

# Society, Language, Difference

## 11. Postmodern?



# Agenda

1. Counter-Reformation
2. What is postmodernism?
3. Simulations
4. The Pompidou Centre
5. No Gulf War?
6. Round-up



# 1. Counter- Reformation













DU TEMPS POUR VIVRE!  
C'EST LE RETOUR aux 40 heures!

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T  
MOBILE

**Soljénitsyne**

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**L'archipel  
du Goulag**

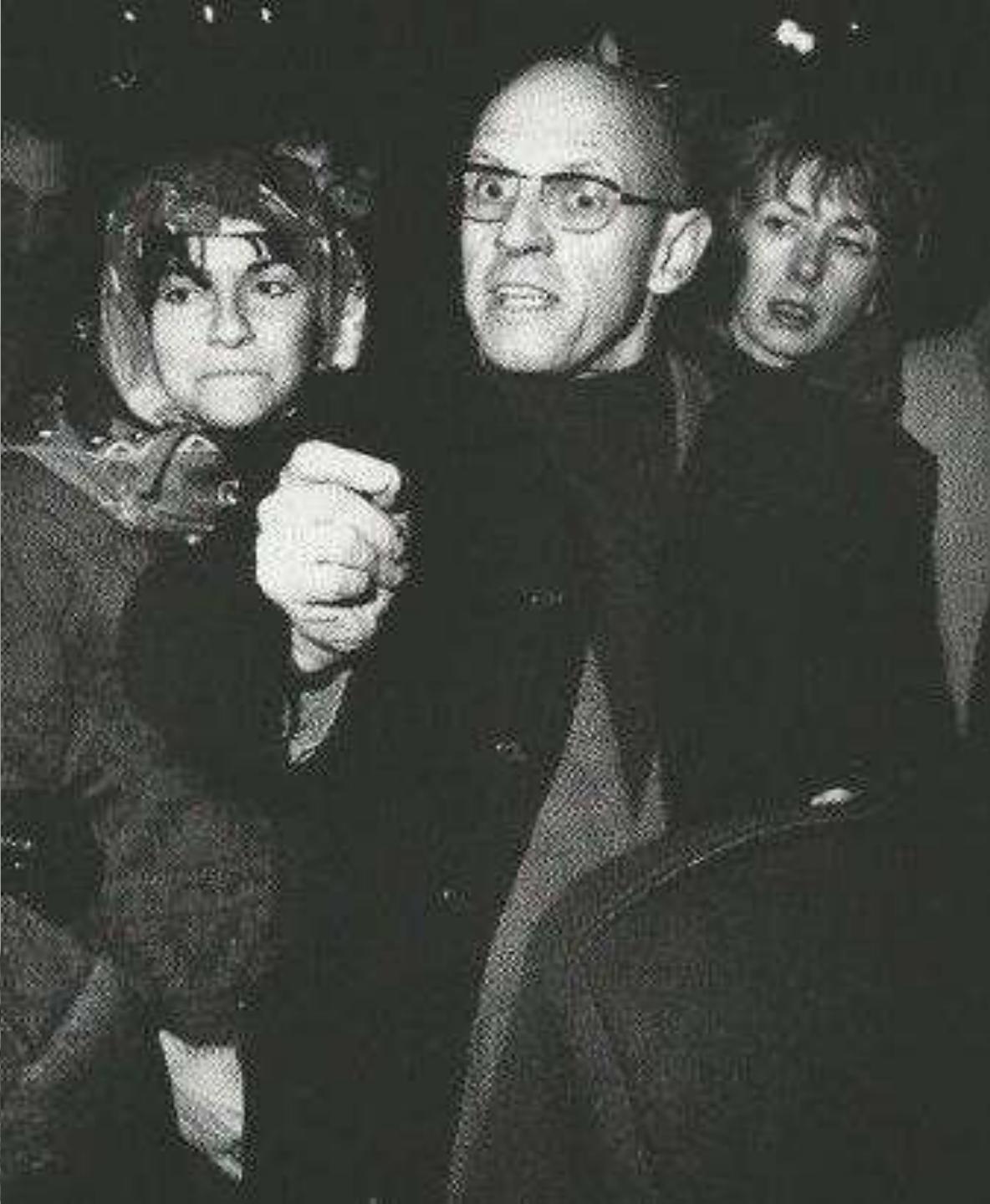
Seuil











Luc Ferry  
Alain Renaut  
La pensée 68



‘The real question is in fact how one went from the militant individualism that characterizes 1968 with the narcissistic and apathetic individualism of the 80s.’

– Luc Ferry











**CHANGER LA VIE**

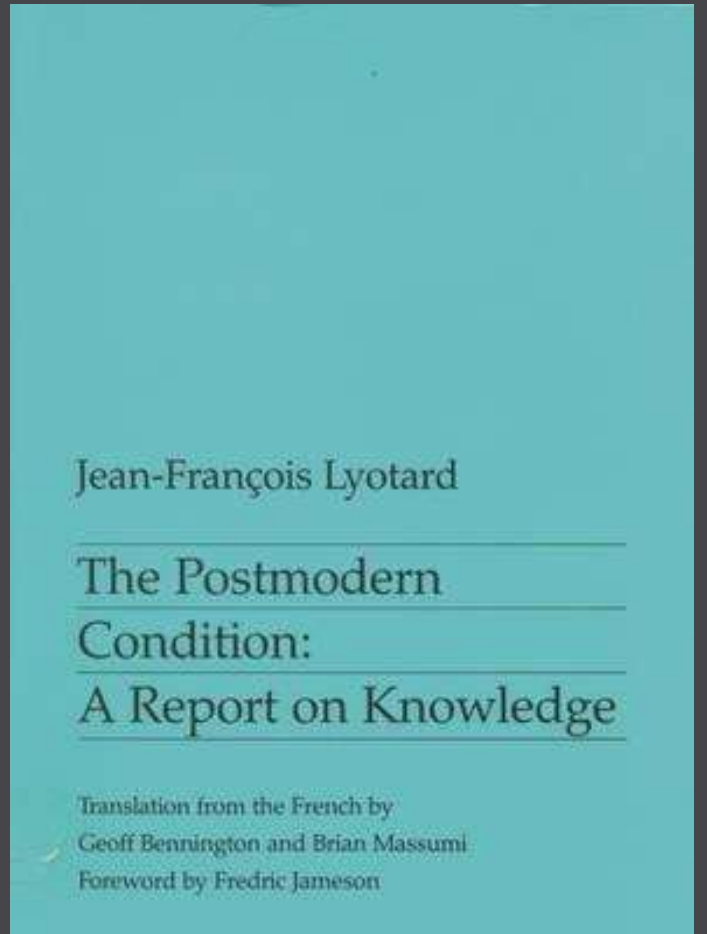
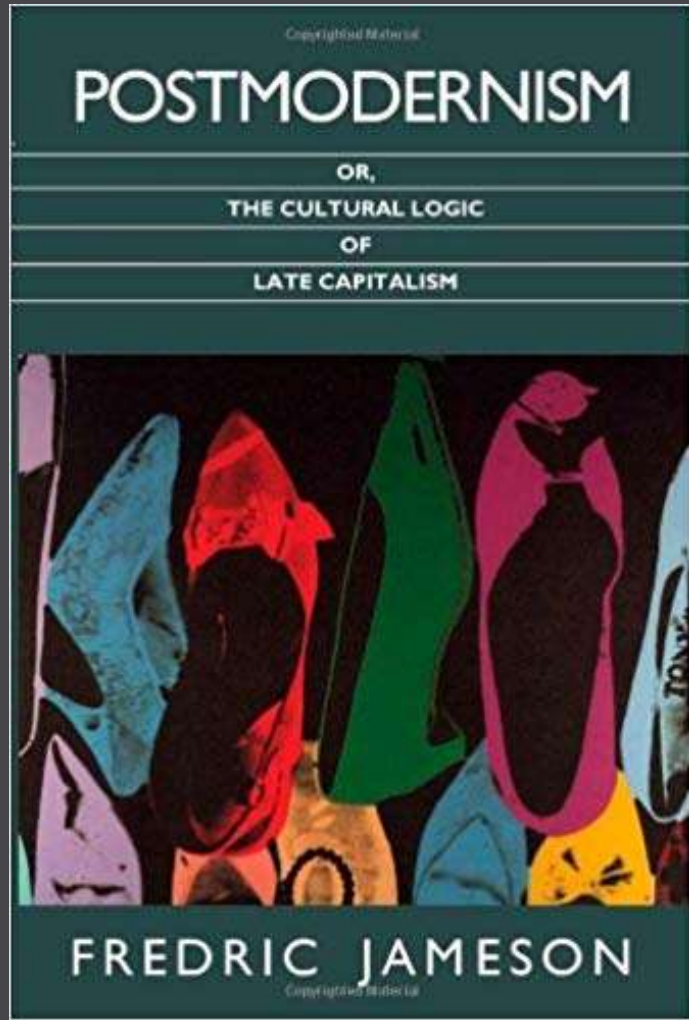
**PROGRAMME DE  
GOUVERNEMENT  
DU PARTI  
SOCIALISTE**

**ET PROGRAMME COMMUN  
DE LA GAUCHE**



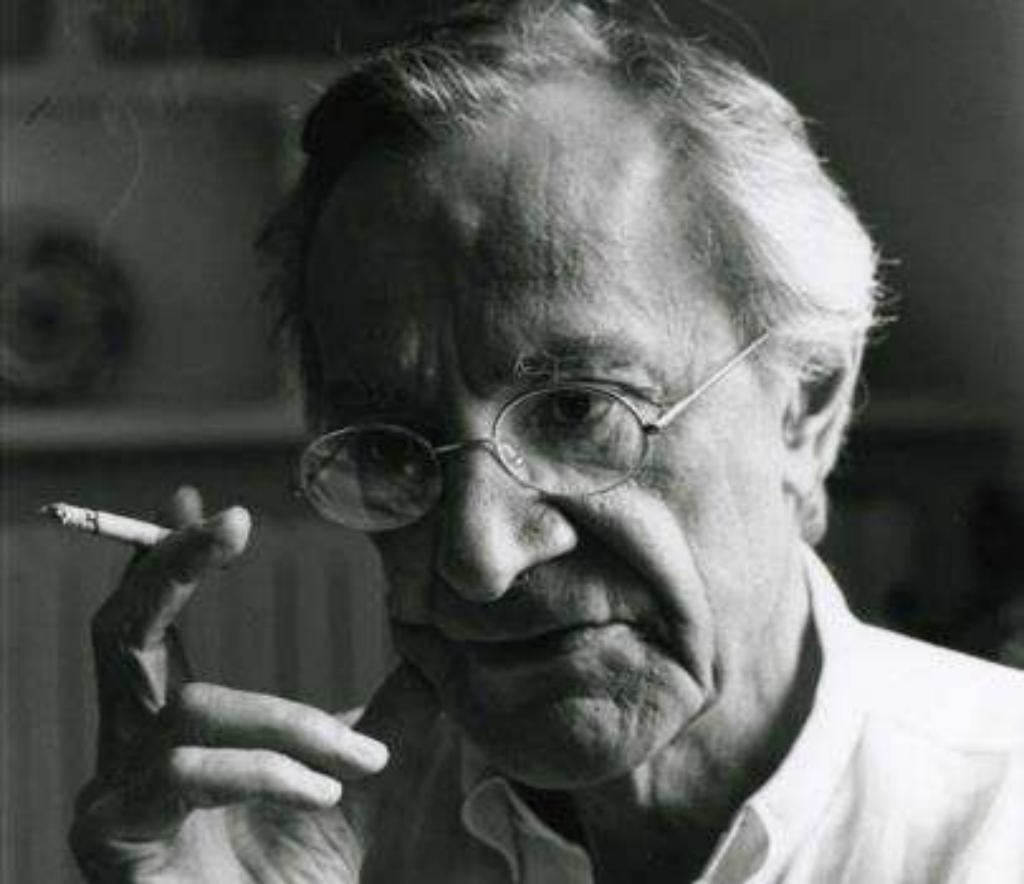
**PRESENTATION DE F. MITTERRAND  
FLAMMARION**







## 2. What is postmodernism?



Jean-François Lyotard

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The Postmodern  
Condition:  
A Report on Knowledge

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Translation from the French by

Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi

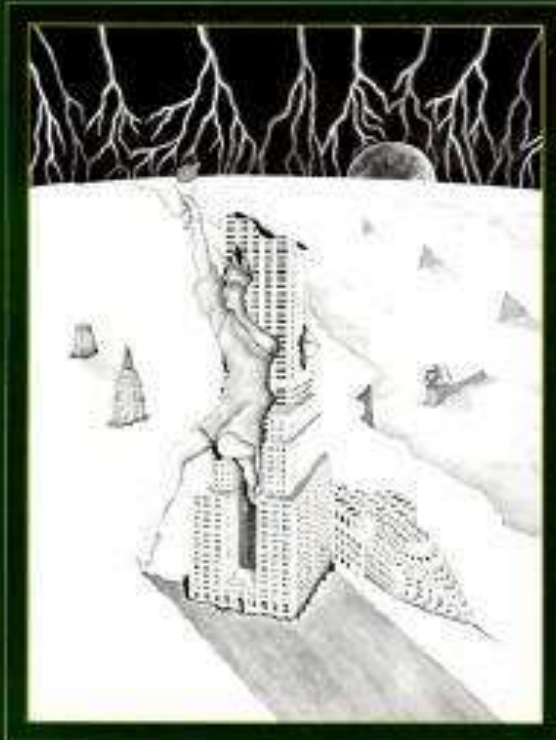
Foreword by Fredric Jameson

‘Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives’

- Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (1979)



The **CONDITION** of  
**POSTMODERNITY**



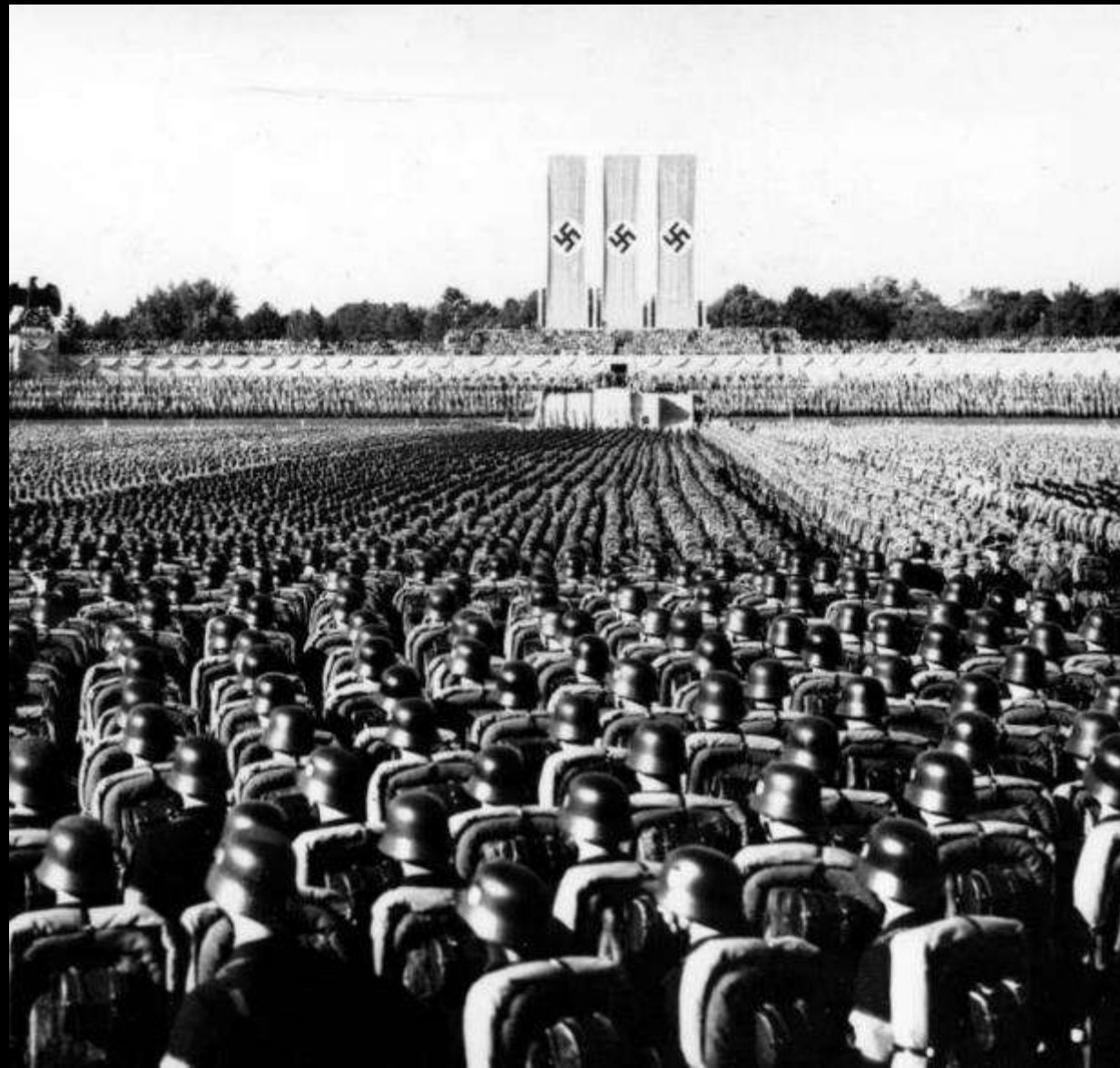
**DAVID HARVEY**

**POSTMODERNISM**

OR,  
THE CULTURAL LOGIC  
OF  
LATE CAPITALISM



**FREDRIC JAMESON**

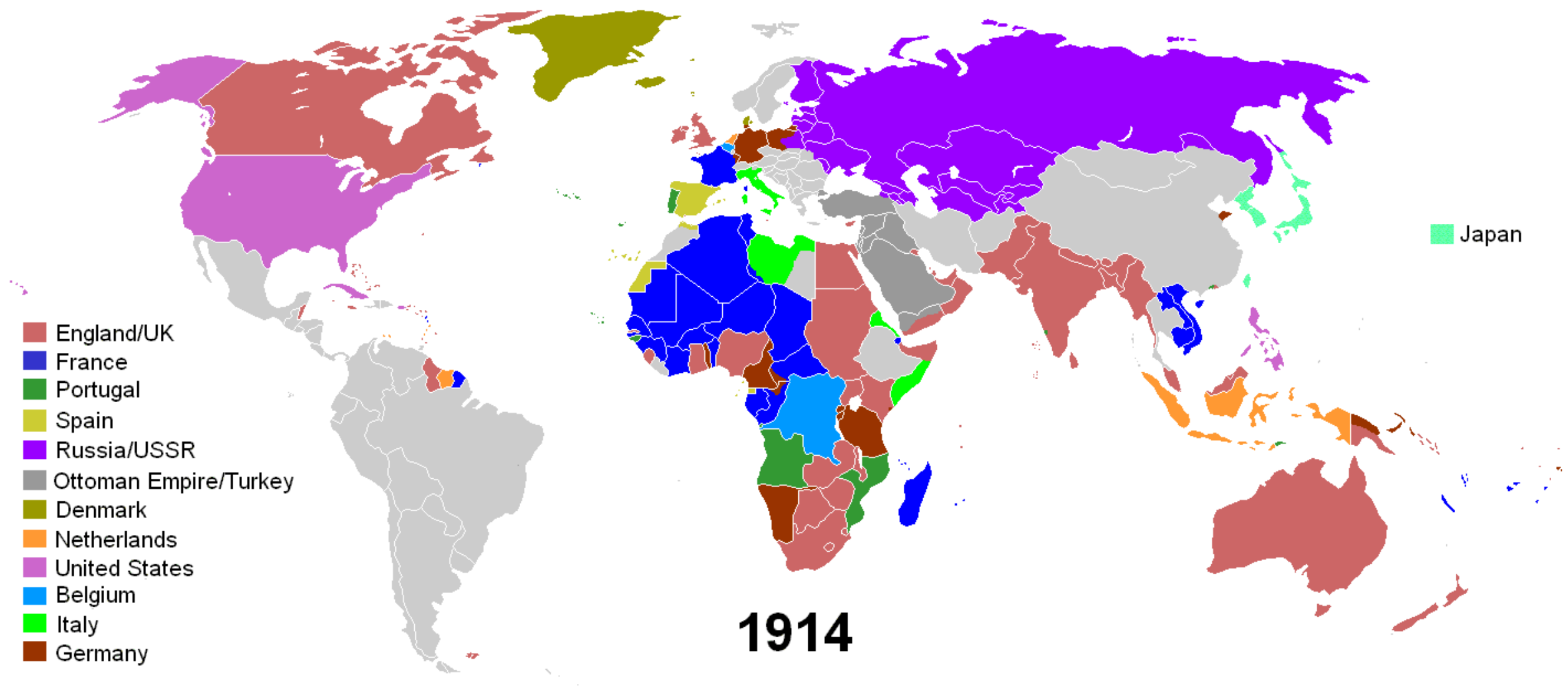






IMPERIAL FEDERATION—MAP OF THE WORLD, SHOWING THE EXTENT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN 1886.  
 STATISTICAL INFORMATION FURNISHED BY CAPTAIN J. C. R. COLME, M.P. HONORARY R.M.A. — BRITISH TERRITORIES COLOURED RED.









- The aims of the Enlightenment became 'stuck in the mud' at Auschwitz (Theodor Adorno)
- Decolonisation and the end of empires after WW2
- Awareness and opposition to Stalin, e.g. Hungary 1956
- Narratives of unilinear historical progress lose ground ... what if they have been deluded, Eurocentric, mere ideology?

Scepticism about  
our stories













- A new kind of era...
- New work: services, finance, computing, deindustrialisation
- Decline of USSR and Marxism as a popular political force
- New forms of culture and instantaneous communication:
- MTV, standardised malls and airports, 'non-places', retro, irony
- Increased scepticism about narratives of progress

## *Post-modernism*



# 3. Simulations





Jean Baudrillard

Simulacres  
et simulation



Galilée

# The Simulacrum

- Reality no longer exists...
- It is disappeared into a world of images and simulations
- The *simulacrum* (representation) is itself all that's real
- 'It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal'
- 'The simulacrum now hides, not the truth, but the fact that there is none' (Baudrillard, "Radical Thought")
- The map no longer corresponds to the territory









# How to talk your parents into parting with \$1300.

There's a new Apple® Personal Computer called the IIc that's so complete and so affordable that getting your parents to buy one should be easier than learning Logo.

If, that is, you know what to say.

For example, don't tell your parents that the IIc has the first true 128K VLSI motherboard, dual built-in RS-232 ports and a built-in half high disk drive. Or that it has a switchable 80/40 character display and built-in mousetrionics so it

may make your parents uncomfortable.

Just tell them that the Apple IIc can run more than 10,000 programs written for the Apple IIe, the most popular computer in education at all levels. And it

You might also mention that it's a bargain. It comes with everything you need to start computing in one box—including an RF modulator that lets you hook it up to your TV the moment you

can use when you're too busy to show them how.

All for under \$1,300.\*\*

Of course, they probably won't want to hear that it runs more games than any other computer in the world except the Apple IIe.

But they might like to know that it also runs advanced business software. Including specialized programs for every profession from doctoring to farming to astronauting. Not to mention personal

personal finances and taxes.

Speaking of which, they can deduct part of an Apple IIc's price from their taxes if they use it for business.

Even if they always keep it at home.

Don't confuse them right now with the wide array of Apple IIc accessories

modems. Or the IIc's low cost full-color graphics/text printer, Scribe.

But assure them that your IIc can grow just as fast as you do.

Now, if all of these carefully reasoned arguments fall on deaf parental ears, don't despair. There is still

one thing more you can do.



*The IIc has room for a power pack, software, even notebooks. So it's worth a few extra bucks.*



*The IIc shows off in true color with*



*AppleWrite—advanced business software*



*With MousePaint, you could become*







# The Desert of the Real

- Hyperreality: 'the generation by models of a real without origin or reality'
- Changes in consumerism, media and popular culture have separated being from appearance, real from concept.
- What is real is merely reproduced, a simulation
- Once, images reflected reality, but over four stages, they come to mask a reality, then mask the absence of a reality, then bear no relation to a reality
- Now we are left with the 'desert of the real', an endless production of images with no effort to base them in reality

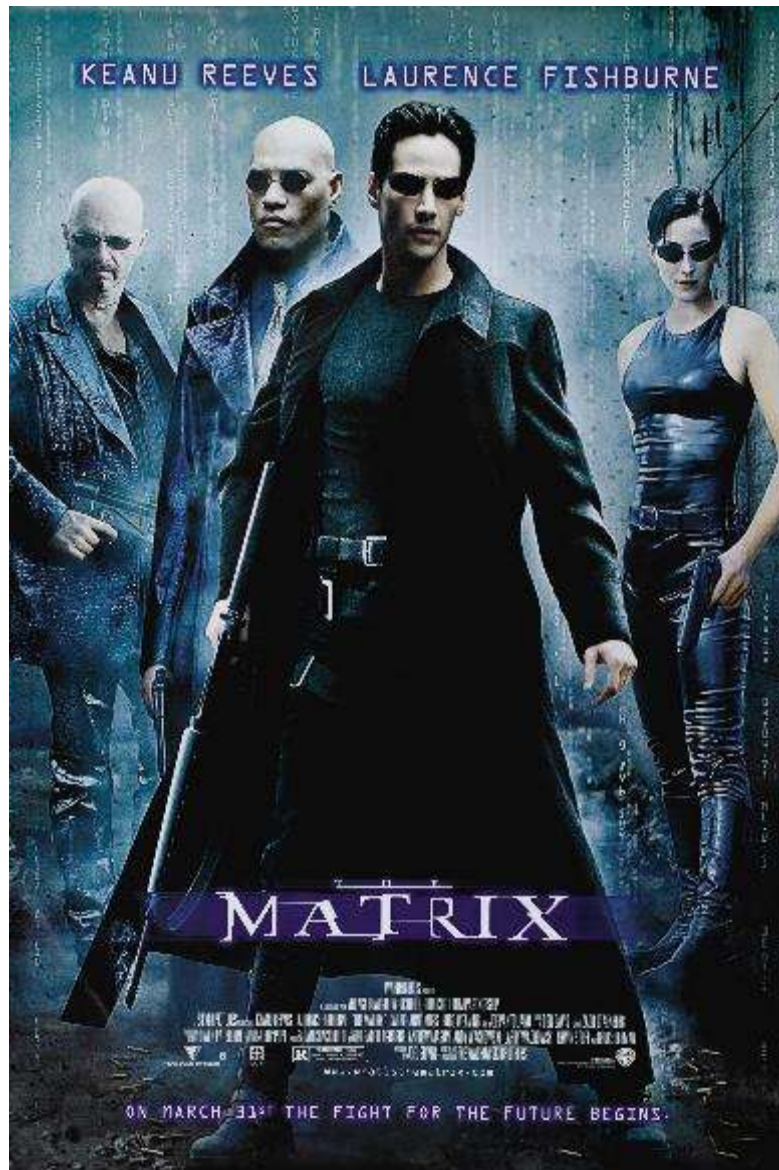




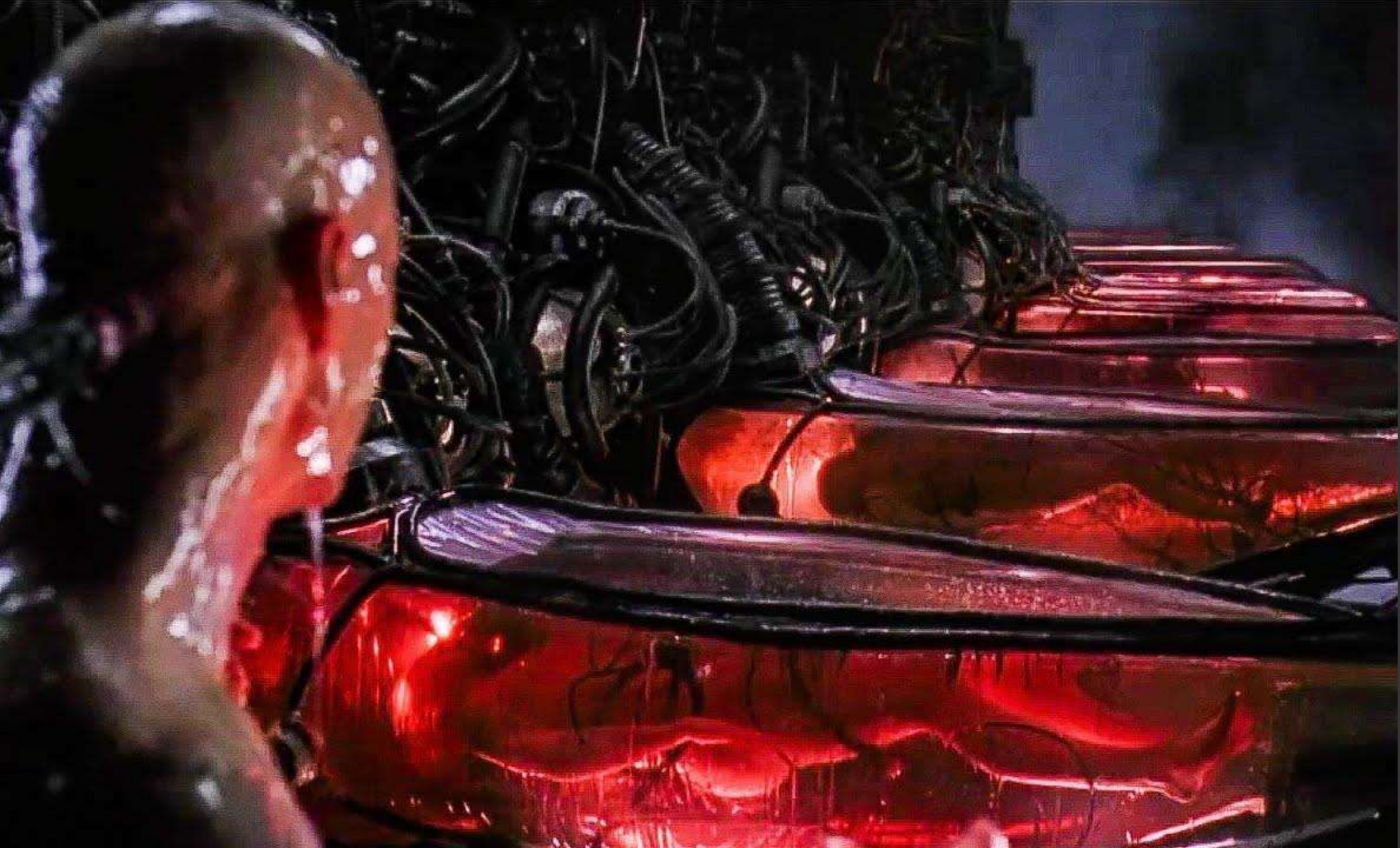












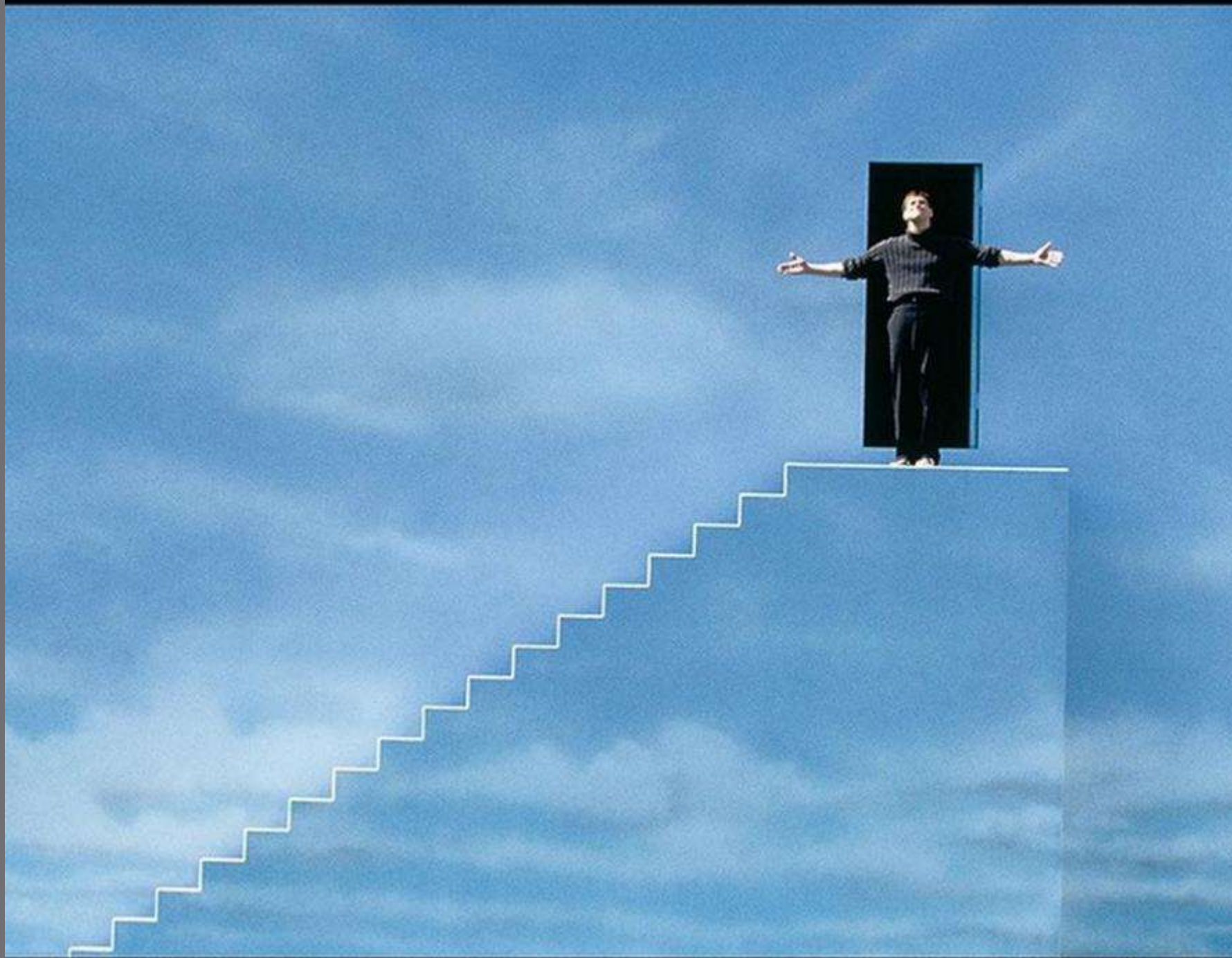








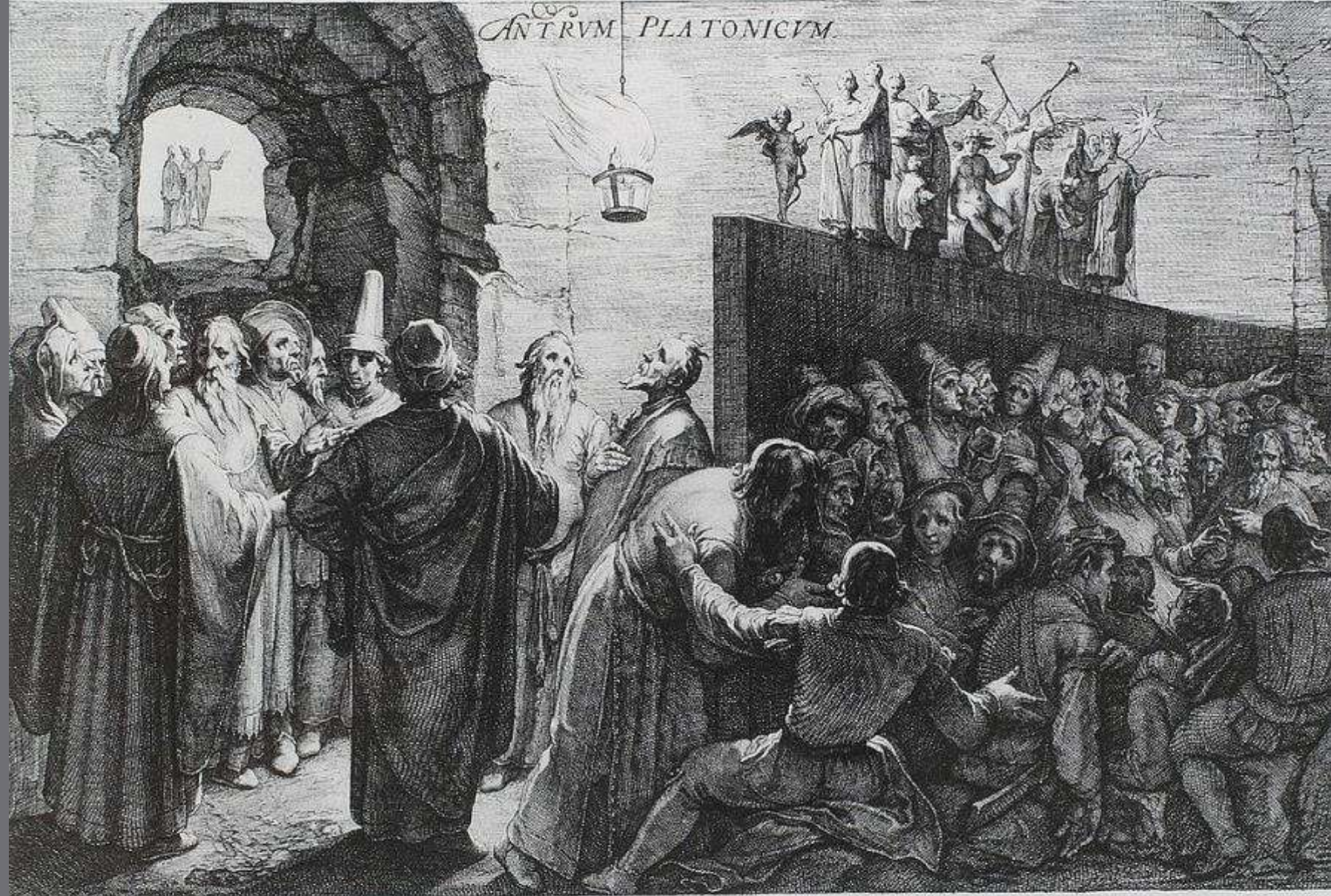






LUX VENIT IN MVNDVN ET DILEXERVNT HOMINES MAGIS TENEBRAS QVAM LVCE

ANTRVM PLATONICVM



Maxima pars hominum cecis immerga tenebris  
Volutur assidue, et s. Tullio letatur man.  
Aspice ut obis. Tis oblitus in heret umbris,  
Ve VERI simulacra omnes mirentur amantq.

Et s. Tullio vana ludantur imagine rerum.  
Quam pauci meliore luto, qui in lumine puro  
Secreti à s. Tullio turba, ludibria cernunt  
Rerum umbras rectag. expendant omnia luce:

Hi posita erroris nebula dignoscere possunt  
Vera bona, atque alios ceca sub nocte latentes  
Extrahere in clarum lucem conantur, ac illis  
Nullus amor lucis, tanta est s. rationis egestas.

CC.  
Sine  
Henr.

H. L. SPIEGEL FIGVRARI ET SCULPI CVRAVIT. AC DOCTISS. ORNATISS. ZD. PET. PAAW IN LVGDVN. ACAD. PROFESSORI



## 4. The Pompidou Centre











## The Beaubourg Effect

- A rant against the brand new, widely-feted Pompidou Centre...
- Built by Richard Rogers and Co between 1971-11 at the Plateau Beaubourg, an area of Paris once made up of food markets (Les Halles)
- An example of postmodern architecture, inside-out (Lloyds Building later)
- A 'carcass of flux and signs', a 'machine for making emptiness'...
- Why does he hate the place?















RETOUR  
A LA NORMALE...







1. Biscayne 4-Door Sedan



2. Impala Sport Sedan



3. Corvair 900 Monza Club Coupe



4. Corvair Lakewood 500 4-Door Station Wagon

## Chevy can match your

These new Chevrolets are the people-pleasingest cars you'll find anywhere—from their easier-to-park new size to their easier-to-pack new luggage compartment. You can pay a whole of a lot more, but you just won't find any car that caters to your comfort and convenience in more ways than a '61 Chevy!

1. *Biscayne 4-Door Sedan*—These new Biscaynes are the thriftiest full-sized Chevrolets, offering big-car room at small-car prices.

2. *Impala Sport Sedan*—Like all Chevis, these elegant Impalas have wider doors, higher, more comfortable seats.

## personality... and then some!

And where could you find a spunkier, thriftier, happier car than Chevy's new Corvair? Your Chevrolet dealer's one-stop shopping center has a whole crew of them for you to pick from— wagons, sedans, coupes—and every one's a pure delight.

3. *Corvair 900 Monza Club Coupe*—ultra-comfortable bucket-type seats, nearly 12% more luggage space up front.

4. *Lakewood 500 Station Wagon*—a likable wagon with a lockable trunk. In all, up to 68 cubic feet of cargo space. . . . Chevrolet Division of General Motors, Detroit 2, Michigan.

# '61 CHEVROLET



# CHEVY CORVAIR





# The Beaubourg Effect

- a 'monument of cultural deterrence'.
- The masses will rush to the centre in order to participate in the 'work of mourning' for a culture they detest.
- 'The masses themselves will finish off mass culture ... The masses are the increasingly dense sphere in which the whole social comes to be imploded and to be devoured in an uninterrupted process of simulation'
- Culture will self-destruct, implode
- *Make Beaubourg bend!*



## 5. No Gulf War?











## The Gulf War Did Not Take Place

- Three short essays across 1991 in *Liberation* and *The Guardian*
- Argument: yes, physical fighting did take place, but ...
- It wasn't a war in a conventional way
- All the West “experienced” of the war was media propaganda
- ‘On the available evidence (absence of images, and profusion of commentary), we could suppose an immense promotional exercise’







# **the gulf war did not take place**

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**Jean Baudrillard**







www.elsewhere.org/pomo/



# Communications From Elsewhere

Home of RJL20

## Realities of Meaninglessness: Precultural narrative in the works of Gibson

**Hans H. F. Pickett**

*Department of Sociology, Stanford University*



www.elsewhere.org/pomo/



### 1. Gibson and Baudrillardist hyperreality

If one examines the dialectic paradigm of discourse, one is faced with a choice: either reject precultural narrative or conclude that the task of the observer is social comment. But the subject is contextualised into a subcultural deappropriation that includes consciousness as a totality. Bataille promotes the use of the materialist paradigm of narrative to read and challenge society.

Thus, the subject is interpolated into a textual preconstructive theory that includes truth as a whole. La Fournier<sup>[1]</sup> holds that we have to choose between the materialist paradigm of narrative and dialectic objectivism.

But Sartre uses the term 'precultural narrative' to denote not theory, but posttheory. If the materialist paradigm of narrative holds, the works of Gibson are an example of mythopoetical capitalism.



## Baudrillard: legacy

- Until death in 2007, famed as a nihilistic, irreverent cultural commentator
- Taking the piss...?
- ‘It is the task of radical thought, since the world is given to us in unintelligibility, to make it more unintelligible, more enigmatic, more fabulous.’



# 6. Round-up

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*Which thinker has been most  
meaningful or interesting to  
you?*

1945: Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

1949: De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Levi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship*

1953: Lacan's seminars begin

1957: Barthes, *Mythologies*

1959: Francois Truffaut, *The 400 Blows*; Godard, *Breathless*

1961: Foucault, *The History of Madness*; Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

1962: Algeria gains independence; Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*

1966: Lacan, *Écrits*; Foucault, *The Order of Things*

1967: Derrida, *Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference*; Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*; Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*

1968: Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*; May 1968

1970: Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*

1972: Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*

1974: Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*

1975: Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa"; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

1977: Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*

1980: Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*; numerous key deaths

1981: Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*

1990: Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies". Gulf War the following year...









# The “Incorruptibles”

‘an intransigent, even incorruptible,  
*ethos* of writing and thinking ...,

without concession even to philosophy,  
and not letting public opinion, the  
media, or the phantasm of an  
intimidating readership frighten or  
force us into simplifying or repressing.

Hence the strict taste for refinement,  
paradox, and aporia.’

- Derrida, *Le Monde* 2004

‘[W]hat I mean by power relations is that we are in a strategic situation towards each other. . . .

we are in this struggle, and the continuation of this situation can influence the behavior or nonbehavior of the other. So we are not trapped.

We are always in this kind of situation. It means that we always have possibilities of changing the situation. We cannot jump outside the situation, and there is no point where you are free from all power relations. But you can always change it.

So what I’ve said does not mean that we are always trapped, but that we are always free. ... there is always the possibility of changing.’

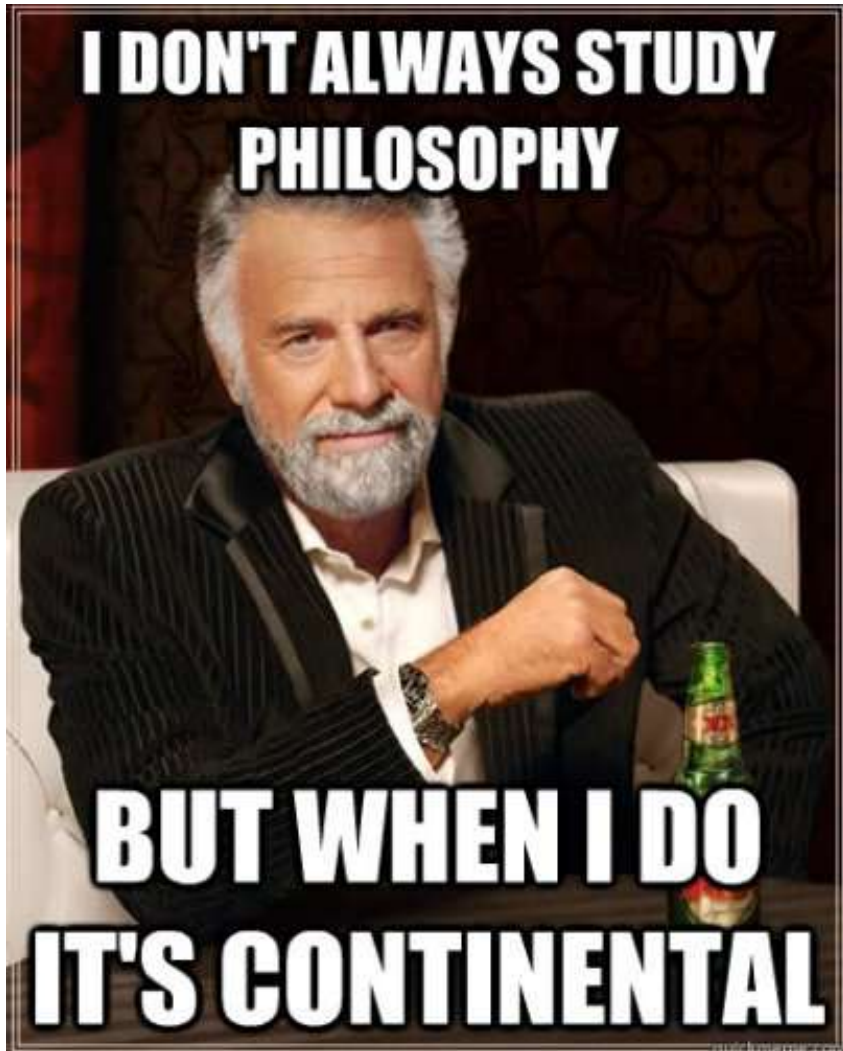
- Foucault Interview, “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity”



# Discussion points

1. What does Baudrillard mean by the hyperreal?
2. What's wrong with the Pompidou Centre?
3. Why did the Gulf War not take place?
4. Which thinker has been most meaningful and interesting to you overall on this course?

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July – 6pm



# Thank you!

- It has been wonderful learning and discussing post-war French philosophy with you
- Thank you for the insightful contributions, enthusiasm and discussion – it's transformed and enriched my own thinking
- I won't be teaching at Mary Ward after this, but do check their website out for philosophy courses in September, be they virtual or online
- Stay in touch too – [www.dantaylor.blog](http://www.dantaylor.blog)