

Fernand
Deligny

1

The random chances of existence have led me to live within a network rather than otherwise, by which I mean in another mode.

A network is a mode of being.

It doesn't take much—a simple passage from masculine to feminine—for *le mode*, mode of being or doing, to become *la mode*, trend or fashion; the word remains the same but the thing evoked is no longer the same thing.

Thus I have lived through the random chances of existence in a network rather than otherwise, and in the randomness of what I choose to read there is always some sort of network to be found.

It's a bit like the story of the nook in the wall and the spider that ended up meeting: if the spider indeed sought out the nook, we may also say that the nook was waiting.

And it is true that I sometimes reach the point of telling myself that a network is waiting for me at every turn. The specific network of which I speak, our network, is almost fifteen years old—which, for a network, is quite an advanced age—and its project is to bring autistic children into close contact.

These days I wonder if this project is not a pretense, the true project being the network itself, which is a mode of being.

Actually, networks abound, and it does seem as though their proliferation reaches its peak in moments when historical events—which according to Friedrich Engels are products of a blind, unconscious form—are intolerable, and it must be said that historical events are endowed with a propensity for being intolerable.

Thus there are events that grow, as we say a tree grows, or the walls of a house rise, and there are networks that spin and weave themselves like so many spider webs, in nooks and in the forks of trees; until birds pass by, or a housekeeper's broom.

I have always had the utmost respect for spiders; today, I can tell myself that this was a matter of intuition. There must be some mistake in the signs of the Zodiac: mine is supposed to be Scorpio, but I am convinced that I was born under the sign of the spider.

I was predestined for my work; from my earliest years I have always had some network to weave.

But can we say that the spider's project is to weave its web? I don't think so. We might as well say that the web's project is to be woven.

We should not take this story of signs too lightly.

Logically speaking, the human species is heir to all species extending beyond the animal and the vegetal—heir to clouds emanating from interstellar spaces that have somehow made oceans the source of what we call life. In the human being the somewhat pronounced accent of consciousness of being has appeared, though this in no way resolves the wholly disparate bric-a-brac of the heritage that has befallen us.

For my part, when it comes to retracing the course of creation, I stop at the spider, while a good many others go no farther back than their own ancestors.

2

Still, I've been finding myself in abandoned dwellings for quite some time. Each time, my companion has gotten there first. She awaits me there. She has no more need of me than I of her, and this allows us to have quite satisfactory neighborly relations.

I'll be told that the dimension of exchange is lacking. What a mistake. I want nothing from her and she expects nothing from me, which keeps us both from holding a grudge.

I am not going to try to subjugate her, and it is obvious that my presence is of no use to her.

In this lack of self-interest there is a highly moral aspect.

But, looking a bit more closely, I have to acknowledge that I am a man and that I benefit from her presence, whereas I truly provide her with nothing. Which shows how the last to arrive profit shamelessly from their predecessors.

3

What a pity that words grow old. In doing so, they do not grow more beautiful; if I say that in old French, an *araignée* (spider) used to be called an *aragne*, I see that *araignée* is *aragne* and that in growing old the word lost the beautiful and candidly open resonance of its two “a”s, and that there is nothing agreeable or necessary about the “*gnée*.”

Aragne was enough.

That said, if the word has grown old, the spider has not suffered over the centuries and even over millennia. Before the word existed, the spider spun its web unconcerned with the flurry of words, which moreover in no way damage the Arachnean web.

A word like Arachnean resonates somewhat as the word Magdalenian does, the latter evoking the last period of the Upper Paleolithic (the civilization of the reindeer). From the reindeer to the spider, it’s a short step at most.

Feeling somewhat Arachnean myself, I mean no insult to spiders or to humans, and just as a spider does not need to have tasted some prey in order to begin weaving its web, while the first network of my own devising was being woven, I was radically unaware of the reason behind this making, though it required some determination on my part.

I was twelve years old; I was a day pupil in a secondary school and it was in my neighborhood that the network was woven, not in the school, which in any case had no suitable space for it. And if chance played some role here, this was the case every time.

If I wanted to indicate one of the constants of the network, I would note an “out-side” as one of the necessary components.

That said, and when space becomes a concentration camp, the formation of a network creates a kind of outside that allows the human to survive.

4

To come back to the Arachnean reign, one should not believe that all spiders spin webs, far from it: the Australian ball spider clings to a horizontal thread and turns one leg in a circle; another thread hangs from that leg, bearing at its far end a tiny drop of a sticky substance that will capture insects. And this is merely one example of the various traps available to Arachneans. We know that the same thing holds true for our own species: certain individuals proceed like the ball spider, and the same individual may spin a web at certain points in her existence and at others wield a sticky ball.

If I wanted to exhaust the analogy between the human and the Arachnean, I would risk evoking such surprises that what I am recounting would arouse more suspicion than attraction, it being understood that, as far as the analogy is concerned, we are talking about a resemblance established by the imagination between two or more essentially different objects of thought.

—1981

