

## Driving as a Manifestation of the Essence of the Current Historical Moment

Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, Haifa University

A mighty silence accompanies "traffic accidents", which are conceived in the public sphere (Habermas 1992) as an unavoidable and sometimes even as holy sacrifice of human victims to the Moloch of the current historical moment: the imperative of our day's flight from the burdens and openness of the abyss of existence into the affluent, pleasurable quest for "home" (Gur-Ze'ev 2004). Within this quest for "home" forgetfulness itself becomes kitsch, banalized, and reintroduced by the culture industry as instrumental. The instrumentalization of the screaming of the victims within the framework of the productivization of their silencing and representation take part in the process of camouflaging the exile of Spirit (Gur-Ze'ev 2005).

Camouflaging the exile of Spirit veils the possibilities of living transcending, vivid, nomadic, Diasporic, life, in the present historical moment, within and against the recycled, closed, realities of the present realm of self-evidence (Gur-Ze'ev 1996). And yet, driving becomes an important alternative to the possibility of transcending Diasporic life, while it is one of the most successful apparatuses of silencing those elements, such as the quest for love, freedom, creativity, improvisation, transcendence and self-positioning, that Diasporic philosophy can offer our day's counter-education.

An intensive active life and rich rhetorical suggestions constitute this silencing that is so effective in the current world of motorized driving. The cost of this success is the avoidance of the struggle for genuine transcendence since it helps to establish the truth that transcendence should not be struggled for since it is already actualized in the present

reality. In today's order of things, as manifested in the arena of normalized driving, freedom, creativity, improvisation, and transcendence are enabled only in terms of efficiency and further instrumentalization of Life, and human life itself, even when it presents itself in regard to the loss of intimacy or even the quest for nearness to the essence of Life and to seriousness in respect of its absence. The loss never appears in our day in terms of avoidance of facing Life, meaninglessness, or aimlessness, or in terms of the possibilities of happiness and creativity in Diasporic life. In fact, the loss in the arena of driving is activated only in instrumental contexts such as demanding a reduction in the number of victims sacrificed, aided by "technical means" like "stronger enforcement of traffic regulations", "more investments in the sub-structure", and "traffic safety education." The essence of issues such as the institutionalization of traffic accidents and the rationalization of the "mistakes" that allow/produce them is systematically unaddressed.

In the standard discourse of traffic and road-safety, the enslaving myths of "the inspiring car", "heavenly driving," and "speed" are systematically ignored too, and with good reason. They function dialectically as regulative false emancipatory ideas ("liberating-creative driving") and at the same time as a vital part of the current worldwide de-humanization process of global capitalism and its culture industry. The sacrifice is not limited to technological progress. It is also an imperative of its ideals and symbols and it is presented in terms of inevitability: an imperative that, from an impersonal point of view, is rational and desirable. It is not viewed as being non-advantageous, an imperative of Fortuna, or as a manifestation of the all-mighty Moira; it is certainly not reviled as part of the toll of the present "progress". Nor is it represented as

quasi-transcendence that makes possible the forgetfulness of facing Life with a Diasporic existence and homelessness with love, creativity, and improvised responsibility toward the suffering and the pleasurable domestication of the Other.

Since the loss is conceived in terms of the instrumental way of life, driving as a liberating experience and its victims both become part and parcel of the same victimizing reality. Traffic “accident” victims are viewed as a necessary and even a desirable means of protecting current consumerism and presenting it as emancipation. The current representation of driving experiences and the present celebration of its quests and their realizations support and enable the edification of this false consciousness by technological progress and the improvement of "the quality of life" and its pleasures, which have become an aim in themselves. This “quality” of reified life is the essence of Life at the current historical moment. In this epoch the “quality” of Life is nothing but standing stock, an instrument and crystallization of economic and technological “progress” as a manifestation of a unique successful quasi-spiritual “homecoming” to the pleasurable replacement of the Garden of Eden and the quest for redemption. Driving becomes an erotic, quasi-religious, experience that makes possible the forgetfulness or the successful ridiculing of a Diasporic consciousness and the quest for transcendence.

This quasi-religiousness perpetuates the forgetfulness of humans that was traditionally facilitated by dogmatic and collective religious and secular “homecoming” projects. Today it offers a unique vivid alternative to improvisation, creativity, and happiness, and to the affirmation of Life by the Dionysian eros so that the Dionysian eros is gaily swallowed by the system and integrated into the present order. It is being castrated, transformed, domesticated, and only then does it reappear as part and parcel of the

immanence of the totality of the present order of things, which nothing of worth is exterior to or “above”.

In the present order that is governed by forgetfulness of the creative quest for the aim of human Life, human beings sink into ever more intensive recycled meaninglessness, Being is forgotten, and the Dionysian/religious “life” of thingness, of meaninglessness, is glorified and idolized as a "heavenly inspiring new Mercedes". The symbols themselves are reified and no longer refer to the transcendent. Within the framework of the present order reification becomes “spiritual” and the world becomes, again, inviting "home", or, at least an arena from which narcissistic-oriented “homecoming” projects become meaningful within the framework of current realization and productivization of global capitalism and instrumental reason.

Within the framework of this retreat from Life as an abyss and openness into the closure of thingness and the Same, it is the car as a living symbol that is endowed with a life of its own; its life is adored and its mythological representations are religiously sanctified. This glory masks the conditions that make it possible. The car, the motorcycle, the speedboat, and the plane are depicted as "strong", “inspiring”, "loyal", "admirable", "beautiful", and "lovable". They become objects of passion and they are even perceived as “divine.” They do not unveil the powers and the passions that are committed to ensure and hide/banalize the exile of Spirit, but rather indicate its intimacy with the death drive.

As current driving unveils, in the present order of things Eros is enslaved in the service of Thanatos. The "speed", "performance", and “charm” of the motor vehicles, which slay the attendants to the uncontrollable, to the quest for the transcendence and authenticity of the human, are the adorable, the admired and the divine – not despite, but

rather because they are assigned to death. Death is the nothingness of the driver's "unsuccessful" life on the one hand, and simultaneously the essence of the aimless "success" within the order of things that today's glorified driver manifests on the other. It is not the human that is triumphant in the productions of today's politics of representation – it is its negation that is celebrated in such exciting, inviting and quasi-edifying manners in the present order.

The traffic "accident" takes the form of the meaningless end of "successful" life. It is conceived as a void bereft of any collective "meaning", value, or transcendental dimension. This is to be attributed to the accomplishments of camouflaging the politics of luck that is so vital for veiling the essence of the current historical moment and relevant perspectives, sensibilities, yardsticks, values, knowledge and passions. Under these conditions, death is represented as personal, as an active form of the presence of (private) "bad luck" which, psychologically, is totally unexpected. At the same time, however, this private bad "luck" is inevitable, an uncompromised requirement, carefully calculated and immensely productive from the economic-rational point of view. The issue of the unexpected, in the sense of the Roman's Fortuna, has its role both in the modern totally administered society and in the post-modern "flexible" self-regulated systems. This issue, however, normally does not get the attention it deserve, and for good reason. From where is it possible in the present order to question its constitutive strives, its ruling practices, its meanings, its evils, and its aims? Not only is there no longer such an Archimedean or utopian point of view: the very passion, drive, quest for questioning the aim of Life and its meaningless has become irrelevant, and the language for its articulation exiled, while new master signifiers have not yet replaced the exiled ones. Diasporic philosophy is not

halted by such a reality, yet currently it is marginalized by its alternative that current driving manifests and realizes so powerfully. But this success exacts its toll and the victims are so many and so silenced.

The de-humanization processes in the present order produce victims whose suffering does not get a name; in the present public sphere, the traffic victims do not receive a name, a place, or a “voice” that will reclaim their humanity and challenge their systematic victimization even after death. They are voiceless, rationalized, instrumentalized deaths which, by contributing to the public horizon as commodities and statistical data, lead to encouraging reproduction and enhancing successful advancement of the present order. As such it prevents the unveiling of its truth and the possibilities for counter-education that will develop edifying Diasporic ways of life and encourage creative love of Life within and against the present reality.

Within the present horizons, "death in a traffic accident" is just one of the representations of the normal technological functioning of the system. It can be controlled to a large degree, statistically, by rational strategies and known manipulations at a cost that is rationally evaluated and justified in determining the life-and-death balance on the roads in a productive way. This balance between suffering and efficiency has a double function: it is proof of the system's effectiveness on the one hand, while it is the apparent inspiring presence of danger, openness, creativity and freedom in this world on the other. In both ways it establishes the stability and the validity of the given reality as a genuine "home".

The present reality, and the false consciousness it allocates, symbolize the continued triumph of the closure of the present realm of self-evidence to which human beings are

attached and by which they are produced. Within its horizons, present human "normality" and its potentialities are attached to, and reproduced by, instrumental reason's control and its reproduction activities. They produce, present, advance, and reproduce human beings and their normality.

In the present order, normality, in the play of the production and reproduction of its self-evidence and regulative principles, needs "traffic accidents." It needs the "accident" and the ("bad") "luck" as a productive symbolic energy for the rational organization of subjects, passions, meanings, and borders to be crossed and overcome in an abstract, individual manner that will not challenge the fundamentals of the present order.

The organization, control, distribution, and consummating of current normality needs, in the requirement of its being as self-evidence, to be veiled. It is of vital importance that its essential qualities not be questioned, identified, or challenged from a Diasporic point of view. The importance of its being veiled lies in its need to maintain itself without being perceived as anti-transcendental.

In challenging the current historical moment from a Diasporic unveiling effort one should acknowledge that in a certain respect there is truth in the popular expression that "only total abolition of transportation will prevent traffic accidents." That kind of "accident," as the category of "accident" pinpoints, is not to be totally eliminated, since it is not the intervention of Moira here, not a transcendental intervention against the rational constitution of the order of things. It is, on the contrary, the face of this order itself and its inner logic that appears when encountering death and suffering in traffic "accidents". This logic is especially crystallized in the logic of motor transportation, which has peculiarities and localities in its ontology that are not to be reduced to mere crystallization of a

stronger power. Yet the current realm of self-evidence and its knowledge networks, dynamics and power-relations is the only framework within which the logic of motor traffic and its “accidents” are possible. It is not just one of its manifestations.

Motorized traffic realizes a certain logic that can be criticized from a Diasporic perspective in face of the absence of conscious alienation of the kind on whose actuality Karl Marx or even Herbert Marcuse could still establish the quest for a qualitative change in human existence. The Diasporic perspective that is here presented is even more radical in the sense that it cannot satisfy itself in any ideological, political, or existential “home,” and its negativity can be preserved even in the absence of conscious alienation and in face of the dawn of philosophical, educational and political projects of emancipation.

It cannot be defeated by failure or ineffectiveness, or even by the apparent triumph of post-modern manifestations of meaninglessness. Here we have to differentiate between the various utopian humanist-oriented “homecoming” projects that were defeated or overcome by their national or fundamentalist-oriented religious rivals and the Diasporic tradition of refusing to be swallowed by nihilism, on the one hand, and the positive utopias that offer nirvana, justice or truth in one of the rival “homecoming” projects on the other. Today the humanistic-oriented “homecoming” project (or the project of establishing on earth the genuine Garden of Eden) is not defeated: in fact it is almost completely manipulated, reintroduced and domesticated as a possible individual reified pleasure. The current capitalistic-oriented utopia is conditioned, constituted and justified by a reality that contains a system of codes of behavior and offers transcendence and quasi-meanings, passions, interests, fears, and dreams of which motorized road interaction is one of the supreme manifestations.

Traffic in the current historical moment universally, across different cultures and rival societies, realizes subjects, objects, and truths that are united in their anti-Diasporic productive commitment. This commitment is addressed by and realized in the practices of certain institutions. These institutions reveal a power that is beyond their specific and concrete manifestations when they institutionally/legally/expertly deal with traffic “accidents.” Such institutions include the police, hospitals, centers for psychological treatment, car factories, traffic media and experts, the fashion industry, public relations experts, teachers, and many more. Without death on the roads, without “accidents,” practically and logically, there is no life for these institutions, intervention theories, practices, and experts. Their well being, and even their very life and purpose, progress, and satisfaction in their professional life, are conditioned by the death rate on the roads. Outside or without the existence of those regulations, theories, practices, and institutions there cannot be a successful forgetfulness of human forgetfulness of its non-instrumental mission. In the absence of a Diasporic questioning, critique, and alternative creation the essence of the current de-humanizing way of being is hidden, affirmed and reproduced by its own victims.

The forgetfulness of human homelessness is assured by the historical establishment of indistinctness between the human life, in all its dimensions and levels, and the realization of the logic of techno-economic efficiency, which actualizes **the purpose principle**. In the field of transportation it offers total instrumental rationalization of life, even when it maintains and reassures the present balance of traffic injuries and suffering by avoiding “unproductive” or “unreasonable” investments in symbolic, financial, and political changes necessary for saving human lives. For the living, on the whole, the victims

produce values lower than those who were saved – by not changing the situation that led to their suffering or death in "accidents".

Money and conflicting social interests alone do not determine the balance of evils that people suffer in the present order in the field of transportation. Western societies today are willing to suffer many hardships that have nothing to do with monetary gains: what is at stake here is the productivity of striving and hopes, the identification with the untruth of our historical moment and its universality and omnipotence that is guaranteed and reproduced by symbolic capital, and conflicting utopian calls to which the attention and passions are surrendered – much more than by financial capital. While being distinct, these conflicting utopian calls, or promises for emancipation and self-fulfillment as surrender, are integrated in different networks of power/emotions/knowledge-relations.

These historically based syntheses determine the balance of evils in the present order of things. In other words, the dynamics of symbolic and financial capital, in their changing context, determine the “good” or “bad” “luck” statistics and the exact range and scope of traffic “accidents” needed to preserve and develop the present order. By that I do not mean that a change in the rate of traffic deaths and injuries is not possible. I am only showing the procedures and powers determining the chances and the directions of such a possible change. Here one should distinguish between subjective sufferings and evils and the very existence, as individual, temporary, and conscious being, of human beings in current inter-subjective contexts; that is, existence as evil and existence within and as part of an objective will and power that manifests itself in subjective wills and power relations in changing contexts.

The objective justification of traffic “accidents” also has a subjective dimension,

ranging from the maintenance of present and promised commodities to those motorized participants who have not yet been hit.

In line with what Heidegger called Ge-stell, the current technological one-dimensional order of things hides the possibility of rescuing the uncontrolled potentialities, both in the compromising settlement in the present order and in the revolt against it. Within this existentia it is not just that spirit is in exile; even the reason of protest (Marcuse 1964, 123-143) and revolt has been conquered and is possible only as a Diasporic existence that is not confirmed, reassured, nor gratified and reworded by the current world of facts.

Within this order human beings are manipulated, activated, and destroyed in a productive manner in all dimensions and levels of their private and public existence, and the illusion of liberation is one of its most needed symbolic energy focuses. This mirage is not an illusion that activates people; rather it is a material dynamic in the network and appears objectively as a commodity that is manufactured, distributed, marketed, purchased, and consumed. It even has its market price, and what can be more “real” and objective than that?

What is at stake here is the transformation of human beings and their relative autonomy, the deconstruction of their dialogic essence and their reflective capabilities, and the industrialized destruction of their bodies. On the roads, specifically, it is realized in two seemingly antagonistic manners: on the one hand, participation in the traffic flow, privately and publicly enjoying its fruits, while on the other hand, suffering its evils and limitations to the degree of threatening public prosperity and destroying the individual.

It is worth pointing out the destructive element of the productive dimension of

motorized traffic and emphasizing the overall rationality and productivity of the human's destruction, which is deciphered, in the case of traffic "accidents", as one aspect of a complex process. Here a greater integration between the public and the private spheres is provided, to the degree of the complete elimination of the private sphere. In other words, it annihilates a potentially spiritual and emotional autonomous realm in which the human's dialogic nature and uniqueness of being enable him or her to reflect on the conditions of the negation of the conditions for realizing his or her essence. What is at stake here is not his or her self-realization but the prevention of his or her struggle to reflect on the conditions determining his or her limitations, possibilities, and orientations. Diasporic existence is prevented by ensuring or at least enhancing the illusion that the current world is the human's world in which he or she is to make every effort to prepare himself or herself to be swallowed by the regulations and pleasures of the pleasure machine that is our day's actual Garden of Eden.

It is facing, not avoiding, the abyss of meaninglessness, namely, facing courageously, in a mature, Diasporic manner, the modes of production of meanings, quests, and ways for satisfaction and escapism/liberation making Diasporic existence possible that offers a concrete refusal to human integration in thingness, in the present reality. Love of Life, responsible nomadism, creativity, worthy suffering, reflection, and transcendence are vital elements of Diasporic existence even in the current post-modern moment. Existentially, economically, technologically and philosophically it is still an open possibility. The current global sophisticated sterilization of transcendence, on the other hand, protects the constitution of a one-dimensional immanence and one-dimensional life possibilities in a realm in which, ideally, everything would be

automatized and rationalized with no "external" threat, with no transcendental axis that would challenge the self-evidence and the factual of the given reality. Under such circumstances the Diasporic energies of love, happiness, reflection, transcendence, creativity, and transformation are reconstructed and transformed into productive elements improving the efficiency of the present system. The current "homecoming" safeguards the unproblematic retreat of alienation into integrated myth, of the disintegration of the abyss of Life into unified thingness, of the transformation and integration of the human subject into an object in an omnipotent, closed, wholeness in and within whose immanence dwells the gay forgetfulness of the reified, post-modern, human. The return of the immanence of myth exiles the possibilities of the presence of **the totally other**, of transcendence, namely, of Diasporic existence.

The omnipotence of the immanence of myth is established today within ever-greater rationalization and rapid greater efficiency of the reproduction of the current reality. It happens while propagating the "individualistic" elements of the system and the possibilities for competition, self-decision, and change as an open option for every normal human being in the learning society. An ideal closed Platonic cave is constituted in an anti-humanistic and ultra-instrumentalist era: motorized vehicles, especially the fast models, glorify "individualistic" values in a special context. Within this context, unlimited mobility, total privacy, and "individualistic" control of life and fate are praised as part of their actual destruction (Oberdiek 1995, 130).

Within the framework of the current capitalist globalization, technological developments, and the representations of the culture industry is there less room for counter-education, which strives for reflection, struggles for dialogue and transcendence,

and offers resistance to the present order of things? The present conditions effectively reduce the social, cultural, conceptual, and existential potential for genuine dialogue and true solidarity. Under these conditions there is less room for the individual's struggle to become Diasporic, to become some-one rather than some-thing – to become an ethical I, who not only reflects but also commits herself to transcendence in relation to the Other as part of a responsibility toward the Other. The current world order reproduces itself by reducing the human being into some-thing, a mere agent, a efficient producer/consumer. As such, she accepts the present realm of self-evidence, identifies with it, and abandons the Diasporic love of Life as an actualized preparation for and response to the sudden possible appearance of **the totally other**. Immanent to the current world order is that there is no room for dialogue and solidaritarian self-positioning, and self-constitution.

Diasporic philosophy allows the otherwise irrelevant question: why should we, within this order, challenge the present reality through counter-education? Why should we search for our otherness, for our humanity by searching for alternative, microscopic and general realities: concepts, experiences, and actions of which can ultimately change the system and its cultural, social, gender, and ethnic formations? The reduction of the subject into a "subject" and the development of a contingent, multicultural, fluid, local and temporal identity, lead to knowledge and value forms that are part of the general reification of the current globalization of capitalism. Within the present culture industry that represents and serves this order, "the individual" is hailed purely in terms of her status as a consumer/producer. Free choice and democracy are expressions that find themselves celebrated purely within a rhetoric that serves the reproduction of this anti-humanist order.

According to the concept presented here, the current social and cultural conditions erode the possibility of struggling for self-reflection, radical cultural critique of the existing system, and its rational transformation in the Kantian sense. It includes reducing the possibility of reasoned and solidaristic acts of changing the system and its cultural, social, gender, and ethnic formation. As part of this circular dynamic, the hegemonic system effectively distributes a liberation consciousness that serves as an agency to improve its own reproduction. In light of its deprivation of human dialogue and reflection potentialities, it might be called false consciousness.

The Diasporic quest for transcendence and the advancement of reflective power represent a movement that is well suited to the metaphor of vertical creative movement: a movement that is essentially a potentiality and is aimed by Love of Life toward the not-yet-realized, to the absent, and that is not content with any "homecoming" project or any nirvana. Traditionally, this kind of movement was not conditioned by, but was rather attached to different kinds of movement that actualized the Diasporic consciousness within rival projects of "homecoming". Traditional movement possibilities were dialectical, while the Diasporic, reflective, potential manifested "vertical" ("platonic") movement and openness to the eternal and the absolute. It was cyclical and part of the eternal movement of the universe that gave dialogue its transcendental possibilities. At the same time, it was based on the recognition of the human limitations of the horizontal movement possible within the framework of "the realm of necessity". Still, an alternative concept of Diaspora and an alternative quest for movement that was beyond the dichotomy between immanence and transcendentalism, which offered a Diasporic consciousness against and not as part of "homecoming" projects, were always a

challenging human possibility. This eternal nomadic existence is even today relevant and opens new possibilities for current counter-education.

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, "the being which really is" is in a "region" "above the heavens", and real human existence is to be realized only by transcending the human being from the given "up" into it, "winged" as it were: "The natural property of the wing is to carry what is heavy upwards, lifting it aloft to the region where the race of the gods resides, and in a way, of all the things belonging to the sphere of the body, it has the greatest share in the divine, the divine being noble, good, and everything which is of that kind" (Plato 1986, 61).

The present possibilities of movement are different. Today's fast traffic is taking place in a context in which "vertical" movement, transcendent, religious, movement of the homeless creative individual toward the veiled mysterious, has become irrelevant and has actually disappeared, while "horizontal" movement within the immanence of the one-dimensional framework of "the same" is no longer looked upon as limited, hard, and slow. Motorized traffic does not represent a mere technological change. It represents a totally different metaphysics of movement and different human possibilities. "Speeding is precisely elimination of expectation and duration...Shifting the soul this time from the brain to the motor will free man from apprehension about a future that no longer has any *raison d'être*, since everything is already there, here and now, present and over at once, in the instantaneous apocalypse of messages and images, in the great old joke at the end of the world!" (Virilio 1995, 92).

Motorized traffic is necessarily a movement of a new kind, a kind that is presumably unlimited and borderless. The (inevitable) absence of limits to this movement has a

twofold manifestation: in speeding ability and in the ability to drive anywhere while disregarding the challenges of purpose and meaning, and establishing a promise for immanent transcendence within the given reality not as its overcoming but as its realization. The ability of getting anywhere overthrows the traditional concept of movement, a concept that received its meaning in light of its purpose according to and within physical hardships and limitations as well as practical ambient factors and the slow moving nature of locomotion prior to technological acceleration. The new speedy mobility is unique by being represented and conceived as an expression of privacy and independence, in that drivers are supposed to drive their vehicles as a perfect expression of their free will, unbounded by external limitations with a feeling of no control or direction whatsoever. The realization of free will, creativity, determination in care for the self, and the ability to change and improvise are conceived, or at least are supposed to be conceived, as an expression of privacy and autonomy in the world as a rewording "home". At any given moment such privacy might direct itself upon others as an inescapable disaster or it may come about in the form of understanding and cooperation with them, as a way of demonstrating that they are in control of motorized vehicles, namely that they control Life itself. The Garden of Eden is instrumentally regained.

Traditional traffic mobilized men and women and their assets in a linear axis within a recognition of its limits and its passion for an erotic movement which is essentially different from that characterizing the daily round of life where "everything is the same". The essential movement in pre-motorized traffic was driven by an erotic power for transcending man from daily life, from the limited and the defective toward the good, the beautiful, and the right, the real and the eternal.

The essence of today's traffic lies in the absence of erotic silence, an absence that reproduces the continuum of the totality of "thingness". In the present realm of self-evidence, the phenomenon of "the same all the time" is recruited into the dialectic between and within horizontal movement in the realm of space (speed) in which speed inherits the realm of time (eternity) – a dialectic that characterized the quest for (vertical) transcendence. Historically, the narcissistic being enclosed within the car with the illusion of overcoming time and of control of external space, and the motorized vehicle as a locus of "excitement," not only replace religious ecstasy, the traditional quest for eternity, and the Enlightenment's devotion to autonomy and reflective capacities: even more, they almost ensure the very possibility of Diasporic nomadism and the quest for genuine transcendence. The illusion of controlling a human-made machine in a completely self-created and self-controlled environment is today's Tower of Babel. It is far different from controlling an animal in the service of human needs. It avoids the question of God, his laws, and the problem of not being a God or being exiled from God, truth, meaning, aim, and Diaspora. But the realm of human creative fulfillment that the original Tower of Babel builders tried to construct was a religious act of refusing all projects of "homecoming"; it was an alternative to the heavenly enterprise, indeed its foundation, and it was Diasporic in the sense from which today's counter-education should learn much when it articulates its refusal to be integrated in today's world order of things.

The illusion suggested by the automobile represents an alternative to previous stages in the history of Western civilization. It also represents an alternative to the cultural stage of commitment to an ideal of a free public sphere, where reason and free

men and women were supposed to flourish within a dialogue that dwells in concrete social conditions. This transition from one realm of self-evidence to another is technologically very productive. It also defines productive from the self-reproduction possibilities of the system that uses human beings as drivers and travelers – who are transformed into a commodity and are treated as objects. They become “flexible parts of the market” for car dealers, doctors, policemen, teachers, and advertisers. In parallel, they become objects in the sense of a flexible, dispensable, workforce in which, “practically” and rationally, it is useless to make a division between the driver, the car, the movement of the car, and the movements of production/consumption dynamics. That is not to say that motorized traffic has to manifest itself in the same ways in any possible world. It is argued that in a different realm of self-evidence a different set of passions, myths, procedures, and criteria would be in operation. Another metaphysics would be at work in it also, in which traffic behavior would no longer represent the quest for avoiding Diasporic homelessness and the striving for its replacement with domesticated passions for “homecoming” that represent surrendering to fear, to “God”, to the governing manipulations of the “home”.

An enlightened Judeo-Christian Utopian quest strives to create such a reality that would be a better, more human reality.

In the meantime, the productivity of present anti-metaphysics secures the scientific and technological progress within which the myth returns as the sole ruler in science’s and (instrumental) rationality’s name. This reality manifests a false consciousness that reproduces and advances it within the framework of technological progress where it is useless logically to make any distinction or separation between the

accident and the mistake. This is so since the accident manifests a personal mistake that is logically necessary and productive according to the system's inner logic. The new myths that determine the causes of traffic "accidents" are scientifically accurate, socially necessary, and technologically productive. In a sense, it is so in such a way that the highest conscious expressions of individuality have become nothing more are nothing less than the expressions of the demolition of the subject's autonomy. This reduction represents the destruction of a kind of ideal commitment to a negation of power fields in which the hegemonic discourses produce a consensus that constitutes an ever-evolving realm of understanding in which subjects recognize other subjects and collectives as solidarian partners for a common movement toward Utopia.

False nomadism produces total identification with the world as "home" by ensuring false libertarian consciousness. Here, driving functions as a myth that enables one to see the road networks and the regulation dynamics of present society as the antithesis to the penetrating force of the system in the private sphere. The driver functions as a eunuch, protecting the public and the private spheres from being penetrated by new, vivid, and young myths on the one hand, and from the Diasporic alternative on the other. The current world order is defended against the rough winds of a new realm of common self-evidence that is about to overrun and conquer the aging, dissolved realm of self-evidence that is under pressure. The castration of the erotic essence of movement in a world where motorized traffic was unknown and instrumental rationality did not rule might be seen as productive. It is productive from the point of view of the capitalistic commodities market.

Under these conditions, there is much need for Life as an abstraction, for virtual

creativity, and for false nomadism. Within this framework the "normal" or "average" driver is born. Every insurance company realizes this possibility. This "normal" driver who identifies with the fast driving myth is the one who surrenders himself to the systematic castration that the present capitalistic society imposes on its followers. The struggle for freedom and transcendence has no place. There is no room for a struggle for freedom and transcendence in a reality where the human conceives of himself or herself as one who might be with himself or herself as a driver, as one who "controls the business," and as someone who "acts in a right manner", according to rules which he cannot avoid, even for a moment, with no danger of capital punishment.

In ages when instrumental reason did not reign as sole monarch driving had a different character. It was a manifestation of the gap between the ideal and the present situation, from the viewpoint of the exiled person from the absolute, truth, or God. It was conceived as mobilizing and instructing in a Diasporic reality that is essentially transcendent. See, for example, Ecclesiastes 2: 3, "My heart conducting itself with wisdom, how yet to lay hold on folly," or Lamentations 3: 2, "He hath led me and caused me to walk in darkness but not into light". Today, when traffic and transportation are viewed with an anti-ontological and non-dialectical eye, traffic is conceived as self-regulated movement in an alternative unlimited reality that is self-sufficient, an aim in itself within the framework of an omnipotent immanence only within which is there room for transcendence. The philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari is one of its best manifestations (Deleuze and Guattari 1994).

The Deleuzian concepts of nomadism, life as a dynamic work of art, and transcendence are vital for any current reflection on today's driving and surely for

understanding its relation to other modes of anti-Diasporic movement, such as that which cyberspace is offering for cyber feminism and cyberpunk. This is because in its ultimate anti-humanistic axis Life becomes "the active force of thought" and thought becomes "the affirmative power of life." "Thinking would then mean discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life" (Deleuze 1983, 115).

The comprehension in fashionable conventions and in dominating and repressive administrative procedures of automatic movement that present-day traffic represents is taking the place of the erotic quest for absolute truth that traditional forms of transportation have represented since the collapse of the Tower of Babel. Even the Enlightenment's vision of the human being in the world, traveling within this framework, still held on to some essential elements of the Judeo-Christian realm of self-evidence. In traffic and in the present context, and especially in the "excitement" of driving at high speed (e.g., like that possible in a "powerful" BMW) and so forth, the driver can reassure himself or herself that he/she has sovereignty over reality and time in the public sphere – overcoming its non-narcissistic regulations, and drive back home, within and into the endless horizons of his narcissistic-totally-constructed-manipulated self. Giving the driver the private sphere within the public sphere hides the disappearance of both dimensions. It presents neither an accident nor good or bad luck, but expresses the efficiency of the system's own realization by reducing human beings to drivers or passengers. The system manifests itself through agents and dynamics as exemplified by drivers and passengers in traffic, and there is no other reality or absolute idea outside it, as there is no reality to systems outside the realms of self-evidence.

Diasporic philosophy does not claim that human beings are mere representations and

agencies of the systems that create, activate, imprison, and control them. In light of Diasporic philosophy a dialectic between ontological and historical dimensions is unveiled. Historically, there are various symbolic and extra-symbolic opportunities and limitations for human beings to transcend the system and its limited horizons. Ontologically, it is important to emphasize the forgetfulness of the wholeness of Being and its openness to the not-yet-realized, the dimension of potentiality, of **the totally other** as represented in the Principle of Hope. However, even within the framework of Diasporic philosophy, the transcendence and the overcoming of limitations and hegemonic strategic attitudes, symbolic, and extra-symbolic dynamics, are concrete, specific, and historically and locally contextualized. That is why the anti-humanistic and anti-Diasporic-oriented tendencies in the relatively prosperous West are so effective, as can be seen in the traffic arena.

The world of fast traffic is a place where Diasporic humanistic potentials have no environment in which to be realized and developed. The constant noise of the engine, the density of the traffic, and the impossibility of a certain, determined attitude to the environment – that is both spiritually and ecologically balanced – contribute to the constitution of the dynamic and the speedy intersubjectivity that are an arguably logical and political imperative. Psychologically, the speeding and the quest for speed can be characterized as a “quest for danger” and sometimes as a healthy "stress backing". I am searching it for an ontological sign of the success of Ge-stell within it, which hides the uncontrollable. We must search for the unobservable that traditional Western art and *tekhne*, in the Greek sense of the word, brought into the light of everyday reality out of the realm of mystery, as something that is autonomous in this daily reality and not as part

of it. Under such circumstances, human possibilities and limitations were different from the ones confronting the new man of today. Today's exciting driving as a mystic experience, as *poisis* in the sense of seeking the limits of the (im)possible, rather than as an expression of the manipulation possibilities of the present system, is a manifestation of stolen freedom and false revolt within a totality where there is no relevance to the concepts of estrangement and repression. Such an earth has no room for trying to rebuild the Diasporic humanist enterprise, as exemplified in the projects of the builders of the Tower of Babel, Socrates, Buddha, Moses, Erasmus, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Benjamin, and Adorno.

Within the horizons of the false public sphere, it seems inevitable that on the public level rational men and women will contribute their share to decisions on issues such as reducing traffic speed, prohibiting driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and other regulations of that sort. At the same time, on the private level they are driven both to demand their stolen freedom by the negation of instrumental rationality's demands and to preserve the well-being of the system and their own safety as agents of that system and its current dynamics and horizons. In practice, whenever possible the new human will rebel against the conditions that constitute him/her, his/her possibilities, his/her pleasures, and his/her miseries at the earliest opportunity. The taboo that Ge-stell constituted will be destroyed with extreme joy, real joy, whenever possible, sometimes at all costs. This rebellion is punitive and useless and does not represent nomadism and Diasporic existence. In fact it represents its diametrical opposition, fear and forgetfulness. This forgetfulness of the quest for creativity and transcendence is realized in the irony of the current world order that calculated such a reaction and that has called for it under its

secret educational agenda.

In conformity with the present order of things, a person realizes the forgetfulness of Diasporic existence (Gur-Ze'ev 2004, 114) as a driver. The driver leaps the abyss between immanence and transcendence in the new totality that becomes "home" and enforces irrelevance on all philosophical and social impasses. According to the degree of "success" of his/her relative effectiveness in representing himself or herself as one who is "successful", to a large extent the driver is recognized according to the car that he or she has or does not have. He or she drives a vehicle that simultaneously enables him or her both to manifest "success" and to rebel against his/her stolen uniqueness and freedom in the ocean of rules, regulations, and control apparatuses that manifest and hide the essence of the logic of the present world order. From the "outside" a reaction will be identified on a scale ranging from "dangerous driving" to "madness". There are studies emphasizing the incommensurability of the subjective and the objective dimensions in motorized driving (Lave 1990, 78).

I do not see in it an incommensurability manifestation, but rather one of the many representations of normality in the present mythic one-dimensional realm of self-evidence. This is a false rebellion because it is planned and controlled by the system, constituted on the private and collective repression and guilt consciousness of a supposed primordial sin (Freud 1971) practiced daily in the earthly hell of normality.

This normality is produced and reproduced by the different elements and dynamics of symbolic energies which allow the destruction of the mere potential of reflection on knowledge, post-modern de-humanization, and global capitalistic forgetfulness; the possibility of a utopian glance at the possible non-repressive, non-

instrumental attitude that could have represented a comprehensive alternative to a totally different concept of movement and traffic is completely obfuscated.

Within such a utopian alternative there is a room for a different self-motion and intersubjective mobility where there are no rational, calculated, institutionalized traffic "accidents". The self-driven movement is never independent. It is always contextualized and materialistic, but it can struggle to overcome limitations by deconstructing the realm of self-evidence that is enclosed within its horizons. It can try to transcend itself by revealing coded social manipulations and truths, validity parameters, and consciousness production operations, by deciphering these codes and by denoting their political meaning. In this sense the alternative universality and the alternative individualism here represented in these terms create a potential for a liberation potential that is met by dangerous alternatives to humanist tradition and whatever liberalism has realized in the present political, social, and cultural systems that we have at present in Western societies. A spiritual alternative to the present order might create an alternative realm of self-evidence that would be less problematic and more terrible, in light of Enlightenment ideals, humanist values, and liberal social regulations to which present Western societies are committed. The history of motorized transportation reveals Western culture's openness to, if not quest for this alternative, where there is no place for autonomous subjects, solitary intersubjectivity, reflective discourse, or dialogical attitudes to society's challenges (Gur-Ze'ev, Masschelein and Blake 2001, 93-106).

In modern times the road networks have become an arena of knowledge that contains its specifications and uniqueness, but have basically reflected, tested, and reassured the rationality of each driver and of the entire system. The logic of the present

realm of self-evidence is built within the collective consciousness, in the symbolic and commodity distribution and consumption practices. They are present in the education of each person to behave within the given horizons of reified procedures, rhetorics, and practices that are both universalistic and one-dimensional. The roads and the behavior on them reveal an educational enterprise and examination process of the universality of the symbolic violence of the present education.

It has become an arena in which human rationality is tested, realized, and reassured daily by each driver in each second of her driving experience. Too much independence, nonconformism, ignorance, or lack of practical experience in this field is sanctioned or rewarded not by a personal teacher, ruler, class or interest group, but by the logic of the present order, a network in which they themselves function simultaneously as its agents, rebels, and victims. Driving in the traffic network becomes a manifestation of the creativity and totality of the immanence, within which "transcendence" is possible after all, while reducing the human to a driver, an affect, a mere reaction to another reaction, an echo to the omnipotence of meaninglessness in which there is no "exterior", redemption or possible Diasporic, creative, existence.

Traffic today represents an important site of instrumental rationality and its anti-Diasporic successes. These successes are manifested everywhere. However, the success of instrumental rationality is not totally without problems, as can be seen in ecology, medicine, or transportation. These cracks in the present order open possibilities for hope and for the actualization of Diasporic life. On the roads, failures of the present order are of tremendous magnitude: exactly where it is most vital, traffic becomes ever more intense, costly, and inefficient, as can be seen in traffic jams in the big cities around the

globe. Yet as in other fields, instrumental reason's failure is normally recognized solely according to its own standards, and so are the suggested solutions. This proves to what degree a realm of self-evidence is omnipotent – until its downfall. Traditionally, a realm of self-evidence could be destroyed from the outside or stagnate and disintegrate from within, since it includes or could include antagonistic spiritual elements. The uniqueness of the present Western realm of self-evidence is the absence of spiritually antagonistic elements. Therefore, dramatic antinomies that represent instrumental reason's total control do not endanger its systems or its perpetual advancement – at all costs, total catastrophe included.

The traffic that in the West is more or less available to all levels of society represents the erosion of reification, repression, and revolt against it. The dynamics of regulations, their realization, and their changing conditions, from both the system's and the users' point of view, are not to be divided. The system is sophisticated, flexible, diverse, and at the same time one-dimensional and universalistic. There is no repressive group interest or conception to be revolutionized or challenged. To survive as a driver one must adjust to the system and contribute one's share to its well-being. The driver is a manifestation of the commodity exchange in which even death in a traffic accident is a rational requirement of the market, a technological advance, and the continuation of "raising the standard of living" among the surviving drivers. These ideals and requirements have evolved out of modernity, but they negate its Enlightenment utopia and its concrete social and cultural potentialities.

The world of traffic is only a fragment of a complicated totality; however, it is a major junction between different networks. Here is a perfect manifestation of the almost

absolute validity of the universality of the master signifiers of the present order, as understood and performed by the representatives of the different sources. This is not to ignore that in present post-modern conditions, more than ever people can simultaneously participate in different and sometimes conflicting constellations which may be political, conceptual or psychological, modern, post-modern, and/or pre-modern. The acknowledged pluralism is promoted essentially as a one-dimensional phenomenon, facilitated by an irresistible universalistic logic that there is no public way to resist it or to revolt against it with no immediate punishment. This argument can be seen in the present conditions and rules of traffic and road “accidents.” The “accident” is thought to be one of two things: either misunderstanding by those involved in the traffic or "bad luck". The second possibility might take the form of a kind of institutional neglect of road conditions that cause the “accident,” which is systematically represented as a personal issue, or "bad luck", as if it were a heavenly punishment. Such is the attitude of many of the cases of the first category, when “bad luck” or “mere coincidence” are manifested in the form of a drunken or “bad” driver approaching from the opposite direction.

Diasporic philosophy offers us an alternative to Foucault’s thesis concerning the clinic or the jail. In respect of traffic space it offers us a reflection on driving as one of the best normalization and disciplining sites. It unveils the forgetfulness and the normalization process not as a Foucaultian closed site that determines the limits of normality, but as a meeting point between the different networks that are united in their anti-Diasporic commitment. This synthesizing process is the one leading to the production, stimulation, and transformation of the various networks and sites as the production of their aim – which is localized by the realm of self-evidence and the

dynamics and borders that are possible within it as its concrete and specific realization.

The closure as reconstructed in road traffic is not the space and disciplinary one that Foucault examines. The closure/stability of the realm of self-evidence is the one that determines the quantities and the conditions of the openness of networks, their pluralism and permitted difference. It is also that the one which determines the construction and de-construction possibilities of passions, codes, concepts, and practices. As motorized traffic has shown on the roads, there is not an alternative spiritual foundation or social bearer for the renewal of concepts or the rebirth of ideals, nor for the appearance of a new relevant critique on the current reality and its systems. Within the framework of the current realm of self-evidence such understanding has become irrelevant, or even a sign of illness or undeniable weakness. Basically, the function and the possibility of experiencing estrangement from the current cultural problem is supplied by the erosion of the antagonistic manifestations between the rationality of capitalistic symbolic and commodity production and the humanist ideals of the Enlightenment, which have been completely integrated into the prevailing realm of self-evidence and its systems.

Filippo Tomaso Marinetti understood that speed is a new spirituality, a religion, that "will master time and space", that gives rise to "a new morality" (Marinetti 1977, 94) and "a new beauty; the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath – a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot – is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace" (Ibid, 41).<sup>1</sup>

A similar yet very different myth from the one about which Marinetti dreamed was realized to the degree of mastering the current order of things. Some of Marinetti's ideas have a place in this order. Yet the dream has been de-contextualized, transformed, and

takes place in a new realm of self-evidence, where the status of concepts and myths is totally changed.

In the second half of the 20th century a new realm of self-evidence started to form, and humans therein were reduced to a function as mere producers/consumers. This reduction was provided by the same dynamics that led to the constitution of emancipatory humanist utopias in the Enlightenment era. Intensified and transformed, these dynamics changed the modern realm of self-evidence into a new realm in which the conceptual possibilities and the ideals, values, dialogue, and possibilities for struggle that were opened in modernity were systematically closed and eroded. If in modernity the human subject was conceived potentially as a site of reflection, dialogue, and solidarity, and as a focus of emancipatory social action in the second half of the 20th century, this ideal has now been transformed into a mere sign of a function. The human has become a sign of a function in the context of his or her producer/consumer abilities: and only as such is he relevant to the self-reproduction of post-industrial society and the development of its symbolic world. This is the context of the flourishing rhetoric about preserving and protecting human life and the awakening of sensitivity regarding the fatality of traffic accidents in an era of their indisputable decrease if we look at percentages of casualties.

At the same time, the vitality of traffic “accidents” has become increasingly important for the system. The mass production of commodities has become committed to a vast interchange that has led to the rapid devaluation of goods through the promotion of new fashions and technologies and the wearing out of goods. This eliminates ineffective producers and well as problematic consumers or socially unproductive groups. Their destruction has many modes and, as the system becomes more sophisticated, it is less

direct, vulgar, and explicit and ever more efficient. This destruction ensures the continuing production and consumption of new fashions that increase the exchange of commodities and the system's reproduction. It protects the workplaces of men and women - though not the people themselves, who become owners of cars, motivated by passions and dreams shaped by the automobile as an agent and as an ideal.

It has become unprofitable to produce cars that will last for long. Their rapid replacement is built into the system. The intensified dynamics has been transformed from the means of the present order to an end in itself. The movement of commodities, increased and revolutionized in many ways by modernity, has become, in the new realm of self-evidence, a vital element in stabilizing its systems and protecting its horizons. Just as human beings have to reflect and advance the present order of things by being agents of increasing dynamism, so are they also caught up in the same matrix of disposability and themselves are in constant change and increasingly worn out, rapidly and totally. From the capitalist, i.e., rational, point of view, traffic accidents are a necessity, a matter of life or death. Yet this is but a manifestation of a deeper development, of progress within the framework of Thanatos, of hiding from God, without the possibility of utopia and without anything mysterious or uncontrollable at their disposal in which they might engage. A real solution to the traffic problem and a dramatic reduction in the number of victims and the attitude to them is a serious threat to the current order of exchange and the current symbolic understanding of space, as well as the mental constitution and the attitude of the drivers.

It is worthwhile, in this context, to note the connection between a reduction in speed and a reduction in accidents and causalities. "All the empirical data prove that

whenever and wherever a speed limit had been introduced, the number of accidents decreased", argues Hans-Georg Retzko (Retzko 1989, 6). There are exact details showing the dramatic link between the decrease in the number of accidents, especially in deaths and serious injuries, and the decrease in traffic speed (Spolander 1989, 73).

Spolander argues that the reduction in traffic speed will result in a significant drop in the number of casualties in accidents, which will remain at a ratio of 4:3, even in the case of a minimal reduction in the speed limit (Ibid.).

Accidents are to be understood within the context of interpreting the essence of traffic and the new status of movement in the current realm of self-evidence. This is the starting-point for understanding the link between the mistake and the accident, the personal and the public spheres. This is the current status of the realm of understanding and communication possibilities as they are manifested in an era when the traffic space is a communicative network. It is where the functions of the newest false human subjectivity are produced and operate, and are represented, destroyed, and reproduced. Men and women become relevant – are alive - as reproducers of motorized movement and as the victims of the symbolic reproduction of the extinction of their human essence. It is a process carried out by the very same subjects who are the agents of their systems and manifestations.

On a more political level, why and how is it that there is no agreement on reducing the speed limit, investing more resources in infrastructure, improving the safety dimensions of cars and implementing regulations that will lead to a significant drop in the number of victims? My argument is that philosophically and politically, the present level of suffering in casualties and the continuation of road accidents and deaths

represents a rational equilibrium, from the point of view of the existing order. Traffic safety education is of special importance because it has the quickest and the largest rhetorical impact while being politically the least expensive and, philosophically, the least problematic. In the Israeli arena, this might be exemplified by Eliahu Richter, a traffic researcher, who says that “the myth that there is a need to increase safety education and drivers’ preparation education in order to decrease the slaughter on the roads by higher awareness has been proven wrong again and again” (Richter 1993, 9).

Another Israeli researcher, Irit Uchmann, presents a similar argument. She maintains that while the National Israeli Institution for Driving Preparation gives courses for about 90,000 drivers annually, the usefulness of these courses is never actually checked. The director of the Israeli National Institution for Safe Driving declared frankly, “Most of the course is directed toward re-studying traffic regulations... It is nothing but a waste of time, and even a terrible waste of money and energy” (Uchman 1990, 21).

The American economists, Lester and Charles Law, calculated that the cost of saving one person’s life from a traffic “accident” is worth 850,000 hours of extra driving time. And since the average life of an American is equal to 600,000 hours, they have “proved” that it is irrational to save a person’s life at the cost required under present conditions. Saving one victim under such conditions is described (somewhat unscientifically?) scientifically as a lousy deal (Lave, *ibid.*, 89).

They also state, explicitly, that society is clearly not prepared to increase traffic safety by decreasing people’s mobility and comfort. Society is unwilling to deprive poor people from the right to drive unsafe cars if the alternative is that they would not be car owners at all (*Ibid.*).

According to these researchers, this is the reason for the lack of investments in a sub-structure that would drastically lower the number of victims. I do agree with their conclusion that a substantial decrease in the number of traffic victims is possible. To a certain degree, I even share their conclusion that “society” is not interested in reducing the number of casualties. True, as things stand today, the demand for lowering the injury ratio is completely irrational. However, in contrast to these researchers, I do not think that we should see this issue as a manifestation of society’s free will, or as a manifestation of genuine social and cultural progress.

By claiming that a substantial reduction in the number of traffic victims is irrational from the system’s point of view I do not mean that such a reduction is in itself irrational. The current system does not value life and has no regard for the victim’s life since it does not consider the life of the victim as anything that is, nor does it view the victim’s life as something that is valuable in itself. My point refers to the economic and symbolic energy that the system has to invest in order to change the present balance. The symbolic energy and economic cost of creating social, cultural, and physical conditions that will substantially reduce the number of traffic victims is irrational under the current system. The level of rational control is such that in light of the experts’ data the conditions of society would have changed already if such a change were not merely irrational, which apparently it is in the present order of things. Normally, hegemonic rhetoric masks this imperative of the current system, but sometimes the functionalist symbolic exchange reveals its truth. To avail of the private rhetoric of researchers working for insurance companies, transport, and road works might be of some use, but even their public declarations are sometimes good enough for this purpose.

A. D. Reynolds and R. F. Dawson's rhetoric might demonstrate instrumental reason in action, in their devotion to an "objectivist", "neutral", and functionalist attitude. Already in the 1970s they were occupied in calculating the rationally justified investment in preventing car accidents and their victims. In their report they treated the problem in such terms as "the cost of a death is not less than the loss of the output which the deceased person would have produced" if he or she had not been killed in the accident (Sharp 1973, 67).

The experts question the economic worth of the life and death of a car accident's victim, and in these reports they say that "it is sometimes argued that if society loses an accident victim's output, it also gains the consumption that he will no longer need". The calculation of the economic value of one person's life is very precise in such reports; they even differentiate between the value of women's and men's lives. Dawson, for example, found that the British economy lost £4360 in each fatal accident in which a man is the victim, but gained £1120 in the case of the victim being a woman: "Since the work done by housewives was given a low value in the calculations, society could be said to gain on average...when women are killed in road accidents" (Ibid.).

Norbert Elias is one of the few thinkers that have set the traffic issue in a nonmarginal place in their social and cultural critique. In the spirit of Aristotle and Kant, Norbert Elias presents an essentialist concept, according to which human essence is manifested in self-control and self-regulation. For Elias this is realized within the framework of present reality, with the traditions and regulations shaping its formations and dynamics. Unlike Aristotle and Kant, however, he identifies self-control and regulation with technical control. More specifically, self-control is realized and tested

functionally on motorized road traffic: “Controlling the car (which includes its maintenance) is nothing but an extension of the driver’s self-control or self-regulation” (Elias 1995, 25).

For Elias, cultural development is a universal educational process of humanity. One of the major forces of education, according to Elias, is the progress of technization of a given society. Here he places technization - the historical process of transportation - in a special position. The supreme trial of every culture is its ability to develop an ever-higher degree of self-control, and this is manifested in the issue of traffic in general and accidents in particular. As in the thesis presented here, Elias also argues that it is wrong to make a division between traffic accidents and the status of knowledge and the dynamics constructing the present shape of society (Elias *ibid.*, 8-9).

Elias maintains not only are the victims of traffic accidents in the developed culture of Western societies inevitable; they are a true indication of how far Western culture has gone in making technological development one of its most important parameters. He sees a connection between further advancing the technization of traffic and improving self-control as indications of cultural progress. His findings identify a considerable gap between the rate of traffic accidents in Western societies and that in non-Western societies (*Ibid.*, 23-24).

Elias uses his data to defend the special stance of Western culture and the advantages that Western societies have over non-Western ones. The differences are substantial and noticeable in the effectiveness of social standards that concern self-control and regulation. The major cause of traffic accidents, according to Elias’s thesis, is the driver, and the degree of the driver’s self-control is an outcome of the level of his or

her cultural development. The degree of cultural development is evident in the individual's self-control, a component responsible for causing the accidents and responsible for their victims (Ibid., 24-25). I do agree with Elias that road accidents are not a matter of luck or chance, and in fact they are not "accidents".

Elias refers to the cultural progress of the West as a manifestation of the progress of rationality and the advancement toward a higher degree of integration. In that respect too traffic accidents are a manifestation of rationality (or the degree to which society has been rationalized) on the one hand, and a justified punishment or a pedagogically necessary treatment that non-Western societies have to suffer on the other. Although his thesis has to be rejected on a few grounds, it is still an important. It implicitly presents the road as an arena in which rationality is tested, as it were objectively, by manipulating the vehicles, drivers, and their communication abilities with other drivers in the context of their intersubjectivity. They are examined in parallel on their ability to know and understand agreed conventional codes and regulations, and on their realizing this ability by applying the required amount of self-control in equalizing the human with the car, or the airplane, or the speedboat.

I do not agree with Elias's conclusion that the degree of traffic efficiency reveals the degree of a culture. His studies are useful, however, for the deconstruction of the cultural context and philosophical essence of its potentials. More than that, I can make use of some of his findings as an illustration of my argument concerning the success of the purpose principle within the framework of advancing instrumental reason that develops vital elements of hegemonic forces in post-industrial society. This rationality has a special presence in interchange networks, transportation, and the representation of

knowledge, its agents, and other commodities. The efficiency of the system is manifested by motorized traffic and not in the cultural and social stage, as Elias tries to convince us. So the level of traffic accidents does not represent some punishment, or luck, or "accident", whose essential characteristics lie in its being an incident, an inevitable catastrophe. In contrast to Elias and other conservatives defending the present anti-humanistic Western order of things, I see in traffic "accidents" the logic of the system, the forces constructing its rationality and its self-presentation and manipulations. Since this rationality is instrumental in its essence, it is not determined by values and is attracted to the mission of the anti-transcendental being, an aim of self-reproduction and advancement of nothingness, of Thanatos. This concrete representation of instrumental reason has social, economic, and technological results in the public sphere and in the remains of what could have been the public sphere of the individual.

Therefore, the implementation of a policy that would lead to a real reduction of traffic "accidents" might clash with the purpose principle, which is indifferent to any value-oriented obligation. It would also be at odds with transcendental ideals, being the supremacy of preserving and developing human life and well-being, and preferring it to further technological advancement possibilities, as well as other elements of protecting the life of the control and repression potentialities of the system. Four possibilities are to be raised in referring to the limits of the rationality of a praxis that will substantially reduce the number of traffic "accidents" and their victims.

A. Further reduction will be needed in the speed of the traffic. In such a case, the symbolic function of driving might bring the driving and other related networks into total chaos. This should be understood in terms of a space where killing time and extrinsic

controlled self-constitution have become central and productive educational and political dimensions of prolonging the life of the system.

B. Substantial changes will be needed in traffic organization, in car structuring, and especially in the representation of the producer/consumer as human-machine. In such a case, the erotic passion between the driver and the car might be confused, and a demand might come to constitute different social borders, relations, and dynamics in which an erotic state between human beings might be constituted. There is even the danger of lightening the educational contribution of a false erotica between human and motorized vehicles under the new cultural conditions. Such a critical light might reveal the part that modern speed driving plays a part in the self-forgetfulness of humans, in their refusal of transcendence, and in their forgetfulness of forgetfulness.

C. The dangers of the traffic routes as sites of knowledge exchange and realization. A reduction of the dangers involved in fast driving and an essential change in the ways in which the dangers on the roads are represented might damage its economic, social, and cultural production. The productivity of the attitude to the danger involved in speedy traffic is based on the dual structure of this kind of danger: as an enemy and as an object of strong passion. This danger is represented as something that has to be overcome. By the same token, it is represented as a dimension of "otherness" in the heart of a one-dimensional world that demands the release of surplus energy and frustration in such a way that in the final analysis it will secure present normalization strategies, power hierarchies, and dynamics. These are elements that protect, serve, and hide themselves as self-evidence. Life on the edge, like philosophy on the edge, might be an erotic reflection of health, as Nietzsche proclaimed. However, at certain historical moments like ours,

looking for the danger and running away from unplanned and uncontrolled life are two dimensions of one and the same trend: the Thanatos track of self-forgetfulness, which is also the forgetfulness of being, the nothingness. “And so everything rushes at man, man-target is assailed on all sides, and our only salvation now is to be found in illusion, in flight from the reality of the movement, from the loss of free will...” (Virilio 1995, 132).

D. The changes I envisage threaten the very possibility of struggling for the realization of human freedom, solidarity, and dialogue in history. This is the case because there is no way totally to ignore the essential difference between self and intersubjective understanding/realization and freedom, between Eros and Thanatos. Traffic is an arena where the possibility of dialogical, solidarity and alternative communication is tested daily. Today’s roads provide the best manifestations of rationality, of “healthy” competition and cooperation between people as if there were a vivid dimension of a free and democratic public sphere. The aforementioned possible changes in the symbolic and traffic operation might crack the self-understandability of some apparatuses and strategies of the system, endangering other entities – that of traffic – thus endangering the entire order of things. The forgetfulness of forgetfulness might be cracked too, and new possibilities for Diasporic readiness, gaze, and listening might become possible. Cracking vital self-evident dimensions might question the ways of production and reproduction of the conceptual apparatus, the hegemonic collective consciousness, normalization strategies, and educational manipulations responsible for reproduction of the necessary public attitude and criteria and so forth. Essentially, different forms evaluation, communication, and intervention approaches might penetrate radical alternative driving and traffic philosophy. As such, they might bring about an alternative, Diasporic, human

condition. Such an order must represent a different intersubjective grammar and a different human attachment to Being and to human beings, technology, and ecology, as well as to the unspeakable or uncontrollable. The object of such a transformation is not to be identifiable within the borders of the current realm of self-evidence. Within the possibilities opened by such a seemingly Diasporic self-positioning, transcendence is both negative and positive, yet it must be of a utopian essence. Existentially and philosophically it must accept the primacy of (the possibility of the sudden appearance of) **the totally other**, of the potential over the actual: it must be politically aggressive or be smashed by the hegemonic educational dynamics of the system and its despair.

A radical examination of motorized traffic and the reconstruction of the accidents function, as well as a study of the possibility of alternative education for safe transportation, all demand a critique of instrumental rationality, its context, and its operation. A Diasporic philosophy for counter-education, however, must tell us the bitter truth, namely that what I am suggesting here engages only one dimension of the issue: the political dimension; and it is at odds with Diasporic philosophy that is true to itself. It is but another positive utopia, a new "homecoming" project that has to be transcended.

Motorized traffic and accidents are but one mode of Being's games of revealing and hiding: games and, as it were, its way of motivating humans into realizing themselves as "being-toward-death" (Heidegger 1957, 265-266).

It is within this questioning, I think, that we should try to understand the philosophical dimension of technological and transportational progress. Heidegger's ontological questioning, as well as the understanding of the procedures of the human body, soul, and truths according to Foucault, still leave room for Habermasian critical

reconstruction and for Adorno's critique on instrumental rationality. These elements are vital for a future Diasporic philosophy and for counter-education that does not contradict itself. The invitation to Diasporic existence and to the reflection offered here is "pessimistic", but by the same token it is utopian. It understands the current advancement of transportation and education for safe transportation as manifestations of nothingness. At the same time, it treats the contingent historical stand of concrete networks as a real world. It is where happiness, falsity, possibilities of hope, and concrete opportunities are present and deserve protection in the struggle for their development, especially by the deconstruction of the current realm of self-evidence to the greatest possible degree, though not by all means.

After all, education on the issue of safer transportation and the call for more careful behavior on the roads might become an important part of a struggle against the powers manifested in the slaughter on the roads, namely countering the logic of the current Western realm of self-evidence. Such an education, even under the present circumstances, might be aided by existing antagonistic sites in the system, or newly developed focuses that contain the potential of becoming vital elements of the coming realm of self-evidence. Specifically, I am referring to the destructive/educational potential of the tradition of the free public sphere in modern Western culture.

Essentially, this tradition is conservative in its self-understanding, but for our purposes here, a more central issue revolves around the very separation between the public and the private sphere. This rich tradition contains (and might reproduce) the explicit and implicit codes and parameters that guide behavior in the public sphere and the alternative possibilities of the human subject. Normally, this is the basis of producing

and controlling the subject in accordance with hegemonic concepts and interests, or power balance in the system. At the same time, this power might be directed against the system, might serve as part of a transformation that would enable a more autonomous and less controllable subject and intersubjectivity. Human life might thus become richer and contain new possibilities, as part of an enterprise that opens new horizons and drives toward new dangerous normalization systems and opportunities for liberation.

Countering the present reproduction of traffic accidents, resisting the current ways of distribution and consumption of “the problem” and its suggested solutions, might become parts of such a utopian struggle. Such a struggle must become a radical political and philosophical praxis. It is important here to note some conservative elements and pinpoint the possibility of their transformation within this utopian struggle. After all, the alternative education for safety transportation is but one of its bearers and builders. Such an alternative education is impossible without maturity manifestations such as a new type of communicative action that is not under the control of the purpose principle, overcoming anti-narcissistic self-forgetfulness and the reestablishment of refinement in the public sphere of behavior.

However, all these elements and their attributes are impossible in the absence of dramatic change in concrete social and cultural conditions. I do not share Habermas’s optimism and positive utopianism concerning the possibility of communicative action and scientifically based advancement toward the “ideal speech situation” that would constitute a solidarian partner in dialogue. Here I see more relevance in Jean Baudrillard’s conception of a communication that sees no way out of our present situation. However, that is the end of Baudrillard’s truth and the opening opportunities

for an alternative communication/traffic education: it is a project that will target the realization of the new ways of driving -- as a representation of transcending traditional kinds of solidarity within a new aesthetic motorized movement ,as part of the entrance of challenging the exile of Spirit and its alternative power/knowledge relations.

The Hebrew term *derech erez* (the way of respect) contains vital importance for any education in safe driving and for any alternative communicational praxis. It exceeds and completes the traffic issue. In Judaism there is a unique synthesis between Torah (the Jewish written law) and Torah Shebe'al-peh (the Jewish oral law) as a reflection of the dialectic of the earthly life and the heavenly world, nature and man. In Judaism the heavenly world does not reduce earthly life and material things such as the body to something of a lower degree. The written Torah proclaims the sanctity of the ways of this world and the sanctity of the human soul, the body and its passions and needs. That is why Judaism praises human worldly ways of conduct as an autonomous dimension that is not of a lower degree and is never totally separated from heaven, as in principle the written Torah and oral tradition – Torah Shebe'al-peh – cannot be separated. These worldly ways and man's conduct in earthly matters are not to be separated from God's imperative, from the truth of the Torah and its heavenly eternity. In this sense, while having its history, different interpretations, educational and political manifestations (Broier 1987), *derech erez* delineates a religious dimension. While representing the earthly dimension in human life, *derech erez* manifests the redemptive aspects in our daily life. As such, it also represents the general utopian axis of humanity's enlightenment as developed by figures such as Schiller, Kant, Hegel, and Marx. They represented a mature conception of *derech erez* in which acknowledging the absence of

the traditional God does not negate utopia or the moral value of daily matters and the acknowledgment of different ways of life. As written in Talmud tractate *Derech Eretz Zuta*, 71, 2: *Kol derachecha yiheyu leshem shamayim* (Let all your ways be for the sake of heaven) (Frizker 1950, 19).

I would like to develop this concept into a general humanistic educational attitude, as exemplified in the traffic issue. That is, alternative traffic education is connected to an alternative conception of movement and to an alternative, utopian conception of the public sphere.

The concept of *derech erez* on the roads has two aspects: one of knowledge and one of action. Each is contained in two different contexts: private and public. In the public sphere, *derech erez* is conditioned by the recognition of an epistemological system that is conceived as legitimate and makes possible knowledge concerning relevant codes and norms in the current public sphere.

Unlike mere politeness, behavior manifesting *derech erez* is conditional not only on the act being conceived as polite, but on other men and women being trained to behave in accordance with it. This is because it is conditioned by knowledge; it is not a matter of making people behave “properly” (which would leave open the issue of repression) but of a real educational enterprise. Under this interpretation, *derech erez* is not just an epistemological issue, and it cannot be realized only as a concrete moral, obligatory, conscious action. In this sense, *derech erez* is not a mere epistemic function or a framework. It is conditioned by a special sort of knowledge, one that is morally oriented, namely courteous behavior shaped by acknowledgment of the other’s identity, needs, rights, hopes, and limits, and ultimately directed to a common transcendence.

From this perspective education in *derech erez* on the roads might be realized only as the politics of overcoming the purpose principle, which constitutes the heart of instrumental reason and capitalist practice (Marx 1971, 114) .

Marx suggests the utopian movement in sexual relations between free men and women as a concrete criterion for true communism (Marx 1971, 147), namely for overcoming the purpose principle that is the essence of both capitalism and vulgar communism. This kind of intersubjectivity, which is determined by recognition of the other as another, as different, and as a partner for critical dialogue and solidaritarian creativity, is manifested in the Jewish category of *derech erez*.

The *derech erez* counter-education that Diasporic philosophy here offers us is but a revolt against the totality of the present reality and is directed at its being questioned and its deconstruction. In contrast to postmodern educational rhetoric, however, such a counter-education is committed to overcoming the driver as an ego with no essence, which realizes itself by negating the Other's otherness. As such counter-education has a utopian axis: a commitment to the revelation of the idea of a human being as a homeless person, as a Diasporic lover of Life, and as a guardian of Being even when defending a rational, open, and free public sphere. This humanistic renaissance avoids being just one more manifestation of the narcissistic power that is produced by the current culture industry. This negative utopia connects, again, the private person to a public sphere, which is being constantly criticized and re-formulated by the individuals creating it. While insisting on their Diasporic existence and on their responsibilities, human beings might become social again, in the sense that the builders of the Tower of Babel exemplified, namely Diasporic, refuseniks of Godly or other dogmatic "homecoming"

projects, and as such building themselves and the entire cosmos as an unending transcendental "home." This Diasporic creativity is not motivated by fear or violently imposed discipline but by love of Life and responsibility that is eternally improvised with the Other. Only there is an alternative movement and self-positioning possible.

Today the very possibility of humans counter-educating themselves against the current trend to de-personalization and indifference in regard to the Other is conditioned by the effectiveness and strength of instrumental reason's manifestations. Listening to the possibilities of Diasporic *derech erez* on the roads might bring humans into Diasporic nomadism that is not an abstract negation that forbids creating any "home": it resists dogmatic, closed, ethnocentric-oriented "homes," but not empathy with the Other as an improvised "home". It might offer a possibility of resisting the present order's hegemony, within which the human is reduced to mere statistical data and an almost totally controlled function.

This "almost" is of utmost importance for any possible counter-education today. Counter-education in *derech erez* on the roads transcends the level of treating the issue of driving as a mere private, or economic "safety" matter, and re-articulates it as a political, moral, philosophical, and existential movement toward the possibility of worthy Diasporic life. Even as a negative utopian enterprise, this is impossible when one is deprived of any tradition. Diaspora-oriented counter-education, therefore, must be established via a hermeneutic approach to the tradition or traditions denoting the moral and spiritual dimensions of manners and making it possible to insist that *derech erez* be realized.

In one sense, Diasporic counter-education here is very Jewish, in respect of its

understanding the centrality of the presence of the absence of God, truth, and justice, and in its accepting the relations between the exile of God and the Diasporic essence of human existence. On the other hand it must overcome Judaism as a "truth" and monotheism in all its manifestations. It should denote and develop its multicultural yet universalist-humanist implications. Judaism might be interpreted in an anti-ethnocentric way, as part of a universal enterprise of edifying, transcending, and liberating the human as such. It can avoid ethnocentrism and cultural neo-colonialism by avoiding the mistakes of both current conservative universalist and multiculturalist discourses. As a humanist alternative, it should cross the existing borders between classic critical theory and Foucault's project in suggesting the possibility of a new critical dialogue and political praxis. Reinterpreting concepts such as *derech eretz* and educating for an alternative transportational reality and traffic behavior, against its conservative understanding, on the one hand, and as part of a dialogue with other cultural concepts, on the other, might evolve into a meaningful defense of reason and a more human order of things.

Diasporic counter-education is very different from the prevailing critical pedagogy. If true to itself Diasporic counter-education must deconstruct the inner logic of the current realm of self-evidence and subject it to interrogation. It must be questioned, if there is still the possibility, today, of redeeming a sense of estrangement to the degree that it may become enlightened. If it is today still possible, it must challenge instrumental reason and ethnocentrism in order to reestablish humans' attachment to each other and to (negative) utopia through the opening up of a dialogue.

Deciphering the essence of "traffic accidents" must face the contingency of the formation of the realm of self-evidence and the systems reflecting it (Gur-Ze'ev 1996,

222-224).<sup>2</sup>

A realm of self-evidence creates or is realized in local social-cultural systems that struggle and communicate with each other and that are violent in their nature. The present order of things is not to be identified with a national sovereignty. It crosses political borders and is much closer to cultural spaces, but it is not identified with them since it includes local social hierarchies, their financial and symbolic power struggles, and political praxis. Systems can change characters and borders, and the direct dynamics and limits within their subjects.

Negative utopia, if and when overcoming the present realm of self-evidence and deconstructing local systems and their power-relations, is always individualistic and cannot be delivered to collectives as the true dogma. Even then it is never secure or guaranteed, and it is "founded" on the void made possible by the promise of the principle of hope that is about to storm it every minute and every day. However, even for the individual, this concrete negative utopia cannot avoid relating to the present historical moment and the concrete capitalistic and nationalistic realities in order to challenge them by counter-education, such as *derech eretz* on the roads. Counter-education here cannot refer to an abstract individual as a contingent supreme standard. It speaks about the constitution of new values, new myths, and a new heroism of sacrifice for the totally different, the transcendent. In its nature, such a counter-education is opposed to "education in safe driving on the roads." Such an approach is determined to de-construct present reality and transcend itself. It aims to generate this Diasporic project without being non-humanistic, but with the determination to transcend humanism and to save it from the presence it wants to deconstruct. Such a determination requires challenging

considering the institutionalized “accidents,” their and production, selection, and designing apparatuses even on the roads.

Counter-education must rest on acknowledgment and on making use of interests and dynamics that currently shape the local systems. On one level, it has to use insurance companies and other interest focuses that are for the moment opposed to those of the car industry, importers, and the government. On another level, it can make use of the remains of the nation-building myth and Kantian moral conceptions in anti-conservative contexts, which can be directed toward concrete action against this aspect of the death industry known as "normal traffic conditions". The remnants of national fanaticism may be of some use too, in a counter-educational action against the world of “traffic accidents.”

Such an action is conditioned by the refusal to accept the forgetfulness of forgetfulness, against the refusal to rebel against the self-understood, and specifically against hegemony trends in the Israeli system. One might assume that such counter-education is really going to decrease the number of traffic victims. Such an instrumentalist might succeed, but only by acting in such a way that will ultimately advance and fortify the system in which a revolt functions in the form of actual or potential "traffic accidents", i.e., like any commodity. Counter-education is fed by the hope principle, that has no power to reduce the number of casualties. In principle it cannot be “successful.” It can only appear as a refusal of “success,” normality, and self-understanding, as a negation of nothingness that the present reality manifests.

Even so, we have to aim and prepare ourselves for the possibility of counter-education that will offer a Diasporic negation of the current ways of the Western order and a total refusal of its self-evidence. Such a refusal must include acceptance of the

liberation of the oppressed (intellectually, psychologically, and economically) potentialities. Realization of the demand for such an education is possible only if the entire social horizon can be changed and a real public sphere can flourish. In such a utopia, a new place for technology and for transportation will be provided by the new human being. There is the place for an essentially different kind of traffic, which has a different telos from the current one. There and only there will equal status be attained for all traffic victims. Even then, will they be victims of a way that is not theirs? And what will be the form of an alternative that we cannot positively describe? All that we can do is act against the negation of its possibility, and rebel against the evil industry that constitutes the one-dimensionality of the present reality as a worthy "home".

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