ll be shocked if one of those big blow-out worship events that

of questioning, comprises "... the fecund tissue of existence itself," that humanity will finally open up "...truly to the experience of anxiety, ecstasy and abandon." In the Tiqqunist paradise, there's an opportunity to experience all the forms of cosmic orgasm. While waiting for that, though, the "hottest" Tiqqunist experience constitutes going into raptures in a bakery, after failing to get some with the baker herself..

- V. Following Heidegger, Tiqqunery prescribes a restoration of sacred horror: manna is fulfilled in the name of being, as if the impotence of contemporary humanity were comparable to that of the pre-animist primitives when thunder rumbled in the sky.
- VI. For a whole century, philosophy has been expressing its need to escape commodity domination by developing a metaphysics that condemns it and puts a limit on it from the perspective of an undying root basis. With all these eternal values compromised by the contemptible inauthenticity of everything that exists, there's nothing left but the holiness of Being. Sheep in wolves' skin, working towards the reunification of meaning and life. However, for a very long time now, the majesty of the appeal to being has been wrapped up in a *smoky aura*. Heidegger: "But 'being'... what is 'being'? Being is what is." As Adorno notes: "Being seduces you, from the depths of bad poems, eloquent as the rustling of leaves in the wind."
- VII. To engender a consciousness of oppression, Tiqqunery goes as far as it can as a philosophy without however ceasing to be one. It is thus characteristic of it that while it unveils the metaphysical essence of the world, it can only really fight it as a philosophical category, that is, as an adversary in the same condition as it is in. Thus it finds the exact expression to qualify its activity when it affirms that it is only struggling

TIQQUNERY<sup>1</sup>

Friends of LHOOQ<sup>2</sup>

23 rue d'Hauteville

75010 PARIS

[www.laguerredelaliberte.org](http://www.laguerredelaliberte.org)

Addressed in 1999 to a small group of persons, the following text was intended to describe in general the philosophical and religious affiliations that the members of the magazine Tiqqun (which had just released its first issue) associated themselves with either explicitly or implicitly. A ridiculously small number of copies of it were printed; the text was never intended for any kind of big public release. A (lucky?) leak then caused it to have a significant release; that's why we're putting it out publicly now.

Tiqqun's project is essentially based on three sources, each comprising a part of this text: Heidegger's thought, which involves the whole of western metaphysical thinking; reflections in the Jewish Kabbala; and the philosophical and political movement of nihilism. For minds steeped in Tiqqunery, they correspond perfectly and fit together totally. Thus it's only for explanatory purposes that they are presented separately here. By simplifying these doctrines and this story, which are rich and complex, we've been able to draw from them a certain theoretical coherence, from a mess of erudite commentary and flat citations; of course it goes without saying that coherence does not imply truth.

And what we said at the time regarding the purpose of this text has not changed either: though it appears didactic at its heart, it should be read above all as critical study notes. Only its conclusion, in the form of theses, could be used as a trampoline to jump

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<sup>1</sup>Connerie means "foolishness" in French; the original reads "la tiqqounnerie," combining "tiqqun" and "connerie." A loose reading, then, would be: "this 'Tiqqun' silliness."

<sup>2</sup>LHOOQ, pronounced aloud in French, is "elle a chaud au cul" meaning "her ass is hot".

to a more directly political critique. The last thesis has often been described as an attack both slanderous and halfhearted. But it is within the eccentric reality of “bullshitting college kids” with underdeveloped literary ambitions that Tiqqun has found its audience. And don’t worry, it won’t have any other. In its decomposition, our era has been apt to give favor to gurus swinging around “the essence” with a dash of rhetorical mush, much like others once swung around censers; but this gives some others no less an urge to make ad hominem critiques of all these modern-day priests trying to pass themselves off as revolutionaries.

February 2002.

Note: Tiqoun, a Kabbalistic concept, is spelled with an “o” in this text. When referring to the magazine itself, we spell it *Tiqqun*.

## ACT 1

Metaphysics and its transcendence; Heidegger.

Scene 1: Metaphysics

Before sketching out the heideggerian project, we will now give a very general view of an outline of what metaphysics is. Metaphysics is often considered as the opposite of physics, which is the study of nature. Thus it is defined as either the science of the realities that are not subject to the senses, of immaterial and invisible beings (soul, God), or as the knowledge of what those things really are, in contrast to their appearances. In either case, metaphysics has to do with what’s beyond nature, or if you prefer, beyond the world as it is given us to examine, as the sciences conceive it and study it — that is, with the foundations of what exists. An example of a metaphysical question: what is being? and in the classic form: is there something to it, rather than nothing? Metaphysics, a way of questioning being in itself, as “being,” often proves to be the fundamental and supreme knowledge, for this very reason.

## Epilogue

And then there was Tiquunery...

### *What is Tiquunery?*

- I. Whereas Tiquunery dreams that it is the nightmare of the modern world, it wakes up to the fact that it is the final intellectual buffoonery of the modern world’s decomposition.
- II. A blend of juvenile hopes and theorized frustrations, Tiquunery is the philosophical, haughty, and pathetic version of the religious and sectarian stink that an era totally stripped of any historical and social consciousness favors.
- III. The exemplary nature of the tiqqunist jumble can only be fathomed in light of the intellectual impostures tolerated in these times: they pay a price of general confusion and flatness for their retaking *just as such* and incoherent syncretization of a set of theories that are *fundamentally* opposed in their aims and ends. With their magic of speculative collage, the strategic visions of Debord serve the philosophical ambitions of the political moron Heidegger; Marx flirts with that poser Caillé; Bataille, that chamber-pot, waltzes with Benjamin...
- IV. The great discovery of Tiquunery is to replace the poetic vision of the world of the Surrealists and Situationists with a religious and metaphysical vision. *A missionary avant-garde*, Tiquunery promises paradise with a religious transparency accompanied by a high intensity mystical practice. In the full meaning of the words, then, basically, humanity will now be able to lose itself “... in never-ending holy wars, schisms, sects, and heresies...” and “accept the idea that metaphysics, far from being the product of an occasionally vaporous kind

with all *the established baseness*, and finally with *the principle of destruction*” (our italics).

The Russian political nihilists rediscovered mystical and religious attitudes in their acts and representations that arose from a similar fascination with death and devastation. According to Camus, they “[lived] up to their ideas. They justified them by incarnating them to the point even of dying themselves. What we are dealing with here is still a conception of revolt which, if not religious, is at least metaphysical.”

Netchaev (1822–1882) was political nihilism’s most extreme figure. The cruel monk of a desperate revolution, he started from the principle that politics and religion should be forever more united. A maniacal admirer of the jesuits, a partial reader of Machiavelli, who accepted any and all means in the name of the ends, he propagated to his mystified faithful followers a steely fanaticism and an absolute abandon. At the service of an absolutist concept of *love* and *brotherhood* — a concept that the revolution would surely bring about soon — murders, crimes, voluntary suicides during attacks, were all held up as the exemplary acts of a new martyrology. Dostoyevsky’s *The Possessed* showed this atmosphere where revelation, terror, and distress mixed together with a kind of hope anchored in an eschatological event. *Tiqqun* — knowing that the rhetoric they use shows rather a *disturbed conformism and pubescent presumption* — nevertheless does not escape this kind of sectarian fascination where, drunk on destruction, all thinking is consumed by fury and rage; this explains the incantatory, arbitrary, and authoritarian tone, *pathetic in this day and age*, which their discourse and thinking sometimes takes on, and one can finally understand, if it were still necessary, that for the Imaginary Party “nothing is more odious than the idea of political unity, except perhaps the idea of obedience.” *Theses on the Imaginary Party*.

This pretense has, however, been rejected by many thinkers as a kind of speculation, an escape from reality. Metaphysics is but a chimera in their eyes, a bunch of questions spinning rapidly around verbiage and tangents, in which religion has always been able to find a few good buyers.

Scene 2: The metaphysical becoming of the world; Heidegger

Though for Marx history is about the development of class struggles, and for Nietzsche the growing and flowering rise of nihilism, it is for Heidegger about the reappropriation of a fundamental forgetting, running through western thought all the way back to Plato — the forgetting of being.

According to a pattern that one can find to be at work in both hegelian and religious thinking (the kabbala), history has gone through three successive phases: primordial unity, separation, and the conscious re-conquest of that lost unity.

The primordial unity, for Heidegger, covers the period of the Greek pre-socratic thinkers (Heraclitus, Parmenides...). A kind of paradise lost, a golden age of the world, this was the moment when for the first time man, however unconsciously, lived out his being, as fully a part of it.

Platonic thinking, by trying to grasp the truth of each object presented to man, tears apart this primordial unity (the christians would here say that Adam had bitten the apple). We then enter into the period of separation, a historical phase dominating western thought until Heidegger.

The conscious re-conquest of that lost unity with being (similar to *Tiqqun* — discussed in the next few chapters) is now possible, according to the latter. How and why is what we’re going to be working on now, by delving into a line of thought that is simultaneously a critique of what western metaphysics has been all about since Plato, and a radical deepening thereof.

In order to understand the historical possibilities involved in this re-conquest, one must on the one hand go back to the period of forgetting, and envision, on the other, the fundamental questions

that techno-scientific power poses in our times. By characterizing all western thought as the forgetting of being, Heidegger does not however imply that there was no proper metaphysical thought before him. Certainly, philosophy still has a metaphysical dimension to the extent that it has forced itself to think about being, but it has never done so by really elevating it to the status of a dignified question; in other words, it has not examined its problems in terms of its meaning and truth. More precisely speaking, the question of Being has always been subordinate to “being-theres”.<sup>3</sup> An “being-there” is any particular being, for example a spyglass, a buffalo, or a man, all of which have in common the fact that they EXIST, that they ARE. For Aristotle, what unites the spyglass and the buffalo (their being) is action and force. If the same question were asked of Schopenhauer, he would say that the “being” of man, a table, and a stone, is their will to live; they all have in common the fact that they want to live. In both cases, it is clear that to be referred to as a “being” depends on that being-there, or symmetrically, that the being-there is only understandable from the perspective of its being. Here we find the primary reproach directed at philosophy by Heidegger: it has only ever thought about “being” from the perspective of and in light of “being-theres,” or, inversely, it has only ever represented being-theres (spyglass, buffalo, man) in light of what they are, how they are, and has forgotten to question the essential origin of these “being-theres.”

Thus western metaphysics remains in the end tied to scientific knowledge, which tries to see everything in its truth whereas being has to be thought about as such, in its transcendence, pure and simple. It remains simple physics (based on the natural sciences), which consists only of exact representations and has made “being” the most empty and general of concepts. Consider a jug, for exam-

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<sup>3</sup>étant – literally the present progressive of “to be,” or “being.” Heidegger’s original is Dasein, meaning “being-there” or “existence.” I’ve decided to go with “being-there.”

can join up, that is, with the hard-core of the conscious ones), he nevertheless remains, like his bosses, the simple agent of a *historico-religious destiny* traced out for him without any input from his own good will. So it’d be tough to denounce the historical transcendence developed by hegelian/marxist philosophy, then, if you were desperate enough to even bring up the divine corpse again. After all, only the arrival of Tiqqun, that is, the normal course of the world according to Luria and the Sabbateans, can in the end decisively bring about the passage into liberation... Even Nietzsche himself wasn’t duped by such attempted backflip. Bringing religion back to the table in the end means not transcending the nothingness, like *Tiqqun* thinks, but validating it, and giving it again the central position that it already had for more than two millenia: old metaphysics and religious dogmatism would only once again consecrate the reign of death, relaunch all “the fables about the nothingness and its worship,” and re-establish the state where “the instinct for destruction is systematized in the name of redemption.” Without being too nietzschean, one might grant this remark a high degree of validity and could think back to the deathly ambiguities of Frankism. And there again the most disturbing questions arise concerning this magazine, one that after having gotten their positive orientations in Kabbalist radicalism, gets all exhilarated about and fascinated with the desperate acts of a vast social decomposition. *A fascination with death, nothingness, violence, and devastation*, even if decked out with such a liberating conclusion as “Tiqqun,” has apparently had more an impact than they’re even aware of on these dear ridiculous eccentrics... It’s never so innocent when you start getting into total devastating nothingness. Crevel, when speaking about Heidegger, has already noted that by talking about nothingness so peremptorily he ended up reducing himself to nothingness. Adorno, a bit more clearly, pointed out that the nihilists are always “those who counterpose their more and more washed-out positivities to nihilism and by means of them conspire together



dence of a world collectively governed by the old metaphysics, the divine, and the passive nihilism that sanctions it, can no longer be based on any kind of *religious or metaphysical transcendence*. The old values preached by religion and the ideal essences determined by Plato (the beautiful, the good, the just, etc...), because they have been set from above, indeed *from outside* of the real and *outside* of life, can only ever really govern reality and life at the price of the most serious disillusionment and damage. Identically, socialism, the earthly continuation of the Christian credo, is condemned right off the bat as an illusory alternative solution. Nihilism cannot be transcended without its full acceptance and achievement, the recognition of its living, *active* principle (we will not here discuss Nietzsche's desperate attempts to execute that project: Will to Power, Superman, Eternal Return, etc.).

In *Tiqqun* one can find an explicit will to take on that Nietzschean bet. Some of their incantatory formulae, as radical as they are falsely lyrical, involve the writers trying to convince themselves of such a will: "Annihilate the nothingness"; "Precisely because he is the man of full-fledged nihilism, Bloom's goal is to bring about an escape from nihilism or to perish." *Bloom Theory*; "We cannot transcend nihilism without fulfilling it, nor fulfill it without transcending it. Crossing that line means the general destruction of things as such — in other words, the annihilation of nothingness." Silence and beyond. *Tiqqun's* false choice, however, is to attach this "general destruction" to the *mystical rags of religious puppetry*, and that's no longer even, as it was in the case of the revolutionary workers' movement, the "laicized," earthly and historical pursuit of the most powerful christian ideals — the class struggle drawn out from the language of religion, according to Debord — but rather the brutal return of that same language, with its symbolic share of the same old rerun images, and with newly ordained priests. Though Bloom still has a chance at awakening of his consciousness before being totally lost, so he can among other things pay a visit to the politburo of the Imaginary Party (so he

ple, says Heidegger, using an example from Descartes. Physically, it shows itself to be a receptacle, having a bottom, an inner surface, and a handle. For scientific representation, which claims to grasp things faster and better than all other experience, the jug is the product of a potter's labor, and is full of air inside. And that's all there is to it, besides perhaps getting into measurements or analyzing the material its made of and its form. But it is a property of the empty space within that jug that it can contain what is poured into it, to be both gift and offering. The connection between the earth, the sky, the gods, and the mortals are condensed into it: "The spring remains in the water that is offered i. In that spring, the rock it springs from, and in the rock, all the heavy lethargy of the earth, which receives the rain and dew ..." (*Essays and Conferences*). Things thus have a multitude of meanings, and gather together within themselves a number of natural and social relationships, and have a mythical sheen about them, a symbolic value which cannot be reduced to use value or to the representation of the thing in all its objectivity. Heidegger seeks out all the repressed meanings of familiar things, meanings repressed by the dominant representations of techno-scientific knowledge, meanings that are nevertheless retained in myth in a latent and diluted form. The example of the jug also shows, for Heidegger, the need for a radical reversal of the mode of man's presence in the world. Man must cease to consider himself as thinking up and producing the world out of himself in his will to power, and instead admit that it is to be seen, rather, from the perspective of its being-there. "Being" unveils and opens itself up to man, if man is able to understand it by means of language. Transcending metaphysics, for Heidegger, is thus to return consciously to the ever retreating origins, to return to a fundamental mode of examination, which the questioning of being-there and its truth cannot permit.

This transcendence of all the old metaphysics does not however arise from a simple human decision. As the members of *Tiqqun* have said, perfectly in line with Heidegger, 'we are on the histori-

cal threshold of a journey which will allow the realization of that transcendence. The old metaphysics, in fact, now has exhausted all its possibilities in the absolute domination of the world by technology. And thus we see how technology, while realizing metaphysics, also puts an end to it.

For Heidegger, technology is in essence not just another phenomenon among all the other phenomena of modernity. The heart of it can only be grasped by attaching it to all the history of western metaphysics which is at its root. Thus, for example, it is not just a purely instrumental activity, as Hegel conceived of it, nor, as Marx saw it, a way of extracting surplus value in the capitalist world. No, it is far more: behind its supposed objective neutrality, it materializes the mode of representation proper to western metaphysics in the domination of nature and of people. Looking at it in terms of the mode of disclosure proper to it, it is a true “provocation” by means of which nature has been given formal notice to provide accumulable resources and energies solely to meet the needs of humanity. From this productivist perspective, nature is reduced to a pure object of consumption, and objects appear, relative to humanity, as the mere fund or stock of humanity’s power; so much so that all objects (natural objects, technology, machines...) become but the symbol of human power and immediately echo it. Nature is thus seen as in line with human plans, and fully compassed by them. In the old days, says Heidegger, the old wooden bridge over the Rhine became part of nature by uniting the two banks of the river; today, the river becomes part of the construction of nuclear power plants.

To what extent have we now gotten to the end of this process? Subject to absolute domination by man by means of technology, nature now turns against him, leaving devastation and death all around. Man, according to Heidegger, cannot escape the circle of this domination. Considered in turn as a source of power (labor power), man can be swallowed up as a subject: “Man himself becomes human material, to be used so as to meet pre-established

Bazarov, a future model for numerous revolutionaries, characterized his approach as the glory of having “the sterile consciousness of an understanding, to a certain extent, of the sterility of what exists.” Nietzsche, however, the true visionary of modern nihilism, was the one who gave us the definition and most acute analysis of what he designated as the present human condition “the most disturbing of all guests.”

Nihilism is the terrain of the collapse of all meaning. An experience of the fatigue of meaning, it is accompanied by a great weariness, a profound disgust for people and things. Nothing’s worth anything anymore, it’s all the same: the true, the false, good, evil. Everything’s over, exhausted, worn out, surpassed, tarnished, fading. It’s the indeterminate death throes of meaning, an endless twilight. Not a definite annihilation of meaning, but its indefinite collapse. The historically executed development of nihilism, according to Nietzsche, proceeds from the death of god. With his death all guaranteed intelligible understanding of the world disappears; and along with god all the old moral, metaphysical, political, and religious values are dead as well... The task is now to confront the coming chaos; not to deny that it is chaos, but to recognize it and admit it as an essential component of humanity... it’s a matter of moving from a nihilism that one undergoes, a *passive* nihilism, to a nihilism that one recognizes, an *active* nihilism, which alone is capable of responding to the devastation brought about by the act of decide that humanity has carried out. The only recourse available to contemporary man to conquer his despair and solitude, then, is to recognize what has never been “true life” in terms of philosophical or religious ideals — that is, to recognize that moments of happiness, harmony, truth and good contradictorily mingle with moments of illusion, plurality, suffering, and evil, with the most extreme tension between them. Nietzsche basically makes a kind of central and frightening bet regarding humanity’s future: “if we do not make of the death of God a great self-denial and a perpetual victory over ourselves, we’ll have to pay for that loss.” In his eyes, the transcen-

## ACT III

### Philosophical and Political Nihilism

“In many ways, Critical Metaphysics takes on and completes the undermining work of nihilism that has been successfully carried out by nihilism for the past five centuries.”

Tiqqun, What is Critical Metaphysics?

“Like all adolescent minds, they simultaneously felt a sense of doubt and a need to believe. Their personal solution was to empower their negation with their intransigence and the passion of faith. And is there anything surprising about that, after all?”

A. Camus, *The Rebel* (regarding the young Russian nihilists)

“Truth is devastation.”

*Tiqqun*, Raw Materials for a Theory of the Young Girl

“...A proletariat of bachelors...”

Dostoyevsky, (on the same subject...)

We have just now seen why with Frank a large portion of the Jewish millenarian movements sank into a kind of total nihilism. This chapter will do no more than to explain with a brief description the concepts of nihilism according to Nietzsche and according to Netchayev (a major figure in Russian political nihilism), and how in an obviously less scandalous but much more comfortable way *Tiqqun* claims this affiliation, soon to be transcended by the advent of the new era of redemption.

The term “nihilism” appeared for the first time in the writings of the Russian novelist Turgenev in his book *Father and Son*. His hero,

aims.” Man can thus grasp the hidden essence of technology, and at the same time the way he is fundamentally a part of “being,” when confronted with this extreme danger, when all his firm foundations are shaken. More precisely, man has the possibility of understanding that technology participates in a metaphysical interpretation of the world which is none other than the way of thinking proper to the whole western tradition, which today is exhausting its last possibilities: by means of the domination of techno-science, “being” is showing nature to man as an “ensemble of calculable forces.” So modern technology puts man in a convergence point where man could just as easily go on giving himself over entirely to the domination-frenzy or become aware of the role he plays in the revealing of “being.” And that role contains both the greatest of dangers and the possibility that something that could save us all is on the horizon. But that can’t happen without us ceasing to be fascinated by technology and understanding it instead as a particular kind of disclosure, giving us a sign that points to something else. Our times thus comprise the critical point where from out of the greatest decadence emerges the possibility that we just might reclaim it all. Thus, before we look at how they’re doing it, we can conclude that the members of *Tiqqun* are taking up that critical point again as such, and then radicalizing it from a pseudo-political perspective.

Above all, it’s not just a kind of nostalgia for the rural world and the tall-trees of its Black Forests that are to be found in Heidegger, but also a certain consciousness, common to all German culture at the time, including his adversaries — Bloch, Adorno, and the Frankfurt School — that a civilization founded on the exploitation of nature and man, where technology is at the service of manipulative Power, could not be tolerated much longer. Whereas for Marx man’s liberation from the forces that dominate him was to come from social and political practice, for Heidegger it can only take place on the metaphysical plane. In other words, the world of technology cannot be a pointing out of something different unless

humanity itself goes through *the experience of nothingness, and only through that experience*. Thus he could say that if men are lost in the vertigo of their own domination, it is only in order that they tear themselves apart, destroy themselves, and fall into the “nullity of Nothingness.” This is a necessary step for man to take before he can be reconciled with “being” as part of a “re-memorative thinking” of a philosophical/poetic nature.

The metaphysical experience of nothingness as an unavoidable preliminary to a full and reconciled life, is part of all the articles in the magazine. This experience is not simply part of a particular viewpoint on heideggerian thought, as we will see below, but is also found in of the most extreme doctrines in the Kabbala and in the ideas the Russian nihilists.

### Scene 3: Critical Metaphysics

“Metaphysics cannot be defeated like an opinion can... Man, having become *the rational animal*, which today means the living being that works, can now only wander through the deserts of a devastated earth. And this might be a sign that metaphysics is manifesting itself to us directly from itself, and that the transcendence of metaphysics takes place as an acceptance of ‘being.’ Because work (see Ernst Jünger) today has risen to the metaphysical level as the unconditional objectification of all present things deploying their being in the will to will. If this is so, we must not think that we are outside of metaphysics simply because we foresee its end. Because metaphysics, even if transcended, does not disappear. It comes back in another form and retains its supremacy, like the distinction, still in force, that differentiates “being-there” from “being.”

— M. Heidegger, *Essays and Conferences*.

because he senses that the worst atrocity he could subject this society to would be to leave his crimes unexplained. And so he manages to insinuate into everyone’s minds the poisonous certainty that in every human being there is a sleeping enemy of civilization. Obviously *Bloom’s purpose is solely the devastation of this world; indeed, that is his fate, though he will never say it. Because his strategy is to produce disaster, and silence all around.*” (our italics).

Frankism caused a real trauma to Jewish communities, particularly in Eastern Europe. According to Scholem, it expressed the catastrophic, desperate, and decadent state of a large portion of the Jewish world at the time. For Frank, as for the radical movement in sabbataism, the final aim of destruction was to free good from the grip of evil once and for all, and that goal now allowed for the use of all possible means: fraud, trickery, disavowals, acting as double agents, or even as triple agents — all were accepted as the tools to work towards an unquestionable goal. This was another aspect of the nihilistic character of the movement, a character proper to the movement of political nihilism itself when it had its resurgence among the Russians over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The partisans of the Frankist doctrine thus indulged into the most unbelievable of displays, in the eyes of a traditionalist Jew: alongside their numerous conversions to Christianity, they regularly carried out orgies and acts of collective insanity... In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rabbinical authorities did all they could to erase all the traces of them and all memory of them. When the French revolution came about, however, certain Frankists saw in that political upheaval a confirmation of Frank’s prophecies, and rallied to Jacobinism (Junius Frey was one of them, and his ghost signs the first magazine’s articles on the last page, next to the names of the other editors). The rest is discussed in the works of G. Scholem (specialist in Kabbalah and Jewish millenarianism), if the subject is of interest to you.

Following in the myths of the Exile and the Desert, *the theme of devastation and silence runs through all the principal articles of the magazine*. It is just as much applied to the acts of Bloom as it is adopted in the strategy of the Imaginary Party. We note quickly in passing that Bloom is the figure of modern capitalism's negation, a negation that does not recognize itself as such but rather is formed by the ensemble of its destructive acts (murders, suicides, etc...) under the banner of the Imaginary Party. In this Party, a few of its conscious members (*Tiqqun*), following the trajectory of their avant-garde justifications, give meaning and value to practices and acts that appear at first to be completely without any: "nothing can explain the systematic absence of remorse among these criminals (Kip Kinkel, for example. — *editor's note*), if not the mute sense that they are participating in a grandiose work of general destruction. Obviously these people, insignificant in themselves, are the agents of a severe kind of reasoning, a *historical and transcendental reasoning*, which demands the annihilation of this world — that is, the fulfillment of their nothingness." *Theses on the Imaginary Party* (our italics); "...every one of these murders with no motive and no specific victim, every one of these anonymous acts of sabotage (carried out by Blooms — *editor's note*), constitute an act of Tiqqun." *Theses on the Imaginary Party*.

Madness never burdens itself with paradoxes: Bloom, that black knight of redemption, insignificant in and of himself and ignorant of the Grail he quests after, nevertheless knows perfectly the absolute law of silence. Evoking the sordid story of some forty year old man who suddenly snaps and apparently totally calm goes ahead and massacres his whole family, our dear "conscious members" give this explanation, which is the perfectly obvious one when one understands the mystical sewer system they swim in: "Faced with his judges, as when faced with torture, (?! — They apparently imagine modern courthouses as secret branch offices of the Inquisition, *editor's note*.) Bloom will remain mute on the motives for his crime. Partly because sovereignty has no need to justify itself, and partly

Though it has tried, *Tiqqun's* critique has not left the terrain of philosophy. Far from examining general theoretical bases, all the questions it poses arise from a particular kind of thought, Heideggerian thought. Furthermore, it has made Heidegger's message that "no change occurs without an escort first pointing the way" into its common currency, and decided to make itself the "escort" designated to carry out that mission. This dependence on Heidegger is the reason why *Tiqqun* makes no attempt to critique him, although they say he's "shit": "Critical Metaphysics is a general injunction to determine oneself based on the metaphysical character of the world; it comprises ... in the words of that old piece of shit Heidegger, "the Appropriation of metaphysics, the Appropriation of the forgetting of Being," *Tiqqun*. None of the members of the magazine have asked themselves what the connection was between Heidegger's philosophy / its ulterior development and the world into which his thought is deployed. All their critique is limited to his critique, the critique of western metaphysics. "Progress," when it comes to Heidegger, consists simply in its being filled with the most diverse of determinations and in the affirmation of its transcendence through the action of human beings. To do this, the philosophical idea to be fulfilled must first be defined, and the logic of its fulfillment inscribed into the very heart of history itself, in a purely hegelian style.

What would such a tour de force consist of? It's a question, first of all, of subordinating all the supposedly dominant interpretations to western metaphysics. From science to technology, from economics to politics, all the dominant relationships are proclaimed as metaphysical. Having put everything under the blade of their critique, and proclaimed that each and every thing is metaphysical, the members of *Tiqqun* marvel at their discovery: that metaphysics is not just everywhere, it is also the Achilles heel of domination. It becomes, in a way, an interpretation that gives its own form to societies, and has dominated western history over the course of five centuries through the development of its successive determi-

nations. So, in the end it shows itself as the principle behind an explanation of what society's becoming. Secondly, in order to mask the history of "being" under its purely speculative dimension, its movement is incarnated in different historical periods, the dialectical process of which ensures that metaphysics will return to itself, and be reclaimed. Like it does according to Heidegger, the whole of the movement of history remains subordinate to the history of "being" which it draws its principles from. The transcendence of metaphysics through its realization is the development by which all reality must be ruled. Social and political history thus become the incarnation of a formal, mechanical movement, the purely logical formula of a dialectical movement whose framework is given as follows in *Tiqqun* magazine:

1. Since the world is always participating in the metaphysical interpretation that comprises it, the truth of commodity society shows itself, in spite of all appearances, in its metaphysical essence, rather than in its economic or technical essence: "There's no commodity world, there's just a commodity perspective on the world." (Tiqqun) More precisely, the essence of commodity domination is the negation of metaphysics, or further, a metaphysics of negation. The spectacle, which is domination's present form, is the final figure of western metaphysics, and in two ways. On the one hand, in the spectacle, domination extends over all the spheres of meaning, and in particular to everything that goes beyond strict material production. On the other, what commodity society was in its essence (either one specific metaphysics or the negation of all metaphysics) finally shows itself visibly: "in the spectacle, the metaphysical character of what exists is seen as a central and obvious fact: in it, the world has visibly become a particular metaphysics." (Tiqqun)

2. Certainly, the realization of commodity society is its negation at the same time: it ruins its own foundations in its development. As a metaphysics of negation, society realizes metaphysics: "Commodity metaphysics is the metaphysics that denies all metaphysics and above all denies that it itself is a certain metaphysics." (Tiqqun).

There is no mystery left now that Julien Boudard has been ridiculously influenced by Frank's words in his idea of the mission he believes is to be accomplished. And thus we now turn to those writings to show the connection to *Tiqqun*.

With frightening and fascinating mystical pontifications, Frank's doctrine preached the desolation and ruin of the world. A nihilist path, explainable by the failure of the prophets that preceded him: Moses, Jesus, and Sabbatai Zevi... The latter, sent down by God, was to him also "powerless to accomplish anything. He was unable to discover the true path." "My true desire," said Frank, "is to drive you towards life." A difficult road to travel, necessitating an absolute rejection of all the laws, norms, and conventions of the past, and implying a plunge into the abyss so as to approach "real, true life." It was a veritable *redemption through sin, ruin and destruction*, a call to absolute and definitive war, where *believers become combatants*. Here are a few extracts from the *Words of the Lord*, where Frank gave his aphorisms: "We must descend to the deepest depths if we want to rise to infinity." "I did not come to this world to lift you up, but to rush you to the bottom of the abyss." Frank defended this plunge into chaos as the final act that would permit the good to be saved from the forces of evil (for Frank, the Qliphoth theory was replaced by the idea of divine forces of good and evil. But that is of little importance for what we're dealing with here...). It moreover requires total obedience to an intangible rule: the strict observation of a code of silence regarding the causes and aims involved in the acts of total destruction carried out. Another few extracts: "The man who wishes to take a fortress by assault cannot do so with words; he must devote all his energies to it. Thus we must fulfill our burden of silence." (this citation is reproduced by *Tiqqun* in their introduction to their article concerning the protest in Turin); "Our ancestors have all spoken: what good did it do them, and what did they accomplish? We must keep silent: let us remain quiet and carry out the tasks we must. Such is our duty."

“Everywhere Adam went, a city was built, but everywhere I go, everything will be destroyed. I have come to this world only to destroy and annihilate, but what I build will last forever.”

J. Frank, “The Words of the Lord” (quoted in the article “Silence and Beyond”)

“BECAUSE DISASTER IS THE WAY OUT OF DISASTER”

Tiqqun, Bloom Theory

“The Imaginary Party claims responsibility for everything that conspires to destroy the present order in thought, words, or acts. Disaster is its doing.”

Tiqqun, Theses on the Imaginary Party.

According to Scholem, “J. Frank will remain in the memory of men as the most terrifying case in the history of Judaism. Whether for personal reasons or otherwise, he was a religious leader who behaved as an absolutely corrupt and degenerate character in his every act.” Whatever Frank’s psychological makeup, the influence he had on a large part of the Jewish community cannot be explained without referring to the nihilist trajectory that a fraction of the Sabbatean movement had undertaken after Sabbatai Zevi’s apostasy. This trajectory was taken to the most radical extreme by Frank via an insane mysticism: to push everything that exists into the abyss, to call upon absolute cataclysm, to drain the cup of desolation to the dregs, to exercise a destructive fullness and to totally strain out the word “life” so as to extract its *elixir*, its *essence*... (and this links back to all revolts based on strictly religious and metaphysical postulates, and to the experience of nothingness discussed in the first chapter concerning Heidegger).

By the extension of a kind of desertification over the totality of what exists, it allows for the original metaphysical experience (the experience of nothingness), which allows for the recognition of the forgetting of “being.” The society that has tried to liquidate metaphysics therefore has instead realized metaphysics: it shows itself in all its truth as a kind of critical metaphysics.

3. The commodity world carries its negation within itself; in unconscious form this is the Bloom figure, and in conscious form it is the figure of critical metaphysics (which represents the members of Tiqqun). Conscious and unconscious negation together comprise the Imaginary Party, which is the political expression of negativity in present society. Bloom, as the dominant face of alienation, is also the general face of the spectacle. Bloom is what has replaced the Worker; he is the figure of non-belonging par excellence. Within the spectacle, his metaphysical dimensions rise before him in alienated form. Dispossessed of everything, Bloom carries within himself the negation of commodity society: by the absolute experience of his alienation, he becomes capable of reclaiming his metaphysical essence, and thus, suppress himself as Bloom. The Imaginary Party is the antagonistic character that commodity society has produced; it must first show itself in a latent manner through partial, momentary, and subversive conflicts before uniting as such and totally abolishing itself in the realization of its task.

Prisoners of the heideggerian pattern — of whom G. Scholem remarked that he had a something of the “Hyper-German Kabbalist” about him — it is not surprising that the members of *Tiqqun* find in the Jewish millenarian movements not only a spiritual and sectarian correspondence of sorts, but also an apparent solution to the difficulties found in politicizing metaphysics. There, throughout history, metaphysical revolt, religious and political revolt, are all effectively unified in acts.

## Act II

### Doctrines and radical movements in the Kabbala

“In spite of the extreme confusion that reigns on its surface, and perhaps precisely because of it, our times are messianic by their very nature.”

— Tiqqun, Bloom Theory

“Over the course of this exodus, certain unusual solidarities appear, and friends and brothers gather along the new battlefronts being sketched out — the formal opposition between the Spectacle and the Imaginary Party becomes concrete. And so, among those who act on their essential marginalization, a powerful feeling of belonging to non-belonging develops, a kind of community of exiles.”

Tiqqun, Theses on the imaginary Party

The reference to the Kabbala is an important, if not fundamental contribution to the magazine’s project. The enterprise’s theoretical framework is as much comprised of Heideggerian philosophy as it is of the metaphysical trajectory of the kabbala, rediscovered and compassed by the magazine’s writers within a teleological vision of history.

It is outside of the purposes of this text to describe the whole of the richness and complexity of this doctrine of Jewish religious thought, born in the twelfth century in [the french provinces of] Provence and Languedoc. A certain number of clarifications concerning Jewish messianism, however, are indispensable for a better understanding of the Jewish radical and nihilist currents of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that *Tiqqun* has a certain affiliation with: the latter essentially originating in a specific reading of the Lourianite doctrine, the messianic adventure of Sabbatai Zevi (1626–1676)

rizes, though there’s no difficulty involved in accepting the idea of a crucified messiah, accepting the idea of an apostate messiah — a traitor — is difficult, if not impossible.

After this conversion, a deep rift was cut through all sabbataism. The most moderate called for the community to return to the laws of the Jewish tradition. Without forgetting or totally disowning Sabbatai Zevi, they gave the explanation that he had been a real chance at redemption that had failed. The fulfillment of their expectations had been pushed back... A much more radical tendency refused to see an act of renunciation in Sabbatai’s conversion. It had a different perspective on this event of such dramatic appearance, a reading of it that permitted a continued hope for redemption while at the same time turning the trajectory of the movement down the path towards an absolute nihilism, of which Jacob Frank was the ideal representative. Was Sabbatai Zevi’s conversion an act of apostasy? This tendency replied that it was not. On the contrary, according to them it was simply the continuation of Zevi’s prophetic oeuvre, misunderstood by the Jewish people. To understand their complex explanation, we’ll have to go back to the Lourianite doctrine. When Sabbatai began his march of deliverance, evil and its tree-bark felt their imminent end with panic. Pressured by the urgency of its situation, evil had doubled its grip on the sparkles of good and unleashed an overwhelming force which prevented any liberation by means of frontal attack. Thus, sheltered within an impregnable citadel, evil could now only be defeated by means of a ruse. This explained Sabbatai’s apostasy, as a kind of subterfuge by means of which he had descended into the abyss of impurity so as to root out the last sparkles of good that were still captive there. Though it was not free of paradoxes of its own, this explanation would drive a part of the radical tendencies in sabbataism to frankism, that is, to the blackest and most absolute nihilism.

*Scene 3: Jacob Frank*



he began a wandering life, which then led him to disassociate himself entirely from obedience to the rabbinical law and to declare his allegiance to a superior law. In 1665, he met Nathan de Gaza, a kind of herald and standard-bearer of the coming Messiah (he had a role similar to that of John the Baptist's role relative to Jesus). Nathan called Sabbatai the new Messiah, able to open the road to the rectification of all human suffering and the reconciliation of wounded souls. From then on the messianic fever spread quickly. The news from the East of the appearance of the Messiah reached the whole of the diaspora and put it into turmoil. To Nathan, the news of Sabbatai's appearance marked an advancement to a new level in the process of Tikkun. The sorting of the divine sparkles imprisoned by the tree-bark (Qlippoth) was complete. This was the twilight threshold of the passage from exile to redemption, to Tikkun. Thus, all laws that had been proclaimed and obeyed up to that moment expired, irrelevant — namely all the laws that had been established by the rabbinical tradition and rabbinical authority. Faith, unflagging in Sabbatai's thought and action, was now to replace all the old practices and rites... Nathan announced, moreover, that during an upcoming journey to Constantinople, Sabbatai would take over the Ottoman empire. The excitement of the Jewish masses then reached a fever pitch: everywhere were scenes of mystic exaltation, announcements of collective prophecies, ecstatic pieces of work where a melange of blasphemous acts and words overflowing with self-esteem flooded out in a climate of general hysteria. Sabbatai arrived at Constantinople in 1666, but was immediately arrested by the Turks. He was given a lengthy detention which had no impact at all on his legend, until, having been denounced to the sultan as a dangerous element by a Polish kabbalist, he was given the choice between immediate death and conversion to Islam. Sabbatai's decision was to renounce the Jewish faith, and his apostasy had enormous repercussions on the future of sabbatean movements. Basically it caused a profound trauma and a general despondency in the Jewish community: as Scholem lucidly summa-

and the revolutionary and nihilist interpretation made of it by the religious leader Jacob Frank (1726–1791).

Before diving into a quick clarification of this little known aspect of Jewish history, and more broadly into the history of millenarianism itself, however, we'll have to look into three or four historical and religious facts without which Jewish millenarianism would come off as just some kind of old eccentrics' ranting.

1. The first monotheistic people known, worshipping a unique and jealous god, delivered by Moses from Egyptian slavery in the exodus, the Jews were promised a land (Israel) and a law. This episode, of the Exodus, along with the Genesis, is all related in the first books of the Old Testament, the part of the Bible that then comprised an *absolute reference* for the Jewish people. These fundamental episodes simultaneously anchor the idea of a very special specificity and an unmatched *collective fate* in the mentality of the Jewish people.

2. Jewish messianism and millenarianism always appear as responses to a serious historical crisis affecting the Jewish people and their land, a crisis that at first finds no response in the religious discourse recorded in the Bible. The central question may be summarized as follows: how can we still believe in a God that has promised us a land and deliverance, while we have ceaselessly been invaded and enslaved over the centuries by foreign people, from the Assyrians to the Romans, from the Babylonians to the Persians and Greeks? We will not here be going into the responses given to this (generally the subjugated situation of the people is seen as expressing a divine punishment to sanction a fault, a punishment that is nonetheless to be removed by the imminent arrival of a prophet and the announcement of a new era), rather we are simply going to be describing a constant process in the millenarian phenomenon: all historical, political, and social crises are immediately transcribed *onto the religious plane*. This point is doubtless the most important one for understanding what is to follow here, since the form of religious thinking we're dealing with, even if it opens

up a number of sometimes remarkable possibilities, doesn't burden itself with the contradictions that our own mode of reflection usually brings about. Here we can find a preliminary explanation for the numerous aberrations exuded by Tiqqun when the writing in the magazine delves into more detailed social, historical, political, or economic analyses of contemporary capitalism.

3. In the year 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the Temple at Jerusalem (the wailing wall is all that remains today. That's enough for the tourists, anyway...). In 133 AD they repressed the last Jewish revolt and the holy city was forbidden to them from then on. The majority of the Jews of Palestine were exiled again and went to enlarge the ranks of the diaspora. This reality of exile is fundamental in the sense that for certain currents of Judaic thought, it does not merely express itself in a *geographical and physical* dispersion of individuals, but in a *metaphysical* wandering, a *wandering of the soul in search of itself*. Thus we can see more clearly how a religious and spiritual reading of history perfectly fits with questions of a metaphysical nature; above all, it allows one to see in a preliminary fashion why in the magazine the metaphor of individuals and souls in exile in the desert of commodity domination characterizes the majority of the articles.

4. The Jewish people are always waiting for their messiah. This observation partly explains the regular resurgence of millenarian agitation among the Jewish community. Furthermore it shows the importance taken on in the eyes of thousands of individuals by the messianic adventures of Sabbatai Zevi and Jacob Frank, and, now, by *Tiqqun*.

#### *Scene 1: The Lourianite Kabbalah*

“All modern revolutionary thought comes together before our eyes in the unification of German idealism and the concept of Tiqqun, which in the lourianite Kabbalah designates the process of redemption, the restoration of the unity of meaning and of life, the

“Possibilities are now open to us that were lost since the time of the millenarian uprisings and Jewish messianic movements of the 17<sup>th</sup> century”

Tiqqun, “Theses on the Imaginary Party”

“As for the trained eye, it sees in all of this nothing to give credence to the irreversible victory of the commodity and its empire of confusion; rather it sees the intensity of the catastrophe, of the moment of truth that will finally put an end to the unreality of this world of lies. In that sense and many others, it's not superfluous to be a Sabbatean.”

Tiqqun, “What is Critical Metaphysics?”

“In strict relation with this, we see the emergence of the kind of person whose radicalism in his or her alienation accentuates the intensity of his or her eschatological expectations.”

Tiqqun, Bloom Theory

Exile lived as the prior condition for the realization of Tiqqun, and the history of the human race paradoxically understood essentially as a progress towards a messianic end in spite of all regression, as we have said above, became little by little the subject of a good deal of infatuation among the popular sectors of Jewish society starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Besides responding to a kind of exasperation, they gave a meaning and truth to the path of history while at the same time giving the Jewish community the benefit of a positive, liberating conclusion to it all. It was within the framework of that blowup that the messianic adventure of Sabbatai Zevi and the Sabbatean movement began, in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Sabbatai Zevi was born in 1626. Educated in Kabbalistic principles from an early age, and specifically in the Lourianite doctrine,

the Jewish community in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It moreover comprises the theoretical basis for the millenarian and revolutionary fever that characterized that doctrine's impact in Europe...

Now, *Tiqqun* deals with the adaptation of the exile myth to our world: because commodity society has such overpowering means to isolate, atomize and circumvent individuals and minds, it is the perfect negative realization of the external and internal decay of modern man. The time of *Tiqqun*, which the magazine's members summon in all their vows, thus appears imminent. Here is an example of one of their proclamations, among others: "loneliness, precarious employment conditions, anxiety, exclusion, poverty, foreigner status — all the categories that the spectacle deploys to make the world unreadable from a social perspective, make it simultaneously crystal clear from a metaphysical perspective. All of them, though in different ways, echo the complete dereliction of humanity when the illusion of "modern times" finally becomes fully uninhabitable, that is, when *Tiqqun* comes about." *Bloom Theory*.

#### 4. As for Gilgul

Take 3 big cabbages, brown them, stir, and work shit out...

We can't finish this section properly without mentioning another element of Jewish mysticism which also has to do with the eccentric enthusiasm of *Tiqqun*'s primary protagonists. Although we can't really make a clear connection to any particular article in the magazine on this point, the presence of God in the universe is called Shekhinah in the mystical tradition of Judaism. According to G. Scholem, from certain kabbalistic approaches it can also be called "the Kingdom," "the Lady," "the Gazelle," or the "Young Girl" (and just because there's no explanation given here, please don't start singing the worn out old refrain, "oh what a funny coincidence!").

#### *Scene 2: Sabbataism and Frankism*

reparation of all things by the action of human beings themselves."

Tiqqun, "What is Critical Metaphysics?"

The name of this doctrine comes from Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, who was born in Jerusalem in 1534 and died in Safed in 1572. The strength and broad diffusion of the Lurianite doctrine within the Jewish world in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, specifically outside of the well-educated, elitist Kabbalist circles, cannot be understood without a brief review of history. Forty years before the birth of Luria, a historical episode took place that had dramatic consequences for the Jewish world as a whole and its self-image: the expulsion from Spain in 1492, and from Portugal in 1497. Aside from the full accomplishment of the process described in point 2, there was a simultaneous awakening of mystical and messianic exaltation which had been unknown as a whole by medieval Judaism (for Christians it was a very different case). This messianic renewal, occasionally reanimating the sources of ancient Jewish messianism, took place through Kabbalah and had a high degree of success over the whole course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in popular sectors, even ending up dominating, in the rabbinical tradition's stead, for two centuries (these were the days of the Jewish Roman Empire, in a very cursory manner of speaking). It was in this context that Luria appeared as one of the most important thinkers of this movement.

The Lurianite Kabbalah is extremely complicated in its details. An understanding can however be approached by looking at three essential points: Tzimtzum, or the contraction of God, Shevirat, or the shattering of the vessels, *Tiqqun* (there's the rub) or the restoration of the broken world, and Gilgul, [reincarnation/cycle] which is anything but a slavic dish of boiled cabbage. We won't discuss the last point, which is of no major importance for what we're dealing with here.

1. Tzimtzum, or the contraction [withdrawal] of God.

Contrary to the biblical teachings about Genesis, for Luria, the creation of the world is not the result of an exterior act by God, where God willed the world into existence because he was bored all alone, but rather of an internal act, a contraction. God and the infinite are present, and the world could only be born at the moment when God, by a movement of interiorization, withdraws into himself. Without this contraction, this withdrawal, this *Tzimtzum*, there could be no creation. For Luria, the birth of the world is a “kind of exile in which God withdraws from his own being and sinks into his mystery.” At the moment when God goes through this contraction inside himself (and hey, it’s not an enema!), he turns outside himself and sends out a ray of light. *The world is born of a divine crisis*. We won’t discuss how this ray of light ends up organizing all creation, but voila, humanity was born.

### 2. Shevirat, or the shattering of the vessels

The divine light, agent of creation, is then put into vessels. After a certain time, they can’t handle the abundance of the divine light anymore and they shatter. Then a cosmic drama takes place: each element of the world leaves its original trajectory and nothing is any longer exactly in its place as it was at the time of the Creation. What was united is now separated (like the sexes, or good and evil, for example). Evil becomes autonomous and takes power over the good, so as to make its order reign: represented as pieces of tree-bark (Qlippoth), evil encloses all the sparkles of good that were thrown out during the shattering of the vessels so as to better feed off of them. Contrary to the teachings in the story of Adam and Eve, this vision denies right off the bat all human responsibility in the origination of evil. However, if the world of evil is born from the shattering of the vessels, the multiple errors and failures of man since Adam up to the present day have accentuated and complicated its domination. Our world, at present, is indeed the result of this shattering, a history of evil leading to the modern confusion, the reign of the Qlippoth (see, for example, how Tiqqun integrates into this representation what it calls “the substance” of

the commodity in the article *On the Economy considered as Black Magic*.

### 3. Tiqqun, or the restoration of the world.

Tiqqun represents the positive content of this evolution. Like revolution, it marks the historical completion of a process where evil and its power are defeated. A true redemption of humanity, it comes about when human beings become aware of their duty on the planet and work for holiness and justice. This duty, which is by and large rag-picker’s work, is defined as follows: man must gather all the sparkles of holiness (the sparkles of good), that are hidden behind every reality, which are simultaneously hidden and protected by the tree-bark of evil (the Qlippoth) and to restore to them the divine essence that they were primordially separated from during the shattering of the vessels. God has no particular role in this work. Though he too may participate in the restoration (in tiqqun), nevertheless, contrary to the Christian apocalyptic tradition since Saint John, this process is above all the responsibility of humanity itself. And this, furthermore, is humanity’s sole earthly function and purpose. This is a fundamental point, because it is humanity’s first break with divine authority by the degree of responsibility accorded to humanity to reconstruct the world. The other, more historical point, is a verification of what was expressed in the introduction. Tiqqun can basically only take place on one condition: it only becomes effective when the exile of the people of Israel has been fully realized. If the people had their Land, they would not work to gather the dispersed sparkles. Thus, perhaps for the first time in the history of Jewish religious thought, *the reality of exile is no longer lived out as if it were the result of divine wrath, but as a mission*. So, in the course of their historical destiny, the Jewish people now no longer have to lament the fate that regularly effects them; and will no longer so much seek a response to the misfortunes of the times in the biblical roots, and will rather look to the future to hasten and take heed of the coming of Tiqqun. This point explains the essence of the vast popularity of the Lurianite doctrine within