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**Telepathic Technologicis
A Seance in Fortean Science**

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Abstract

Telepathic Technologicis: A Seance in Fortean Science

This paper reviews the speculations of the American writer Charles Fort (1874-1932) for the practical utilization and implementation of telepathy and telekinesis in large-scale technical systems. It outlines the Fortean program in four basic research areas: teleportative transit systems, telekinetic military technologies, poltergeist power and energy systems, and radical telepathic constructivism. In the second part of the essay («Towards the Technicization of Witchcraft»), the author analyzes the TELE as a vital component in the history of modern technologies to establish further the plausibility of the Fortean research program. A final section reflects upon the essential interconnectedness of the practices of technologization and metaphorization. (The paper is written as a research proposal and urges the further investigation of the telepathic problematics opened up by Fort's texts.)

Zusammenfassung

Telepathische Techno-Logiken: Fortschritte in der Fortischen Forschung

Das Papier beschäftigt sich mit den Spekulationen des amerikanischen Schriftstellers Charles Fort (1874-1932) über den praktischen Nutzen und die Einführung von Telepathie und Telekinese in großen technischen Systemen. Vier grundlegende Forschungsfelder des Fortischen Programms werden vorgestellt: Teletransportsysteme, telekinetische Militärtechnik, Poltergeist-Energiesysteme und der radikal-telepathische Konstruktivismus. Im zweiten Teil des Essays («Zur Technisierung der Hexerei») analysiert der Autor das TELE als eine vitale Komponente der modernen Technikgeschichte und versucht dabei das Fortische Programm zu plausibilisieren. Zum Schluß werden übergreifende Zusammenhänge von Technologisierung und Metaphorisierung diskutiert. (Das Papier ist ein Entwurf eines Forschungsantrages zur weiteren Untersuchung der Fortischen Telepathieproblematik.)

Zum Geleit

Louis Kaplans Text liegt irritierend quer zu eindeutig sozialwissenschaftlichen und eindeutig literarischen Erzeugnissen. Er thematisiert selbstexemplifizierend, wie schwierig es in beiden rhetorischen Gattungen werden kann, die jeweiligen Geltungsbereiche, Gegenstände und Praktiken evident zu machen und in zumindest den Angehörigen der jeweiligen Sparte selbstverständliche und unzweideutige Begriffe zu fassen.

Es ist ein alter Brauch der »problemorientierten sozialwissenschaftlichen Grundlagenforschung«, die interdisziplinäre Zusammenarbeit zu beschwören und ein Verlassen eingefahrener Gleise des Wissenschaftsbetriebs zu fordern. Eine gerade in der Technik- und Umweltforschung naheliegende praktische Zusammenarbeit mit Natur- und Ingenieurwissenschaftlern kommt dabei zwar kaum zustande. Aber rhetorische Anleihen bei ihnen sind so beliebt wie respektabel. Will man sich in den zeitgenössischen Sozialwissenschaften Gehör verschaffen und doch den Anschein unfranzösischer Seriosität wahren, dann hilft die Übernahme thermodynamischer, kybernetischer, dissipativ-morphogenetischer, hyperzyklischer oder chaostheoretischer Vokabulare und Bilder und ihre Anwendung auf gesellschaftliche Vorgänge. Ein Austausch zwischen sozialwissenschaftlichen und literarisch/literaturtheoretischen (oder anderweitig »künstlerischen«) Ansätzen der Weltbetrachtung und Problemverarbeitung gilt in einer auf »Empirie« bestehenden sozialwissenschaftlichen Technikforschung dagegen eher als suspekt.

Kaum ein Wissenschaftsphilosoph mag mehr an der Vorstellung festhalten, zwischen sozialwissenschaftlichen und literarischen Deutungen lasse sich eine sichere Grenze ziehen oder es lasse sich Einigung erzielen über mehr als sehr vorläufige Plausibilitätskriterien für die überlegene Dignität gelungener sozialwissenschaftlicher Interpretationen. Der Glaube allerdings ist unerschüttert, sozialwissenschaftliche Arbeiten seien im Vergleich zu natur- und ingenieurwissenschaftlichen durch einen ungleich höheren Anteil interpretativer, Sinn verleihender oder bestreitender Leistungen ausgezeichnet und ihr gesellschaftliches Interesse läge in diesem seinen »kritischen« oder wenigstens »narrativen« Potential.

Immerhin wird in der sozialwissenschaftlichen Technikforschung gegenwärtig Autoren viel Aufmerksamkeit zuteil, die Technik kultur-anthropologisch als »Symbol« oder linguistisch als »Text« begreifen wollen. Vor diesem Hintergrund könnte eine Aversion gegenüber in Form und Inhalt literarisierenden Arbeiten verwunderlich erscheinen. Dennoch kam es zu anhaltenden Diskussionen über die Zulässigkeit und Wünschbarkeit einer Veröffentlichung des vorliegenden Textes als WZB-Paper. Was hat er mit Wissenschaft zu tun? Trägt er zur Technikforschung bei? Welche Qualitätskriterien soll man anlegen, und disqualifiziert nicht die Unsicherheit in der Beantwortung dieser Frage den Text? Dürfen wissenschaftliche zu - in Louis Kaplans Prägung - »wissenschaftlichen Betrachtungen« entarten? (siehe dazu S. 34, Fn. 1)

Warum aber sollten Grenzüberschreitungen zur »Literatur« wie der vorliegende Text bedrohlicher und weniger anregend sein als - beispielsweise - Beschreibungen technischen Wandels im Kauderwelsch höherer Thermodynamik oder eigenwillig verstandener Quantenmechanik oder gewagter mikrobiologischer Analogien?

Bernward Joerges

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Louis Kaplan

But Science is established preposterousness.
We divide all intellection: the obviously pre-
posterousness and the established.

Charles Fort, *The Book of the Damned*¹

Preface

Almost every day of his life for a quarter of a century, a solitary investigator looked through the scientific journals and the current periodicals in the New York Public Library or the British Museum Library. He was in pursuit of phenomenal phenomena--anomalous data and exceptional records which did not seem to fit into the norms and conventions of the established sciences. In this way, Charles Fort learned of wondrous but repetitive occurrences at the borders of fact and fiction--the fall of strange substances to the earth (butter and blood, frogs and fishes, artifacts), the spontaneous combustion of human bodies, or the sightings of unknown objects in the heavens. Perhaps these monumental labors were setting the foundations and groundwork for new or alternative sciences. Perhaps these were prankish pastimes and mischievous jests for the purposes of a good laugh. He did not know himself. As he wrote rather dubiously towards the end of his life, »Because to this day, it has not been decided whether I am a humourist or a scientist.« (p. 850)

While Fort has been an invaluable resource for science fiction writers or for those who deal with the obviously preposterousness², he has been rather un- or underemployed in the offices, labs, and halls of the established. This paper is an attempt to redress this unfortunate

1 *The Book of the Damned*, p. 17. Unless otherwise indicated, all parenthetical quotations in the text are taken from Charles Fort, *The Book of Charles Fort* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1941). These break down into *The Book of the Damned* (1919), pp. 1-310; *New Lands* (1923), pp. 311-359; *Lo!* (1931), pp. 539-841; and *Wild Talents* (1932), pp. 841-1062.

2 For a partial description of science fiction which has incorporated Fortean problematics, the reader is referred to the biography of Fort written by a noted science fictionist himself. See Damon Knight, *Charles Fort: Prophet of the Unexplained* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 203-4. The list is much expanded in Jean Louis Brodu's unpublished paper »Charles Fort: Precurseur Excentrique du Domaine Anomalistique« (October, 1982).

situation in intellection. Following in the spirit of Charles Fort, the essay seeks to transport (or teleport) his brainstormings about large technical systems for a possible deployment by the technological and the scientific establishments. But the means of conveyance are not as strange to the technological field as one might have imagined. In fact, we will discover that these means have been at the very basis of the entire technological research program in Western societies for the past centuries. This refers to the fertile bond between *tele* and *techne* which has led to the growth of the tele-technologies (e. g., telegraph, telephone, television, etc.) that have radically altered our everyday life through actions at a distance that move across space and time.³ Therefore, this essay outlines a Fortean research program which seeks a logical expansion and extension of these links. Given Fort, there is the desire to forge the connections between the technologic and the telepathic as far as possible. Such applications will inscribe and describe the field to be known as *telepathic technologic*s.

Most of the ideas are derived from Fort's posthumous text, *Wild Talents*. In typical fashion, Fort collects anomalous data and relays strange incidents about the telekinetic feats of numerous individuals. Here he suggests in a most serious-playful manner that it would be wise to investigate and cultivate the alleged »wild talents« of individuals for technological ends. Following his call, I try to systematize and elaborate these speculations--whether practical suggestions or flights of fancy--into a potential research program. This paper might be read as a kind of grant application which seeks financial support to found an Institute for Telepathy (IT) which would devote itself to the transformation of these irregular dream flights into standardized technological practices.

For it is a matter of *talents* in the widest and the wildest possible sense. The telepathic technological research program involves the procurement of human talents which will yield financial talents far beyond the initial investments. Telepathic technologic is not a surefire nor a guaranteed success. It is not clear whether the following quasi-grant

3 The etymology of *tele* comes from the Greek where it provides what is far away, far off, and far out. Coincidentally and incidentally, this same *farther* meaning is inscribed in the proper name of Charles Fort himself. Of course, one uses the expression (*Fort!*) in German to signify in the imperative, Away! Given this semblance one can interchange the Institute for Telepathy (to be outlined in this proposal) with another neologistic formulation, i. e., the Institute for Fortpathy.

proposal should be taken with a grain of salt, a ton of sugar, or with nothing at all. For when it comes to the chances of success for telepathic technologies, we are in a zone of uncertainty somewhere between science and fiction or between the two forms of intellection.⁴ Like current researches into technological innovation in the sociology of science, we are situated in the epistemological gap of a *double novation* where it is impossible to separate »legitimate science« and »pseudo science.«⁵ There is no way of knowing the full extent of the *tele* forces which has been unleashed by technology's pact with the powers at a distance. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that the quantity and quality of investment into the telepathic technological research program will have an effect upon the further realization and establishment of the tele itself.

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- 4 This uncertain and borderline situation is duplicated in telepathic texts by two noted thinkers where one will be left not knowing what to make of telepathy. See Sigmund Freud's posthumous »Dreams and Telepathy,« *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (Vol. III, September, 1922), pp. 283-305 and Jacques Derrida, *Telepathie*, trans. Hans-Joachim Metzger (Berlin: Brinkmann und Bose, 1982). Freud asks: »Have I given you the impression that I am secretly inclined to support the reality of telepathy in the occult sense? I know nothing about it.« (p. 305) Fort gives his own distracted version of the telepathic margin in these open and vagrant terms. They waffle: »So far as my own experiences, I do not know that telepathy exists. I think so, according to many notes that I have taken upon vagrant impressions that come and go, when my mind is upon something else. I have often experimented. When I incline to think that there is telepathy, the experiments are convincing that there is. When I think over the same experiments, and incline against them, they indicate that there isn't.« (p. 962)
- 5 For an excellent discussion of the paradoxical space of dual novation in relation to the telepathic technology of table turning, see Michel Pierrssens, »Novation Astray«, in *Sub-stance*, 62/63 (1990), pp. 157-67.

Part I. The Research Program

1. From Transportation to Teleportation

International trade and travel demands greater and greater velocity. A short history of the transportation industry would demonstrate how each mobile system has measured its effectiveness in terms of an increase in speed. We have moved from the Wright brothers airplane to the supersonic transporter and the space shuttle, from the tugboat to the atomic-powered submarine. Fortean science insists upon taking the next step in moving through space. But the step it seeks will be an instantaneous leap. This is the leap from transportation to *teleportation*. »The present snails of the wheels and planes may be replaced by instantaneous teleportations.« (p. 1001) Fort seeks nothing less than to revolutionize the transportation industry. He does not seek to reinvent the wheel but to bypass it completely. In the following passage, he is leading us on the path towards the deployment of teleportation for commercial uses. Fort envisions travel without railway stations, port towns, nor commercial centers. Instead we shall have a dispersed network consisting of innumerable locally-operated teleportative devices equipped with interplanetary or even intergalactic capacities. If one can still find room for traffic in this system, it will become rather invisible.

The outstanding suggestion, which, however, like many other suggestions, I cannot now develop, is that, if Teleportation exists, it may be used. It may be criminally used, or it may be used commercially. Cargoes, without ships, and freight, without trains, may be traffics of the future. There may be teleportative voyages from planet to planet. (p. 572)

These suggestions are »outstanding« not only because they constitute a superlative brainstorm and not only because they are unfinished and in need of institutional establishment. It is also because the move from transportation to teleportation requires an »out standing« conception of space-time. It is not a question of development nor evolution. In the jump from the snail to the frog, it is a question of quantum leaps to be made here, or in between here and there. Fort urges an investigation of the uncertain laws derived from quantum physics for the theoretical resources to enable an implementation of this teleportative program. If

we manage to demystify the aura around this hallowed science, we would see that quantum physics is a rather sophisticated game of leapfrog for the micro-structural object of study on the move.⁶ One has heard in the contemporary lingo of social studies of science about »scaling.«⁷ Fort insists that it is only a matter of scaling up these teleportative effects from the sub-atomic particle to the Federal Express package or to grandma's care package from home.

The quantum theory is a doctrine of magic. The idea of playing leapfrog, without having to leap over the other frog, is simply another representation of the idea of entering a closed room without passing through the walls. But there is a big difference between »authoritative pronouncements« and my expressions. It is the difference between sub-atomic events and occurrences in boarding houses . . .

There are hosts of persons, who consider themselves up-to-date, or ahead of that; who bandy arguments in the latest, scientific lingo, and believe anything that they're told to believe of electrons, but would be incapable of extending an idea for electrons to boarders--even though they argue that every boarder is only a composition of electrons--and go right on thinking of affairs, in general, in old-fashioned, materialistic terms. (p. 1003-4)

The technical logic of Fort's syllogisms seems impeccable. If one really believes that an electron or a sub-electronic quark particle can undergo teleportation, then why not a human being lodged in a boarding house or a carton of cigarettes composed of these same immaterial materials? The »extending (of) an idea« is just a question of scaling. Therefore, the Fortean research program must discover the laws and principles through which such teleportative effects can be generalized to work at every possible level. In the codification of this procedure, the Fortean science of *teleportative physics* might hold the key for the development of a large technical system to take us where we want to go in no time at all.

6 For the classic account of the links between the telepathics of Eastern religious texts and of modern quantum physics, see Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (London: Wildwood House, 1975). For a Zen twist to teleportative effects in the form of a transmission of mind (»which is not really transmission«), see *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po: On the Transmission of Mind*, translated by John Blofeld (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

7 For a consideration of the effects of scaling in modern technoscience, see Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press, 1987), especially pp. 210-3. The Fortean research program seeks to apply Latour's sixth rule of method (»just a question of scale«) to get teleportative physics off the ground.

In the age of bytes and chips, the Fortean brainstorm must be accessed in relation to recent investigations in the computer sciences. As a member of the original Fortean Society in the 1930's, the visionary architect R. Buckminster Fuller had already made this move in the 1960's. Fuller shares the teleportative logic of his quasi-master in a computerized version that apparently moves the splitting subject into a verbal part and particle of speech. In *I Seem to be a Verb*, he (?) sets up the following schizophrenic scenario which interfaces interplanetary space exploration, bio-technology, and computer programming. »Teleportation: Within a century, a man's entire genetic code may be fed to a computer, flashing to a receiving computer on the moon or a planet and instantly reconstructed into the person who stood on the Earth a few seconds earlier. Two yours. (Or, OR, have WE been teleported?«)⁸

There is an uncanny similarity between these split genetic visions of teleportative technologies and the current debates on computers and artificial intelligence. In a recent book review, the philosopher Daniel Dennett writes, »One of the defining doctrines of strong AI is the possibility in principle of teleportation--transporting a *person* from A to B by transmitting a complete, atom-for-atom *description* of the person's body (and brain) and using the description to construct a duplicate at the destination.«⁹ One of the most provocative versions comes in the guise of Hans Moravec's description of *downloading* as a latter-day doctrine of Fortean and Fullerian teleportation.¹⁰ In contrast, Roger Penrose believes in *The Emperor's New Mind: Concerning Computers, Minds and the Laws of Physics* that the quantum nature of the computing brain problematizes teleportation. Taking issue with Fort and Moravec, he argues that teleportation could never achieve the perfect duplication of the quantum state of a brain. At the site of these conflicting models, the Institute of Telepathy would serve as a switching and screening center in the pursuit of these contemporary problematics.

8 R. Buckminster Fuller, *I Seem to be a Verb* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970). One should also recall Fuller's fond words about Fort which serve as the Foreword to Damon Knight's biography *Charles Fort: Prophet of the Unexplained*.

9 Daniel C. Dennett, »Murmurs in the Cathedral,« *Times Literary Supplement*, September 29, 1989, p. 1055.

10 See Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

2. Counter-Gravitational and Telekinetic Power and Energy Resources

In recent years, there have been many proposed alternatives to the use of fossil fuels. With the pressure to abandon coal and oil as energy resources, there have been attempts to develop atomic energy and solar power. But one has only to mention the word »Tschernobyl« to feel the negative repercussions of the nuclear-powered research program. Meanwhile solar energy still remains a very impractical and expensive means of energy consumption on a mass-scale. In this situation, the Fortean research program seeks to add other fuels onto the pyres. This would involve the consideration of both counter-gravitational and telekinetic powers as energy resources.

Fort follows in the footsteps of his American revolutionary compatriot, Benjamin Franklin, in the investigation of counter-gravitational power. The key scientific work of Ben Franklin led to the discovery that lightning was a conductor of electricity. Fortean science could lead to both lightning's and work's lightening.

If in the general electric conditions of a thunderstorm there be sometimes a counter-gravitational effect upon objects, somebody might find out how countergravitationally to electrify aircraft and aviators. If all work is opposition to gravitation, somebody may make a big discovery of benefit to general laziness. Elevators in skyscrapers might be run with half the power they now need. Here is an idea that may revolutionize industry, but just now I am too busy revolutionizing everything else that I give this idea to the world. (p. 568)

If only this counter-gravitational effect could be mastered or even simulated, then we would have our work cut out for us. Fort envisions numerous energy-saving applications from the running of airplanes to elevators in this program of general elevation. While this visionary revolutionary is generous enough to throw out such an electrifying idea to the world at large, the Institute of Telepathy will have to be more specific in investigating the actual parameters of this recreational technology. The Institute would study and test the exact conditions under which this counter-gravitational effect can be put to work. This lazy scenario provides another instance of the shift and lift towards levity in the arc of the Fortean scientific revolution as the humourist science experiments to undermine the gravity of the Newtonian world order.

The other component of the energy research program must involve the exploration of telekinesis as a potential power and energy resource. As the name implies, telekinetic effects involve the use of mental powers in order to achieve physical action and motion at a distance.¹¹ The Fortean research program would seek to investigate all reports and cases of electro-magnetic interferences and disturbances induced through human subjects. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to become as conversant as possible with this conversion process and to expand its effects.¹² It is obvious that this research program will forge a new alliance between parapsychologists, telekinetic subjects, engineers and technicians. But it is not the purpose of this overview to cite empirical case studies which have been undertaken by investigators of parapsychological phenomena in support of telekinetic effects.¹³ It is rather to fire our imaginations to the Promethean vision of telekinetic power as imaginative fire.

In a space-time where the distinctions between matter and energy or between human and mechanical have broken down, the Fortean vision of *transmediumization* would not seem so farfetched. Telekinetic power has to be considered among the many »conscious technologies« which are rewiring the intelligence at the crossroads and the interface of mind and matter.¹⁴ The telepathic research program would seek to

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- 11 For a popularized account of do-it-yourself tele-experiments, see Reese P. Dubin, *Telecult Power* (New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1970; German translation: Balgach, Schweiz: Spurex Ltd., o. J.).
 - 12 I thank Ingo Braun for pointing out a parallel investigation into telekinetics in Rupert Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life* (Boston: J. P. Tarcher, 1981). Sheldrake's »hypothesis of formative causation« proposes the existence of morphogenetic fields which connect things across space and time. This offers the possibility of mental morphogenetic fields which shift material or energy forms through morphic resonance. For a more thorough analysis, see Michael Swords, »Morphogenic Fields and the Interlinkage of Things Across Space and Time: The Hypothesis of Rupert Sheldrake« in *Info Journal*, Vol. X, No. 2 (June, 1985), pp. 2-8.
 - 13 The interested reader will find that almost every issue of the *Journal of Parapsychology* (Durham, N. C.: The Foundation for Research in the Nature of Man) contains at least one empirical study reproducing the results of experiments with telekinetic effects. The scientific establishment always makes many more rigorous demands and standards for these tests. But this mode of parapsychological research is of no help if it merely reproduces the positivistic approach to science which the Fortean research program of telepathic technologies contests.
 - 14 For a related study on the grafting of *tele* devices upon the mind, see Jerome C. Glenn, »Conscious Technology: The Co-Evolution of Mind and Machine« in *The Futurist* (September-October, 1989), pp. 15-20.

establish the connections between mental and physical *pathic* energies (e. g., desires, emotions). Or, if you wish, these power-houses or wishing-stations will become the switching centers to translate and transmediumize the one into the other. These are the human dynamos and power stations who will concentrate their energies into a motorized form. At the appointed hour, the new »organization man« of the future will have started up his wishing day.

Or sometime in the Witchcraft Era--and every morning at nine o'clock, crowds of human wishers, dignified under the name of transmediumizers, arrive at their wishing stations, or mental power-houses, and in an organization of what are now only scattered and wasted hopes and hates concentrate upon the running of all motors of all cities. (p. 1036)

An important branch of the telekinetic research program will service the automotive industry. Here telekinesis could offer an alternative that will bypass the problems of fossil fuels (e. g., petroleum pollution, gas shortages). Its generalized application could bring new meaning to the »auto-mobile.« There is no longer a wish for a car in every garage. Instead, the Fortean research program sets its sights on every man, woman, and child his own catalytic convertor and engine starter. Fort considers many of the schemes over the past years to design a fuelless motor as a perpetual motion machine. This exceptional scientist can not rule out this possibility or automatically banish the fuelless to the scrapheap of the foolish. He can not be certain that these contraptions have been hoaxes or fakes. This refusal would rule out how the refuse of the past becomes the established preposterousness of the present--i. e., that there could be a fuel-powered motor in the first place. In the following considerations, Fort interchanges the terms to challenge the hard-and-fast distinctions among swindle, dream, and practice or among impostor, magician, and experimenter. The word »crank« will have to be suspended and in marked form. This moves the crank from the negative appellation of a crackpot to the potentially positive handle of the fuelless motor.

The fuelless motor, which is by most persons considered a dream, or a swindle, associates most with the name of John Worrell Keely, though there have been other experimenters, or impostors, or magicians. The earliest fuelless motor »crank« of whom I have record is John Murray Spear, back in the period of 1855, though of course various »cranks« of all ages can be linked with this swindle, dream, or most practical project. (p. 1056)

When it comes to the case studies of John Worrell Keely or John Murray Spear, Fort is decidedly undecided. Perhaps these men were on the trail of an exception to the second law of thermodynamics. If they had had more time, support, and resources, they could have standardized the exceptional actions of these seemingly counter-entropical motors. Perhaps they were telekinetic mediums who emanated the motivating rays. Perhaps they were charlatans of the most sordid sort interested only in duping the investment companies and science centers of their day and that their »hydro-pneumatic-pulsating-vacue-engine« or »vibratory generators « (p. 1056) were as empty as their long-winded names.¹⁵

Now it is my expression that all perpetual motion cranks may have been dupes, or rascals--that they may have been right, occasionally--that their wheels may sometimes have turned, their marbles rolled, their various gimcracks twirled, in an excess of reaction over action, either because sometime will occur exceptions to any such supposed law as »the conservation of energy,« or because motivated »rays« emanated from the inventors--

That sometime engines have run, fueled with zeals--but have, by such incipient, or undeveloped, witchcraft, operated only transiently, or only momentarily--but that they may be forerunners to such a revolution of the affairs of this earth, as once upon a time were flutters of the little lids of teakettles-- (p. 1029)

We do not rule out the possibility of hoax. We do not guarantee success. There is always the risk that the telepathic will turn into the telepathetic. Rather we ask to reopen research into the fuelless motor to the light of contemporary technologies. Once upon a space-time, there was a revolution of the steam engine that began like a lot of hot vapor emanating out of a teapot. There might be another revolution just around the bend which takes the form of the fuelless motor. It might yield a perpetual return from the temper tantrums of a young girl or from the mad ravings and ragings of a »crank«.

15 For a contemporary defense of Keely's motor, see Clara Sophia Bloomfield Moore, *Keely and his Discoveries* (London, 1893; reprinted New York: University Books, Inc., 1972).

3. Telepathic Constructivism: Large-Scale Public Works Programs

Playing the role of the *transmedium*, the Fortean telepathic researcher seeks to establish a common bond and a translation of interests between the circus act and the construction industry. It is necessary to translate the wondrous demonstrations performed only in music halls and sideshows to the large-scale construction site¹⁶ and to transform the magic and stunts of the mysterious seance into the normal technoscience of *telepathic constructionism* (or, alternatively, *telepathic constructivism*).

All around are wild talents, and it occurs to nobody to try to cultivate them, except as expressions of personal feelings, or as freaks for which to charge admission. I conceive of powers and the uses of human powers that will some day transcend the stunts of music halls and seances and sideshows, as public utilities have passed beyond the toy-stages of their origins. (p. 1041)

The Fortean text recounts a number of the exceptional phenomena which will serve as the basis of this research program for the implementation of telepathic constructionism. These phenomena involve the actions of Poltergeist girls who demonstrate unusual powers of levity during their stage acts. When the so-called Electric Girl tries to sit down, she can no longer obey Newton or his laws of gravity.¹⁷ While it might appear as low comedy in this context, the trick would be to find out how it could serve as the basis for high finance.

Anybody who would like an account of this wild, or undeveloped, talent, that is free from interpretations by spiritualists and anti-spiritualists, should go to the contemporaneous story, published in the *Journal des Debats* (Paris) February, 1846. Here are accounts by M. Arago and other scientists. When Angelique Cottin went near objects, they bounded away. She could have made a perpetual motion machine whiz. She was known as the Electric Girl, so called, because nobody knew what to call her. When she tried to sit in a chair, there was low comedy. The chair was pulled

16 One transfers the call to the non-contact hermeneutic stunts of Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) which opens up the lines of exchange between the occult and technosciences at every stage of the game. Maximizing a maxim close to the heart of the institutionalization of telepathic technologies, recall: »Vaudeville was the research center for communication systems« (p. 365).

17 For an elaboration of Angelique Cottin and for studies of other »Electric People,« the reader is referred to John Michell and Robert J. M. Rickard, *Phenomena: A Book of Wonders* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983), pp. 36-8.

away, or rather, was invisibly pushed away. There was such force here that a strong man could not hold the chair. A table, weighing 60 pounds, rose from the floor, when she touched it. When she went to bed, the bed rocked-- (p. 1032)

If we grant that the sixty pound table became subject to levitation through the telepathic powers of Ms. Cottin, then we must investigate further to ascertain how to cultivate and to mobilize this talent on a larger scale. We will want to master the powers of levity and to institute its applications. We will want to raise levity to a science. One of the most exciting areas of application for the levitational technologies will be in the building industry. There, the Poltergeist girl will walk hand-in-hand with the architect and the urban planner in designing the environment of the future. With the forging of this new alliance, the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York might look like the products of children's erector sets in the not too distant future.

Perhaps there are new Babels to be built. A table, weighing 60 pounds, rises a few feet from the floor--well, then, it's some time, far ahead, in the Witchcraft Era--and a multi-cellular formation of poltergeist-girls is assembled in the presence of building materials. Stone blocks and steel girders rise a mile or so into their assigned positions in the latest sky-prod-der. Maybe. Tall buildings will have their day, but first there will have to be a show-off of what could be done. (p. 1035)

Even as one grants the possibility of a telepathic effect in the individual case of Ms. Cottin, Fort has already outlined the overall and general consequences of the constructionist research program. But it would be the express purpose of Institute of Fortpathy (IF) to bridge this gap (»maybe«). As Fort indicates, »There will have to be a show-off of what could be done.« Such exhibitionism would be the goal of our research program. It is in preparing for this »show-off« that research and experiment will be undertaken in the offices, halls, labs, and abandoned fields by the Department of Telepathic Constructivism at the IF.

We would like to outline two concrete examples of telepathic public works programs drawn from contemporary socio-political life in order to demonstrate its potential applications.

(a) *Contra the Contras and Pro the Nicaraguan Canal*. Recently, the world has witnessed political turmoil in Central America. This has included the American invasion of Panama and the end of Sandanista rule in Nicaragua. The United States has promised millions of dollars

in aid to the new Chamorro government to assist in the effort to bring Nicaraguan democracy back on its feet again. It is in this unsettled political situation that the prophetic imagination of Charles Fort intervenes to suggest a New Deal. A large-scale telekinetic public works program can help the Nicaraguan economy and, at the same time, secure a more permanent ally for the United States in this troubled region. Fort foresees a twenty-first century Panama Canal in the making with the exportation of his selective service program.

Sometimes I tend to thinking constructively--or batteries of witches teleported to Nicaragua, where speedily they cut a canal by dissolving trees and rocks--the tumults of floods, and then magic by which they cannot touch houses. (p. 1041)

(b) *Telepathic Constructivism Towards German Unification.* The telepathic construction research program should be of special interest to the public works administration in the Federal Republic of Germany. With the steady influx of refugees from the East, there is a dire housing shortage in West Germany. In this crisis situation, one might do well to consider the logic of Charles Fort and to concentrate upon his research program of telepathic constructionism.

If, by looking at it, a picture can be taken down from a wall, why could not a house be pulled down, by still more intently staring at it? If occultly, mentally, physically, however a house could be pulled down, why could not a house be put up, by concentrating upon its materials? (p. 981)

And if a house might be pulled down, herein lies the means to accomplish the long-awaited public works project for Germany. If occultly, mentally, physically, however, a wall could be pulled down. There is no reason to leave this job to thousands of tiny touristic hammers and the slow and arduous task of pecking away to get a piece of the wall. As Germany moves towards unification and shifts its borders, the Fortean research program of telepathic construction and deconstruction can expedite this task through the implementation of a variety of public works programs (i. e., housing, wall demolition, road construction). In this spirit, the ghosts who are indebted to the German language for their clumsy etymological origin (i. e., *Poltergeists*) can contribute to the rebuilding of its society and culture.

The days of a construction industry based on labor-unionized manpower might be numbered. On the one hand, we will observe the increasing employment of a robotic labor force to perform repetitive

tasks. On the other hand, the raising of a new breed of rugged individualists--the Poltergeist telepathic techno-scabs--may render the old hands obsolete in the performance of their constructive and deconstructive wizardries.

But telepathic constructivism is not only a futuristic research project. It also demands a historiographical investigation to reassess and even to rewrite the architectural achievements of the past. Indeed, all the wonders of the ancient world might have been nothing but the staging of telepathic effects. Telepathic constructivists will revise the ways in which we understand how these civilizations have been constructed. In particular, telepathically constructive history will reconstruct the history of construction. Such mythological constructions as the Great Wall of China or the Egyptian Pyramids no longer read as cryptic hieroglyphics.

I now have a theory that the Pyramids were built by poltergeist-girls. The Chinese Wall is no longer mysterious. Every now and then, I reconstruct a science. I may take up *neo-archaeology* sometime. Old archaeology, with its fakes and guesses, and conflicting pedantries holds out an invitation for a ferocious and joyous holiday. (p. 1035)

A number of social scientists are quite familiar with Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* for the investigation of relationships of power and knowledge.¹⁸ But it is time to take into consideration the virtually unknown Fortean science of *neo-archaeology* which predates the Foucauldian positivities. Ceaselessly revising and revisioning the origins, Fortean neo-archaeology will forge the links between telekinetic power and the abysmal grounds of knowledge.

4. Telekinetic Military Technologies

There is another important use for the powers of the Poltergeist girls. The Fortean research program calls for the development of telekinetic military technologies through the rigorous disciplining and training of hates. The collective focusing of these negative energies would produce destructive material effects. These »overwhelming effects« are a literal example of mind *over* matter. The telepathic effect always involves an

18 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper Colophon, 1976).

element of *pathos* because it consists of the transmission of feelings and emotions at a distance. The War Department of the Institute of Telepathy will thrive upon bad feelings. We propose a research program to transform negative vibes and casual venoms into a reliable lethal weapon and into an exact science.

Or military demonstrations of the overwhelming effects of trained hates--scientific uses of destructive bolts of a million hate-power--the blasting of enemies by disciplined ferocities--And the reduction of cannons to the importance of fire-crackers--a battleship at sea, or a toy boat in a bathtub-- (p. 1042)

The Fortean analysis of telekinetic military power employs reductive figures that scale down from cannons to fire-crackers and from a battleship to a toy boat in a bathtub. On the one hand, conventional conflict magnifies or blows up the war games of little girls and boys. But the deployment of these Poltergeist military strategies flips the scales around again.

We say that all is fair in love and war but we would rather make love, not war. Telekinetic military technologies offer the best of both worlds. They will be a powerful weapon in war *and* a deterrent to war.

But of course not that witchcraft would be practiced in warfare. Oh, no: witchcraft would make war too terrible. Really the Christian thing to do would be to develop the uses of the new magic, so that in the future a war could not even be contemplated. (p. 1042)

Fort has hit upon the paradoxical logic at the basis of every national defense program and the rhetoric of peace through strength. Of course, the same logic has been applied to nuclear weapons over the past fifty years with great success. One wonders why one would want to change weapons deterrence systems in mid-stream. But unlike the use of nuclear weapons, the concentrated use of telekinetic military technologies would destroy their targets alone. They would not spread radioactive waste materials which will be around to contaminate the earth and its inhabitants for centuries. In other words, if a Poltergeist brigade had targeted its telekinetic powers upon Hiroshima, we would have witnessed the same catastrophic effects but without the nasty fallout.

In *Wild Talents*, Fort provides a Berliner case study of a telekinetic warrior in action. Given that he is not a Poltergeist girl shows that the program does not have to confine itself to such a small segment of the population. While Fort plays the optimist in presenting the case of the

psychic bomber, one senses the intertwining of threat and deterrent and the double-edged quality that permeates the entire lubricated account of this explosive personality.

In the *New York Herald Tribune*, Nov. 29, 1931, there is an account of the doings of Kurt Schimkus, of Berlin, who had arrived in Chicago, to demonstrate his ability to discharge, from a distance, explosives, by means of what he called his »anti-war rays.« According to reports from Germany, Schimkus had exploded submarine mines and stores of buried cartridges. Herr Schimkus will have success and renown, I think: he knows that nothing great and noble and of benefit to mankind has ever been accomplished without much lubrication. He announced that slaughter was far-removed from his visions: that he was an agency for peace on earth and good will to man, because by exploding an enemy's munitions, with his »anti-war rays,« he would make war impossible. Innocently, myself, I speculate upon the possible use of »psychic bombs,« in blowing up tree stumps in the cause of new pastures. (p. 946)

As a vital component of this research program, we recommend the foundation of a new type of military academy for the development of and instruction in telekinetic technologies for military uses. As a tribute to the far-seeing powers of our founding foreseer, this institution will take the name of Fort Fort. It is advised that a large-scale recruiting program be conducted in order to find the wild talents who could make such a program workable. The governing board of this stronghold would consist of both high-level military personnel and circus ringmasters. They will scout out talent everywhere from the college campuses to the freak shows of the nation. They will investigate published reports in every tabloid about possible and impossible Poltergeist activities on an international basis. The recruiters will make a special effort to interest all girls between the ages of 4 to 8 years old with Poltergeist potentialities and to enlist them into the new national defense program. If society would pay as much attention to the cultivation of these wild talents as it does at present to the training of tennis and gymnastics prodigies, then it will only take a few years until we will be witnessing the rise of the Steffi Grafs and the Mary Lou Rettons of the world of telekinetic technologies.

There is no denying that there are considerable start-up costs for the training program. But we insist that the rewards and benefits will override any initial expenditures. Once the Poltergeist girls have been properly disciplined, then the bubble gum brigade can just sit back in

the lounge of Fort Fort to watch music videos, gossip about their idols, and chew away until they take the call.

Girls at the front--and they are discussing their usual not very profound subjects. The alarm--the enemy is advancing. Command to the poltergeist girls to concentrate--and under their chairs they stick their wads of chewing gum. (p. 1042)

What could be cheaper? A cable TV hookup, a couple of magazines, a Coke and candy machine, and an alarm mechanism. The greatest expense might be the supply of chewing gum. But to lessen the costs of this vital energy resource, a special deal might be worked out with a major manufacturer to make them the official sponsor of the Fort Fort Poltergeist Freedom Fighters (FFPFF). But this might be stretching things. After all, it is expected that the price of bubble gum will not be blown out of proportion in the coming years.

Fort writes in a dazzling apocalyptic prose as he stages a typical battle utilizing the wild talents of the Poltergeist girls in action. It begins by bringing into play the pyromaniacal talents of the girls that transmute the world into fire.

A regiment bursts into flames, and the soldiers are torches. Horses snort smoke from the combustion of their entrails. Reinforcements are smashed under cliffs that are teleported from the Rocky Mountains. The snatch of Niagara Falls--it pours upon the battlefield. The little poltergeist girls reach for their wads of chewing gum. (p. 1042)

The second-half of this particular battle highlights a more complex telepathic technology than the simple focusing upon military targets. It imports teleportation and mobilizes strategic spaces in the service of the war machine. Fort insists that natural resources and national landmarks (e. g., Niagara Falls, the Rocky Mountains) can be mobilized for military action. Fort wants to develop technologies which simulate natural disasters by using the natural resources themselves. For instance, he envisions the Niagara Falls as a high-powered flood device or the Rocky Mountains as an avalanche simulator. This is a case study in the scaling up of the slapstick practices of a bucket of water in the face or a falling rock to the head. In the Fortean research program, the black humour reaches catastrophic proportions. These strategies can be expanded to other particularly fortuitous features of the American landscape. For instance, just as the enemy is advancing, the teleportation of the Grand Canyon to the battle site could trip them up in a

most abysmal manner. The California and Nevada deserts could be put to military use in the simulation of sand storms to blind the enemy. One can even envision the teleportation of Disneyland as a military decoy by the girls. This strategy of spatial mobilization would first lure the astounded enemy into the teleported magic kingdom and then capture them as prisoners of war when Mickey and Donald turn Rambo.

There is no reason for environmentalists to panic in the fear that these military maneuvers will destroy the American landscape. Once the reversibility of telekinetic technologies has become perfected, these landmarks can be teleported back to their proper spatial locations after the battle has been won. While this analysis has focused upon the geo-territorial features of the United States, this teleportative-telepathic weapons system can be extended anywhere to utilize the natural resources indigenous to each nation.

In the power realignments of the *fin-de-siècle*, the world will witness the retreat of Soviet and American troops from Europe and the gradual disarmament of nuclear weapons systems. At this critical juncture in the military history of the West, we call for the development of telekinetic technologies at the basis of an alternative defense program of military action at a distance in our planning for a secure future. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, we foresee an age fortified through telekinetic military technologies but without any of the negative risks of its atomic predecessor.

Part II. Towards The Technicization of Witchcraft

But I do think that one hundred years ago an advertisement for a fast sandwich man would have looked as strange as today would look an advertisement for »polt. grls.« (p. 1030)

Throughout this seance, we have overheard the pre-recorded oracles of Charles Fort invoking the demons of »magic« and »witchcraft« in relation to telepathic technologies. This might lead us on a left-handed path in believing that there must be some sort of strange occult powers in his research program in opposition to contemporary rational technoscience. But Fort wants his readers to wonder about science and witchcraft and their superimposition. It is important to defamiliarize or tele-familiarize the operations of and in history. This equation sets up the virtual equivalence between the disciplines or translates a wild talent and a conventional discipline.¹⁹ »Or much of the 'parlor magic' of times gone by, and now it is industrial chemistry.« (p. 1045) On the one hand, we must begin to denaturalize the modern technologies of the mundane environment whether in the form of the light socket or the steam engine. We must tune in to the magic that consists in the turning on of the television set. Here Fort intervenes to switch the terms of the demonic. Or he illustrates how the mere fact of an employment suffices to convert an outrageous demon into a conventional savior. This is how it works: »Someday almost every particular in this book may look quaint, but it may be that the principle of putting the witches to work will seem as sound as now seems the employment of steam and electric demons.« (p. 1046)

Given these assumptions, the history of science is nothing more than the way to describe the establishment of preposterousness. »Witchcraft always has a hard time, until it becomes established and changes its name.« (p. 558) Fort throws out these remarks in a discus-

19 For a similar inscription of truth as »customary metaphor,« see the post-humous text of Fortean humourist scientist Friedrich Nietzsche in »On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense« (1873) in Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York, 1954), p. 47.

sion of the magic that became electricity. The electrical revolution involves the standardization and the technicization of a stage trick. If a historian of science and technology would like to know its real pseudo-origins, then he or she will have to attend a magic show. In this fairytale and storybook setting, the historian will see a magician on stage who performs with a wand in one hand and a cat in the other. One had better hold on to both one's hat and notebook in this highly charged setting. »Once upon a time, Dr. Gilbert waved a wand that he had rubbed with the skin of a cat, and bits of paper rose from a table. That was in the year 1, of Our Lord, Electricity, who was born as a parlor-stunt.« (p. 982) The establishment of preposterousness rewrites this history in hindsight in light of the conversions of Anno Electrico. This latter-day institution of dates and principles (A. E.) turns a trick into a god-head and into capital. Immersed in the electrical age, we have become oblivious to this stunted origin.

On the other hand, we must work to conventionalize witchcraft. For one remains in the land of the obviously (if and) when it comes to the telepathic technologies which have been outlined in this paper. At present, they are having a hard time of it--but if they were only to become established and change their names. This could be in the year 1, of Our Lord, Telepathy, who might have already been born as a parlor-stunt. If rendered practicable, we might be on the verge of a revolution or devolution in time that will set off all the clocks and calendars in another direction. The sequence B. C.-A. D. will give way to other nomenclatures whether B. T.-A. T. or B. W.-A. W. »Or that practical witchcraft, or the development of wild talents might be of such benefits as to draw in future records of human affairs the new dividing line of A. W. and B. W.--or might be a catastrophe that would drive all human life back into Indians, or Zulus, or things furrier--« (p. 1044)

The industrialization (or the making industrious) of these latest models and modalities of witchcraft is the primary purpose of the research and development program to be undertaken at the Institute for Fortpathy (IF). We are working to generalize these isolated cases of preposterousness and to render them a reliable, useful, and practical technology. We are working for the new dividing line and for the future records. We want to put telepathic technologies on the job and into the market. We want to make »polt. grls.« a quite commonplace abbrevia-

tion in the want ads of the next century. In this transmutation of dreams, we want to incorporate them into and as the smooth running of the large technical systems of the future.

Of course, the skeptical or uninspired reader might shake his head in disbelief at the Fortean vision as too far out and off. But we can only ask the reader to look around at the wondrous connections of *tele* and *techne* that pervade our mundane existence. One does not second guess the ringing of the telephone. One answers it. Yet this is a telepathic technology which sends out the vibrations of the voice millions of times each day across the far-reaches of space.²⁰ One does not doubt the turning on and tuning in of the television set. Yet this too is a telepathic technology through which one invests in pre-recorded phantoms on a screen. One does not doubt the telegrammatical or the telefaxual effects which link up businesses on a global basis and which transforms the telephone line into a printing machine.²¹ All of these telecommunications technologies are telepathic in structure, nature, and movement. They are invisible actions at a distance or over time which have become doubly invisible through a process of naturalization. They show us how the *tele* is the condition of possibility and the limit of modern technology.²² In the light of these other scenarios, the telepathic technological

20 For the reinscription of the invention of the telephone within the *Geistesgeschichte* of telepathic technologies that range from Mr. Watson's spiritualism to Mr. Bell's communicative compact with the ghost of the dead brother, the fingers are unconsciously directed to Ronell's *The Telephone Book*. I would also add that a young speculative technologue toyed with the telepathic effects of a telephonic hook-up with the dead zones in a provocative scientific fiction. See Walter Hartenau, »Die Resurrection Co« (1898), in Walter Rathenau, *Gesammelte Schriften in Fünf Bänden* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1918), Vol. 3, pp. 287-97. A bilingual version of this essay and prefatory notes will be forthcoming in this series.

21 I thank William Hungerbühler for Daniel Goleman's article, »Robots With an Almost Human Touch in *The International Herald Tribune*, August 3, 1989, p. 6. This introduces two recent tele-coinages coming out of contemporary robotics--*teleoperators* or »the fact that their operation is directed by a person at a distance« and *telepresence* or the »perceptual illusion that the makes the person experience the sensation of being in the same place as the distant robot.«

22 I refer the reader to the speculations of Francis Bacon who stands at the start of this telepathic research program. In *The New Atlantis*, Bacon already foresees the outlines of the telephone and the television in the following way. »We have also means to convey sounds in trunks and pipes, in strange lines and distances.« (p. 303) »We procure means of seeing objects far off; as in the heaven and remote places; and represent things near as afar off, and things afar off as near; making feigned distances« (p. 302) In Henry LeRoy Finch (ed.), *The*

research program must be viewed as the logical extension of the other invisible networks beyond material transport.

In the name of Fort, we have spoken of telepathic technologies with the most pragmatic ends in mind. For our prophet has come as a profiteer and spoken in terms of utilities. He has stated his aims in the most conventional of sign languages (\$). In situating the social and economic benefits of the telepathic technologies at the top of our agenda, we have hoped to divert any negative branding of his ideas to come. These have been the rather practical means to interest a research group at a contemporary think tank or a science center to invest in the development of his dream business proposal. Through these visions, we have sought to fire the minds of the scientific managers, the technical wizards, the marketing psychics, the sociologists and historians of technology and whoever might be assembled in the convening of the board meeting to assess the utility of this research program and to stir up support.

Given this practical bent, Fort must not be marginalized as some idle dreamer. This speculator would rather become the bridge to connect the utilitarianism of his forefathers with the material-spiritual needs of the next generations. Perhaps you have been reading about the Thomas Edison of the twenty-first century who has come as the Avatar of Albany.²³ His brand of *new age utilitarianism* combines incense and sweat and it smells something like this: »Or the trail of a working witchcraft--and we're on the scent of utilities.« (p. 1029) We must pursue the trail blazed by this pioneer in the establishment of preposterousness. We must take up this questing and questioning in

Complete Essays of Francis Bacon (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1963). As the telephone rings, one might muse again upon the telepathic technologies outlined in this essay. It is also interesting to note that the father of induction does not rule out the possibility of telepathy in the second part of the *Novum Organum* but rather lends his support for the Fortean telepathic technological research program to come. »For it may be that in some of them (so-called matters of superstition and magic) some natural operation lies at the bottom: as in fascination, strengthening of the imagination, sympathy of things at a distance, transmission of impressions from spirit to spirit no less from body to body and the like.« In James Spedding (ed.), *Works of Francis Bacon*, Vol. V (London, 1860), p. 172.

23 Here I am playing off the contemporary appellation of Fort as »The Mad Genius of the Bronx« in Harry Allen Smith's article of the same name in *Low Man on the Totem Pole* (1941). This is reprinted in *3 Smiths in the Wind* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), pp. 30-7.

our pursuit of the commonplaces of future history. We must follow the three cardinal translations of interests in the research program of telepathic technologicis at the crossroads of the most mystical of destinies and the most practical of ends.

Our instances of practical witchcraft have been practical enough, so long as they were paying attractions at exhibitions, but the exhibition implies the marvel, or what people regard as the marvel, and the spirit of this book is of commonplaceness, or of coming commonplaceness--or that there isn't anything in it, except of course its vagaries of theories and minor interpretations, that won't someday be considered as unsensational as the subject-matters of textbooks upon chemistry and mechanics.

My interest is in magic, as the daily grind--the miracle as a job--sorceries as public utilities. (p. 1046)

It is our hope that the technoscience of the large technical system will draw its future sustenance from the tele-directed dreams of Fortean science including teleportation, telekinetic energy and power resources, telepathic constructionism, and telekinetic military technologies. It is our hope that the wild talents of the Fortean imaginary will be fantasized and understood as vital reserves and potential resources for scientific cultivation. We have placed ourselves in the curious border zone of telepathic technologies where the wilds meet the talents. It is not a bad thing to place oneself on the verge of our picture where wildness begins and where knowledge begins.²⁴ We have placed ourselves at the borderline of scientific invention that divides the hoax and the prophesy. We have placed ourselves at the margin between the serious arguments of the established preposterousness and the laughable toys and games of the obviously. This is the wager that trades off dollars and laughs, or sense and jeers. What will the spin of the Fortean lotto wheel turn up? Will the results have been more or less satisfactory? We have argued in this quasi-grant proposal that a lot will depend upon the nature and the

24 For an excellent discussion of literature as resource for scientific invention, see Michel Serres, »Literature and the Exact Sciences,« *Sub-stance* (No. 2, 1989), pp. 3-34. The following citation suggests some strange sort of telepathic connection between the two philosophers of science once upon a time. »The primitive forest is a reserve, a stock of species or essences from which, once upon a time, our agriculture and our animal husbandry came--even if we have forgotten from what wild plant wheat was born.« (p. 5) One ought to compare this with the uncanny remarks of the self-professed »primitive farmer« (p. 862) of science and the cultivator of *Wild Talents*: »But once upon a time there were wild cabbages and wild beets and wild onions, and they were poor, little incipencies until they were called for by markets.« (p. 1030)

scope of future investment. But, at the present conjuncture of conjectures, the telepathic technologic research program can only close with a question mark or in a dash.

Billions of dollars are today seriously drawing dividends from toys and games that were put to work. Billions of laughs and jeers have preceded solemn expressions of satisfactions with fat bank accounts. But this is only reasoning, and is nothing but logic and argument, and there have been billions of laughs that never turned into anything more satisfactory--though where do I get the idea that there is anything more satisfactory than a laugh? (p. 573)

Coda of Copula

»And telepathic realization!« suggested Katie. »To be sure, telepathic realization. And--«²⁵

Berlin, Spring/Frühling 1990

25 This snippet has been snatched from a dialogic exchange from Charles Fort's only published novel *The Outcast Manufacturers* (New York: B. W. Dodge and Company, 1909), p. 324. This was reprinted recently by the Printed Heritage Preservation Society in Washington, D. C. in 1988. To my misfortune, neither half of the exchange comes from out of the mouth of the character named Looey.

And After Words: Reflections on Technology and Metaphorization

If this particular telepathic technological research program has not yet gotten off the ground in the space of one year since its initial propositioning, the problematics which it raise--and it bears repeating that these have to be marked throughout the text as levitational effects--continue to remain a part and a parcel of that which has been leaving the assured solidities of the earth and its gravitational fields. This spaced out scenario has the air of technology. It no longer involves a journey to the center of the earth, but teleports over and out of the earth's peripheries. It plugs into a dynamic mode of operation which returns to the furthest reaches of the *tele* as a resource to be abolished over and over again despite the success or the failure of these transmissions. In this sense, it is not technology which has transported the *tele*, but the *tele* which transports technology. The transfers which have been registered at the institution of this long-distance carrier have prevented technology from speaking with a voice that could not be somehow previously recorded or to bear the mark of the disembodied. In this manner, the shock waves of the tele-technologies have signaled a floating and a drift which remove the earth from its core.

But perhaps then it was never really the point of such an »unearthly« research paper to have begun at point A where there were no telepathic technologies in the first place and to have ended at point B where there were telepathic technologies in the final place. Such a mode of absolute existence and non-existence would belong to a history other than the history of technology and the cross-currents of its electronic writing or the setting up of places without location from which to get elsewhere. Could the *off* and *on* mode of absolute states have been operational when it involves the switches of the proverbial ghosts in the machine? In its telepathic guises and in its electronic media, modern technology has alluded and eluded to an inter-mediate situation which problematizes these absolute distinctions through its *tele* programming. To give the most mundane instance in far-seeing visual terms, these *tele* powers have disguised the furthest absence as the nearest presence in the live-wired privacy (?) of one's own home.

Mathematically or technically speaking, the *tele* might be equated with an independent variable that one could dub for the sake of argument or of interrogation--X. Not really a point and not really a really, the telepathic technologies operate at the crossroads of switching centers. These trace the networks of invisible lines and transitional cables, innumerable transmissions and transferences, receptions and dispatches and everything else in between. Or X might be translated into the language of Charles Fort in *The Book of the Damned* as the »intermediate state of quasi-existence« which we are-are not.¹ And it is to the point to recall that X remains as the title of Charles Fort's first (and lost) manuscript between science and fiction. Like technology, Fort too began his calculations with the unknown variable X. Like the beckoning and overreaching call of modern technology, X speculated upon the possibility of an unearthly communication at a distance. »The book starts out with the proposition that society is an organism, but can not be ultimate, and, therefore, is in relationship with something else, called, for convenience, »X.«² In this ancient network analysis (circa 1910), Fort envisioned X as the »trellis of ether« or as the remote control station for which the earth might just be a cover or a even a telepathic projection.

In tacking the far- and even overreaching *tele-* onto technologies, one has started up the motor of and as metaphorization. The prefix would seem to say in no certain terms that technology stimulates metaphorization, that it transports beyond itself, that it demands speculation. This is the basic extension course that puts technology into the program of literary studies.³ For what are modern technology and classical metaphor if not answering machines to the calls of the other? Technological operations always pose a relation to an other. That is why its circuits have been always risking to close or open the gap of the

1 For a further discussion of the Fortean intermediate state of quasi-existence and other humorist-scientific quandaries, see my essay »FORT - Quasi-Einführung in die Wissenschaft« in *Witzenschaftliche Weltbetrachtungen: Das verdammte Universum des Charles Fort* (Berlin: Gatza Verlag, 1991).

2 Charles Fort to Theodore Dreiser, May 1, 1915, unpublished letter in Dreiser Collection, University of Pennsylvania Library.

3 For the laying down of the lines (*Verkabelung*) that cross up literature and media technologies and a tuning into the *tele* in the form of »Botschaften aus dem Totenreich« (p. 23), the reader is hooked to Friedrich Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter* (Berlin: Brinkmann und Bose, 1986).

tele. That is why this drive has been the pretext for the construction of so many death engines and intricate destruction mechanisms.⁴ From this perspective, science and technology take on the blackest of humours. It has never been just a strategy of walking the line between humor and science. It has never been a matter of throwing a dash of satire on this machine and then applying a ironic thrust to that machine. Instead, the telepathic technologies force reflection and speculation on the other-directed transporting mechanism in general. This has involved the staging of something more unsettling. It has been rather to take a stab and a splice at technology and its problematic relationship with the engines of difference so as to return to the crossed out intersection where both black humour and technology trace a mutually supportive writing practice.

Nevertheless, the calling and recalling of the text through these metaphorical termini does not seek to inscribe the telepathic technological discourse as a subset of the literary mode. It does not mean to say that technology can be explained and understood in and as *literature*. That would be too simple of a reading. Furthermore, it has never understood itself as a radical extension of the program of social constructivism. In taking the *tele* as a dashing leap or as rigorous displacement, there has never been the attempt to conceive technology as an effect of literary or of social frameworks. Rather it has had recourse to the missing links that cut across the technologue's love of the network and the literary critic's love of the intertext. In either case, metaphor acts as motor.

What is the proper velocity of this metaphorical motor? That has always been a difficult question to gauge. Perhaps telepathic technologies have been toying with the idea that they demand a kind of accelerative or even over-driven discourse in order to jam. In other words, the wild talents would demand a series of transpositional speech stunts that

4 For an aberrant reading of media technology, psychoanalytics, and death directness moving across the modern German landscape, see Laurence Rickels, *Aberrations of Mourning: Writing on German Crypts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988). Rickels plugs into the telepathic as the return of the repressed which haunts the masterminding necro-logics of technological domination. »Belief in the omnipotence of thoughts, which requires that the creditor takes full responsibility for the fulfillment of death wishes, summons the vengeful of the dead which haunt the channels of telepathy and telecommunications.« (p. 41)

run on technological metaphors. Rather than seeking alienation effects or requiring the defamiliarization of its technological reader, the telepathic technologies research program will have kicked in and into reverse so as to pluck the severed strings of a sympathetic vibration in the processes of its pedalling.

Here, again, our two generic illuminati--the literati and the technologi--may have talking the same language all along without even realizing it (which sounds like telepathy all over again) or, at the very least, they may have been in tele-communication between the lines of a discipline-to-discipline call. The technologist has always spoken in terms of taking the necessary steps for the scaling of the large technical system or for making the translations that have to occur in order to establish the technological network and the multiplex transmission of its signals. The textologist has always spoken in terms of the movements of metaphor and the play of signification across the web of language for the staging of intertextual effects. There is no wonder why *translation* has become a keyword common to the vocabularies, currencies, and the arsenals of these transferring tradesmen. If and when one wants to apprehend the tricks of the trades, one has been led into the maze of metaphor.

And after words, this is the drive that leads us on . . .

It is a double-sided record that requires our continuous reading and processing. The metaphor of technology and the technology of metaphor. Flip sides. It is necessary to cultivate the translations that move across this passage and make this passage move.

May you flourish at the crossroads of this chiasmus in your dealings with this latter-day dual-directional (con)version of the water and the wine. Yet, unlike how the computer counters in error, it is not that this drive has remained unspecified.

The drive remains.

Over . . .

Berlin, May, 1991