



**Remains of a Self**  
**Solitudes and Responsibilities**

Michaelsen, Cathrine Bjørnholt

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CATHRINE BJØRNHOLT MICHAELSEN

# Remains of a Self

## Solitudes and Responsibilities



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CATHRINE BJØRNHOLT MICHAELSEN

# Remains of a Self

Solitudes and Responsibilities

REMAINS OF A SELF  
SOLITUDES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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SOLITUDES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Cathrine Bjørnholt Michaelsen

PhD Thesis  
The Faculty of Theology  
Department of Systematic Theology  
'Self-understanding and Self-alienation'  
University of Copenhagen  
February 2017

Remains of a Self.  
Solitudes and Responsibilities

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“Here, the exhaustion is initial: my reason for writing is to reach B.”  
- (Jean-Luc Nancy, “Exscription”)



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## ABBREVIATIONS

References to Artaud, Blanchot, Derrida, Nancy, and Lacan give the pagination of the original followed by that of the English translation (if provided). In volumes where several texts are collected, only the titles referred to will be listed.

### ANTONIN ARTAUD

- OC I-XXVI *Oeuvres complètes*. 26 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1970–1994.
- OC I *Correspondance avec Jacques Rivière; L'ombilic des limbes; Le pèse-nerfs*.
- OC IV *Le théâtre et son double; Le théâtre de séraphin; Les cenci*.
- OC IX *Les Tarahumaras. Lettres de Rodez*.
- OC X *Lettres écrites de Rodez (1943–1944)*.
- OC XI *Lettres écrites de Rodez (1945–1946)*.
- OC XII *Artaud le Môme*.
- OC XIII *Van Gogh le suicidé de la société. Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*.
- OC XIV *Suppôts et Supplications*.
- OC XV *Cahiers de Rodez Février-avril 1945*.
- SW *Selected Writings*. Ed. Susan Sontag. Trans. Helen Weaver. Berkeley: University of California, 1976.
- TD *The Theater and its Double*. Trans. Victor Corti. Richmond: One World Classics, 2010.
- WRS *Watchfiends & Rack Screams. Works from the final period by Antonin Artaud*. Trans. Clayton Eshleman. Boston: Exact Change, 1995.

### MAURICE BLANCHOT

- CAP *Celui qui ne m'accompagnait pas*. Paris: Gallimard, 1953. *The one who was standing apart from me*. Trans. Lydia Davis. Barrytown: Station Hill, 1993.
- CI *La communauté inavouable*. Paris: Minuit, 1983. *The Unavowable Community*. Trans. Pierre Joris. Barrytown: Station Hill, 1988.
- EdD *L'écriture du désastre*. Paris: Gallimard, 1980. *The Writing of Disaster*. Trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.
- EI *L'entretien infini*. Paris: Gallimard, 1971. *Infinite Conversation*. Trans. Susan Hanson. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- EL *L'espace littéraire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1955. *The Space of Literature*. Trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

- FP *Faux pas*. Paris: Gallimard, [1943] 1971. *Faux Pas*. Trans. Charlotte Mandell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- LS *Lautréamont et Sade*. Paris: Minuit, 1963. *Lautréamont and Sade*. Trans. Stuart and Michelle Kendall. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- LV *Le livre à venir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1959. *The Book to Come*. Trans. Charlotte Mandell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- PAD *Le pas au-delà*. Paris: Gallimard, 1973. *The Step not Beyond*. Trans. Lycette Nelson. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- PF *La part du feu*. Paris: Gallimard, 1949. *The Work of Fire*. Trans. Charlotte Mandell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- TO *Thomas l'Obscur*. Paris: Gallimard, 1950. *Thomas the Obscure*. Trans. Robert Lamberton. New York: Station Hill, 1988.
- VVA *Une voix venue d'ailleurs*. Paris: Gallimard, 2002. *A Voice from Elsewhere*. Trans. Charlotte Mandell. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

#### JACQUES DERRIDA

- AA *Antonin Artaud. Dessins et Portraits*. Avec Paule Thévenin. Paris: Gallimard, 1986. *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud*. Trans. Mary Ann Caws. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998.
- AC *L'autre cap*. Paris: Minuit, 1991. *The Other Heading*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- ADS *L'animal que donc je suis*. Paris: Galilée, 2006. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. David Wills. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.
- AM *Artaud le Moma—Interjections d'appel*. Paris: Galilée, 2002.
- AP *Aporias: mourir—s'attendre aux "limites de la vérité."* Paris: Galilée, 1996  
*Aporias: Dying—Awaiting (One Another at) the "Limits of Truth."* Trans. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- BS I *Séminaire La bête et le souverain I (2001-2002)*. Paris: Galilée, 2008. *The Beast and the Sovereign I*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- BS II *Séminaire La bête et le souverain II (2002-2003)*. Paris: Galilée, 2010. *The Beast and the Sovereign II*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- CP *La carte postale de Socrate à Freud et au-delà*. Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1980. *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- D *La dissémination*. Paris: Seuil, 1972. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- DE *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question*. Paris: Galilée, 1987. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1991].
- ED *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris: Seuil, 1967. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

- F “Fors,” in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *Cryptonymie: Le verbier de l’homme aux loups*. Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1976.
- FC *Feu la cendre / Cinders*. Bilingual edition. Trans. Ned Lukacher. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991.
- FL *Force de loi: le “fondement mystique” de l’autorité*. Paris: Galilée, 1994. “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation’ of Authority,” in *Acts of Religion*, Ed. Gil Anidjar. Trans. Mary Quaintance. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Dia “Dialogue entre Jacques Derrida, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy,” *Rue Descartes*, no. 52 (2006): 86-99. *For Strasbourg: Conversations of Friendship and Philosophy*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.
- G *De la grammatologie*. Paris: Minuit, 1967. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- H “Hostipitality,” in *Acts of Religion*. Ed. Gil Anidjar. New York, London: Routledge, 2002: 358-420.
- HQE *Heidegger: la question de l’être et l’histoire*. Paris: Galilée, 2013. *Heidegger: The Question of Being and History*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- LI *Limited Inc.* [1978]. Paris: Galilée, 1990. *Limited Inc.* Trans. Jeffrey Mehlmann and Samuel Weber. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988.
- M *Marges—de la philosophie*. Paris: Minuit, 1972. *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- MA *Mal d’archives. Une impression freudienne*. Paris: Galilée, 1995. *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*. Trans. Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- N *Negotiations. Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001*. Ed. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002. The interviews referred to in the thesis are English in the original.
- P ‘*Préjuges. Devant la loi,*’ in *La faculté de juger*. Ed. Jean-François Lyotard. Paris: Minuit, 1985. ‘*Before the Law,*’ in *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. New York, London: Routledge, 1993: 181-220.
- PA *Politique de l’amitié suivi de l’oreille de Heidegger*. Paris: Galilée, 1994. *Politics of Friendship* [partial translation]. Trans. George Collins. London, New York: Verso, 2005.
- PM *Papier machine: le ruban de machine à écrire et autres réponses*. Paris: Galilée, 2001. *Paper Machine*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University press, 2005.
- PdM *La peine de mort*, Vol. 1. Paris: Galilée, 2012. *The Death Penalty*, Vol. 1. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- POS *Positions*. Paris: Minuit, 1972. *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass et al. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- PPT *Poétique et politique du témoignage*. Paris: L’Herne, 2005. *Sovereignties in Question. The Poetics of Paul Celan*. Trans. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.

- PS *Points de suspension: entretiens*. Paris: Galilée, 1992. *Points...: Interviews 1974-1994*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- PSY (I–II) *Psyché: inventions de l'autre*. Paris: Galilée, 1987. *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, Vols. I–II. Trans. Peggy Kamuf et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007–2008.
- RES *Résistances de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Galilée, 1996. *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- SM *Spectres de Marx: l'état de la dette, la travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale*. Paris: Galilée, 1993. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- T *Le toucher*. Paris: Galilée, 2000. *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*. Trans. Christine Irizarry. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- V *Voyous: deux essais sur la raison*. Paris: Galilée, 2003. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- VEP *La vérité en peinture*. Paris: Flammarion, 1978. *The Truth in Painting*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- VP *La voix et le phénomène: introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*. Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 1993. *Speech and Phenomena. And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Trans. David B. Allison and Newton Garver. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

## SIGMUND FREUD

- GW I–XVII Sigmund Freud. *Gesammelte Werke*. 18 Vols. Ed. Anna Freud et al. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1961.
- GW II/III *Die Traumdeutung; Über den Traum*.
- GW VIII *Über den Gegensinn der Urworte*.
- GW X *Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten; Triebe und Tribschicksale; Das Unbewußte; Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod; Trauer und Melancholie*.
- GW XI *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*.
- GW XII *Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose; Das Unheimliche*.
- GW XIII *Jenseits des Lustprinzips; Das Ich und das Es; Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus*.
- GW XIV *Notiz über den 'Wunderblock'; Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*.
- GW XV *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*.
- GW XVI *Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse*.



## G. W. F. HEGEL

- HW 1-20 *Werke in zwanzig Bänden.* Ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970ff.
- HW 3 *Phänomenologie des Geistes.*
- HW 9 *Enzyklopädie.*

## MARTIN HEIDEGGER

- GA 1-102 *Gesamtausgabe.* Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975ff.
- GA 2 *Sein und Zeit.* Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- GA 5 *Holzwege.* Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- GA 8 *Was heisst Denken?* Ed. Paola-Ludovika Coriando.
- GA 9 *Wegmarken.* Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- GA 10 *Der Satz vom Grund.* Ed. Petra Jaeger.
- GA 12 *Unterwegs zur Sprache.* Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- GA 14 *Zur Sache des Denkens.* Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- GA 29/30 *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit.* Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- GA 39 *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein".* Ed. Susanne Ziegler.
- GA 40 *Einführung in die Metaphysik.* Ed. Petra Jaeger.
- GA 41 *Die Frage Nach dem Ding. Zu Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen.* Ed. Petra Jaeger.
- GA 45 *Grundfragen der Philosophie.* Ed. Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- GA 53 *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister".* Ed. Walter Biemel.
- GA 64 *Der Begriff der Zeit.* Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- GA 65 *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis).* Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann.
- Zoll *Zollikoner Seminare.* Ed. Medard Boss. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006.

## FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN

- HSW 1-12 *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe und Dokumente, in Bremerausgabe.* Ed. D. E. Sattler. München: Luchterland, 2004.
- HSW 5 *Hyperion.*
- HSW 10 *Anmerkungen zum Ödipus; Patmos.*

## IMMANUEL KANT

- KW 1–10 *Werke in Zehn Bänden*. Ed. Wilhelm Weischedel. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968.
- KW 3–4 *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.
- KW 5 *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können; Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?*

## SØREN KIERKEGAARD

- SKS 1-28 *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*. Ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. København: Gads Forlag, 1994-2013.
- SKS 4 *Gjentagelsen. Repetition*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Begrebet Angest. The Concept of Anxiety*. Trans. Reidar Thomte. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- SKS 11 *Sygdommen til Døden. The Sickness unto Death*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.

## JACQUES LACAN

- Écrits *Écrits*. Paris: Seuil, 1966.
- Sem I-XXVII *Séminaires de Jacques Lacan*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Paris: Seuil, 1975ff.
- Sem I *Les écrits techniques de Freud. Freud's Papers on Technique* (1953-1954). Trans. J. Forrester. Norton: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Sem II *Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse* (1954-1955). *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. S. Tomaselli. Norton: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Sem III *Les psychoses* (1955-1956). *The Psychoses*. Norton: Routledge, 1993.
- Sem IV *La relation d'objet et les structures freudiennes* (1956-1957).
- Sem VI *Le désir et son interprétation* (1958–1959).
- Sem VII *L'éthique de la psychanalyse* (1959–1960). *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. D. Porter. Norton: Routledge, 1992.
- Sem IX *L'identification* (1961-1962).
- Sem X *L'angoisse* (1962-1963). *Anxiety*. Trans. A. R. Price. Cambridge: Polity, 2014.
- Sem XI *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (1964). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London:

- Hogarth Press, 1997.
- Sem XVII *L'envers de la psychanalyse* (1969-1970). *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Russell Grigg. Norton: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Sem XX *Encore* (1972-1973). *Encore. On Feminine Sexuality*. Trans. Bruce Fink. Norton: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Sem XXIII *Le sinthome* (1975-1976). *The Sinthome*. Trans. A. R. Price. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016.
- SIO "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever," in *The Structuralist Controversy. The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*. Ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato. Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

#### JEAN-LUC NANCY

- AE "L'amour en éclats," in *Une pensée finie*. Paris: Galilée, 1990. "Shattered Love," in *The Inoperative Community*. Ed. Peter Connor. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- ASQV *Après le sujet qui vient?* Paris: Aubier, 1989. *Who Comes After the Subject?* Ed. Eduardo Cadava et al. New York, London: Routledge, 1991.
- CD *La communauté désoeuivrée*. Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1999. *The Inoperative Community*. Ed. Peter Connor. Minneapolis, Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- CT *Au ciel et sur la terre*. Paris: Bayard, 2004. "In Heaven and on Earth," in *Noli Me Tangere: On the Raising of the Body*. Trans. Sarah Clift et al. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.
- EL *L'expérience de la liberté*. Paris: Galilée, 1988. *The Experience of Freedom*. Trans. Bridget McDonald. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- ES *Ego Sum*. Paris: Flammarion, 1979. *Ego Sum*. Trans. Marie-Eve Morin. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
- ESP *Être singulier pluriel*. Paris: Galilée, 1996. *Being Singular Plural*. Trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne O'Byrne. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- LD "Des lieux divins," in *Qu'est-ce que Dieu?: philosophie, théologie: hommage à l'abbé Daniel Coppieters de Gibson, 1929-1983*, Publications Fac 1985. "Of Divine Place," in *The Inoperative Community*. Ed. Peter Connor. Minneapolis, Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- NA "Nous autres," *Po&sie* 2005/1, no. 111: 3-9. "Nous Autres," in *The Ground of the Image*. Trans. Jeff Fort. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.
- RE "Les raisons d'écrire," in *Misère de la littérature*. Paris: Bourgois, 1978. "Exscription" in *The Birth to Presence*. Trans. Brian Holmes et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.

## FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

- KSA 1-15      *Kritische Studienausgabe der Werke*. Ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980.
- KSA 1          *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.
- KSA 2          *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*.
- KSA 3          *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*.
- KSA 4          *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.
- KSA 5          *Jenseits von Gut und Böse; Zur Genealogie der Moral*.
- KSA 6          *Götzen-Dämmerung*.
- KSA 7          *Nachlaß 1869–1874*.
- KSA 11         *Nachlaß 1884–1885*.
- KSA 12         *Nachlaß 1885–1887*.
- KSA 13         *Nachlaß 1887–1889*.

## F. J. W. SCHELLING

- SW XII         *Philosophie der Mythologie*, vol. 2. *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. XII. Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1857.
- SW VII         *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (1809). *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. VII. Stuttgart und Augsburg: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1860.
- GP               *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*. Ed. Horst Fuhrmans. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1972.
- WA               *Weltalter*. *Sämtliche Werke*: 1811-1815. Ed. K.F.A. Schelling. Stuttgart: Cotta'scher Verlag, 1861.

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

*Das  
Selbe  
hat uns  
verloren, das  
Selbe  
hat uns  
vergessen, das  
Selbe  
hat uns*

– Paul Celan, “Zu beiden Händen,” *Die Niemandsrose*

Il n’y a que moi, moi qui ne suis pas, là où je suis  
– Samuel Beckett, *L’innommable*

### REMAINS OF A SELF?

After... Always after... As known, ever since Hegel’s famous preface to his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, an introduction always comes *after the fact* of that which it is supposed to introduce insofar as it is always an introduction *of* something, which therefore it must succeed in order to precede it.

Accordingly, there is both a constitutive belatedness and an irreducible retrospectivity bound to the discipline of writing an introduction, which, as we shall come to see in more detail, is not unrelated to the two main ‘disciplines’ of the thesis that this introduction is about to introduce—deconstruction and psychoanalysis—nor to its subject matter: ‘the remains of a self.’ The difficult, if not impossible, task of writing an introduction consists not only in introducing something that, while being written had no readymade blueprint, and at times not even an orientation or a direction; and yet to simulate that it did, it also consists in presenting something whose presentation is already past, and yet presenting it as though it is still to come.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, how to present something that is already past and how to begin when one is already late to what was supposed to come before? One way to begin belatedly is to designate and situate that which the introduction comes after in order to introduce it retrospectively, which is what I will attempt to do in what follows.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Derrida, the act of writing an introduction or a preface is a ‘ludicrous operation’ not only because in confining what it presents to a ‘thematic nucleus’ or a ‘single guiding thesis’ it tries to close off the textual displacements of the writing to come in advance, but also because “l’écriture ne tient en aucun de ces temps (présent, passé ou futur en tant que présents modifiés)” (D, 13/7).

In 1986, Jean-Luc Nancy sent out a letter of invitation to a number of prominent contemporary French thinkers to respond to the question ‘who comes after the subject?’ or ‘*après le sujet qui vient?*,’ which eventually also became the titles of the succeeding English and French publications of the collection of essays evoked by Nancy’s pertinent question.<sup>2</sup> In the introduction to this collection, Nancy situates his question on a rupture line within the critique and deconstruction not only of the notion of ‘subjectivity’ but also of a whole range of interrelated notions such as ‘authority,’ ‘consciousness,’ ‘interiority,’ ‘ownership,’ ‘selfhood,’ and ‘self-presence,’ which Nancy takes to be “une des déterminations majeures de la pensée contemporaine.”<sup>3</sup>

As the collection of essays testifies, Nancy’s question leaves no room for simple answers but calls forth a range of different approaches resulting in a series of highly complex and diverse responses. To a certain extent, this thesis may also be read as providing a sort of response to Nancy’s question—even if it is 30 years late. Accordingly, the title ‘*Remains of a Self—Solitudes and Responsibilities*’ can be heard as an echo of Nancy’s initial question in the sense that it repeats it in a deferred and displaced manner while attempting to respond, not only to the repeated question, but also to the many responses that it provoked, and continues to provoke, in and beyond the publications immediately following Nancy’s invitation. This requires some further explanation.

In my view, one of the implications of the ongoing deconstruction or auto-deconstruction of ‘the subject’ or ‘the self’ is that one can no longer speak or think of *the* subject or *the* self. This implication binds any attempt to respond to the questions of ‘who comes after the subject’ or of ‘what remains of a self’ in at least a twofold way: first, it implies that one cannot simply replace a more ‘classical’ or ‘traditional’ concept, model, structure, or theory of ‘the subject’ or ‘the self’ with a new and alternative concept, model, structure, or theory of *the* subject or *the* self—even if a radically transformed one. This is because, I would argue, it is the very position of the definite article ‘the,’ around which such attempts are constructed that has been called into question. Neither, however, can one simply dispose of all the concepts,

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<sup>2</sup> The collection was first published in English translation in *Topoi* 7 (2) in September 1988. One year later, the original French essays along with some new contributions were published in the final issue of *Cahiers Confrontations* (Winter 1989, no. 50). In 1991 an English edition of *Who Comes After the Subject?* edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy was published, including all the essays from both the English and French editions with the addition of four previously unpublished or untranslated essays by Sylviane Agacinski, Luce Irigaray, Sarah Kofman, and Emmanuel Lévinas.

<sup>3</sup> ASQV, 8/5.



models, or theories pertaining to ‘the subject’ or ‘the self’ by declaring them dead in order to substitute them with other names without, however, essentially questioning or altering the very place of such replacement.<sup>4</sup>

In this respect, it would be misleading to speak of ‘replacements’ with regard to deconstruction at all since it is the very places that the notions of ‘the subject’ and ‘the self’ have occupied throughout the history of Western philosophical thought (if such a unified expression makes any sense today) that are destabilized and displaced in deconstructive readings of the seminal texts both constitutive of and constituted by this very history. In more precise terms, deconstruction puts the place of *the* subject constructed as the underlying seat or stable substance (*ὑποκείμενον*, *subiectum*, *substantia*) of the more or less unstable series of predicative attributes said to belong to it on trial, as well as the place of *the* self conceived as the place where the subject is constituted as the authoritative proprietor of itself and its properties through the abilities of self-consciousness, self-reflection, and self-

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<sup>4</sup> One example of such an attempted replacement is to be found in Irving Goh’s study *The Reject*, which directly readdresses Nancy’s question concerning ‘who comes after the subject’—in order, as Goh says, to attempt a ‘more adequate response’ than those assembled in the collection of essays of which the majority preserve the notion of ‘the subject’ even if they tarry with it. Cf. Goh 2015, 4. Instead of preserving ‘the subject,’ Goh presents his own attempt at a more adequate response as follows: “To the question of ‘who comes after the subject,’ I respond here by saying: the *reject*” (ibid. 6–7). My intention is not to go into the details of Goh’s definition of ‘the reject’ or his argument as to why it should replace ‘the subject’ her, but merely to note what I, despite Goh’s admirable and meticulous response, find troublesome with respect to his gesture of replacing ‘*the* subject’ with ‘*the* reject.’ As I read it, the preservation of the ‘the’ in this replacement is as problematic as the preservation of the word ‘subject’ and goes together with another troublesome gesture of Goh’s, namely, his insistence that what is called for by Nancy’s question, indeed what “we need,” is a “*theory of the reject*” (ibid. 23. My emphasis). Moreover, Goh distinguishes this required ‘theory’ of the reject from the “more general experiences or empirical phenomena” (ibid. XII) with which it is said to resonate, thus reproducing the traditional dichotomies not only of ‘theory and practice’ but also of ‘the noumenal and the phenomenological,’ as of ‘the general and the particular,’ all of which have a complex history of subjection to deconstructive scrutiny. It therefore strikes me as somewhat odd that Goh resorts to such opposition in order to argue for his theory of the reject in place of that of the subject, all the while arguing that ‘the subject,’ precisely because of its historical subjection to deconstruction, should if not rejected then at least be “de-supposed,” that is, neither presupposed nor preserved as though “nothing has happened” (ibid. 5). In brief, what I find troublesome about Goh’s response is that it seems to insist on the possibility, and even the necessity, of constructing a *theory of the reject* in order to replace the *theory of the subject*, without, however, really questioning the place of such replacement, which appears to be sanctioned by the ‘the’ that designates it.

presence.<sup>5</sup> As Derrida writes in *La carte postale*, deconstruction in the wake of psychoanalysis “oblige à reconsidérer toute la topique de l’*autos*.”<sup>6</sup>

This double bind of thinking, banning *both* the replacement of the ‘old’ subject or self with ‘new’ subjects and selves *and* the plain and pure break with or overcoming of these notions and their history, is what Nancy alludes to with his situating of a ‘rupture line’ within deconstruction. Accordingly, what this line demarcates is that, *on the one hand*, deconstruction “n’est pas un simple anéantissement du ‘sujet,’”<sup>7</sup> that is, deconstruction does not lay claim to having liquidated or proclaimed a final end to either ‘the subject’ or ‘the self,’ even if some readers have read it as doing so.<sup>8</sup> *On the other hand*,

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<sup>5</sup> In the seminal seventh book of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle asks ‘what is being?’ (τί τὸ ὄν) but immediately adds that this question may be replaced by the more narrow and precise question ‘what is substance?’ (τίς ἢ οὐσία) (cf. Met. 1028b). According to Aristotle, such a replacement of being with substance can take place because the question of substance asks for what is the most basic, fundamental, or primary with regard to the being or the region of being that is called into question, and once this has been established the rest may be constructed on the basis of such grounds. To Aristotle, then, ‘substance’ (οὐσία) refers both to a certain ‘whatness’ that makes ‘a being what it is’ (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι) in itself (καθ’ αὐτό) and to the ‘underlying support’ or the ‘fundamental’ (τὸ ὑποκείμενον) of such a being, which in a more Latinized way of speaking could be translated into the ‘essence’ or the ‘subject’ of something that exists (cf. Met. 1028b–1029b). Accordingly, ‘the subject’ refers to that which is not dependent on anything other than itself and to which something else may be attributed or predicated but which itself is not the attribute or predicate of anything else. Thus, the subject is related to what is essential, fundamental, primary, self-sufficient, or substantial with regard to a being and thus already opposed to what would be inessential, auxiliary, insufficient, secondary, and supplementary. On Heidegger’s reading, what happens in so-called epoch of ‘modern metaphysics’ of which Descartes is a pioneer, is that the ‘subject,’ which previously served as a designation of any substantial being, is now identified exclusively with the conscious human being. Thus, the human being is turned into the privileged subject *par excellence* (ausgezeichneten Subjekt) in relation to whom all other beings are henceforth determined as ‘objects.’ Cf. GA 41, 106.

<sup>6</sup> CP, 343/322.

<sup>7</sup> ASQV, 7/4.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, Gabriele Schwab writes that even though “poststructuralism and deconstruction privilege experimental fragmentations and (dis)figurations of language as open and dynamic processes of textualization. The dominant tenor of their discourses about the subject is, however, still one that celebrates its end. Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, Lyotard, and Deleuze and Guattari all in some way convey the sense that we are beyond the subject” (Schwab 1994, 5). On my reading, such a general statement about such divergent discourses is simply too simple, and risks reducing all the differences that would make it questionable. For example, it ignores the whole discussion of the (im)possibility of ‘overcoming metaphysics,’ which to Derrida is an unavoidable and irreducibly ambiguous issue for deconstruction to tarry with without final resolve, whereas to Deleuze this issue has never been an issue.

however, neither does deconstruction pave the way for a ‘return to the subject,’ nor to a ‘resurrection of the self,’ who would once again become present to itself as the selfsame—although, in another sense, deconstruction is surely preoccupied with the ‘returns’ and ‘hauntings’ of a subject who has received countless death-sentences.

However, as the epigraph by Celan tells us, “*das Selbe hat uns verloren,*”<sup>9</sup> and with this abandonment, the self of which we are trying to speak here is no longer the same. No longer the same as what? No longer the same as itself, to be sure. However, at this point several questions arise: was it ever, has it ever been the same as itself? Has the self ever been selfsame? Do we know, and have we ever known, what we mean to say when we say ‘the self’? Has ‘the self,’ as the definite article indicates, ever constituted the referent of signifier of an invariant unity of meaning to be unraveled through consistent analysis or excavated by a sufficiently hermeneutical or genealogical work? Moreover, did the self only cease being selfsame ‘after’ the deconstruction of itself, and, if so, when did this auto-deconstruction of the self begin to take place? Did it ever begin? Would it be possible to locate a place and time at which ‘the self’ began to deconstruct itself—or is the auto-deconstruction of the self perhaps already at work from the outset of its very construction?

Proceeding from such questions of deconstruction and working with a view to deconstructive gestures of reading and writing, this thesis will not be an attempt to reconstruct an alternative or a ‘new’ concept, model, or theory of either ‘the subject’ or ‘the self’—nor of ‘subjectivity’ or ‘selfhood’ for that matter. Instead, it will be an attempt to undertake a tracing and an interrogation of different contexts, experiences, and situations in which the constructs of ‘*the subject*’ or ‘*the self*’ begin to tremble, vacillate, and deconstruct themselves, thus exposing the destabilizing otherness already roaming the foundations of these constructions. Hence, it will be my suggestion that, rather than simply obliterating the notions of ‘subject’ or ‘self’ in order to celebrate their traceless extinction, deconstruction is concerned with what or who remains in the abandonment of *the subject* and *the self*, which have perhaps always already begun to take place. It is to the question of such remains that this thesis tries to respond by echoing the initial question of Nancy, and asking *who* remains to pose the question of *who* comes after the subject, which therefore also becomes a question of *who* or *what* was already there when the subject arrived on the scene.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Celan 2000a, 219.

<sup>10</sup> This double questioning of ‘*who* asks the question of *who*?’ already reverberates in some of the responses provided to Nancy’s question, especially in the brief essay by Blanchot entitled ‘*Qui?*,’ but also throughout the interview between Derrida and Nancy entitled “‘*Il faut bien manger*’ ou le calcul du sujet.” What becomes obvious in these

In other words, we will be asking *what* or *who*—since it is also a question of the distinction between a ‘what’ and a ‘who’—*remains* to experience the auto-deconstruction of *the* subject and *the* self, including what is called whomever’s or whatever’s ‘own’ subject and self. Where, if anywhere, is this *who* or *what* situated and where, if anywhere, is its position?

If, as Nancy suggests in his introduction, the subject can be understood as “la propriété de *soi*,”<sup>11</sup> then the thesis could be read as an attempt to trace the remains of a self without properties. That is, a self that has no belongings since it is no longer the owner of a subject understood as the stable reference point of propriety to which these belongings would refer. As such, we are asking about a self that would remain in the abandonment of ‘its’ subject, a self to which nothing belongs, not even itself. Such a self, abandoned by itself, would therefore no longer be *the* self of a stable property such as *the* subject, but rather *a* self as instantaneous, unstable, and precarious as ‘pre-individual singularities’ of “*une vie, une saison, un vent, une bataille, 5 heures...*”<sup>12</sup> which Deleuze in his response to Nancy’s question calls *hecceities*. It concerns *a* self that remains under the erasure of *the* self, there where *there is* neither a presence to oneself nor to another, nor a simple absence of self—since absence (*ab-esse*) is still a mode of presence—but rather a kind of spectral self that remains in the dis-appearance of itself—we might say, then, that these remains resemble what Derrida calls ‘the trace,’ which always implies “à la fois sa marque et son effacement.”<sup>13</sup> Rendered in the words of Lacoue-Labarthe, what is of interest to us here is:

[C]e qui, dans le sujet, déserte (a toujours déjà déserté le sujet *lui-même* et qui antérieurement à toute ‘possession de soi’ (et sur un autre mode que celui de la dépossession), est la dissolution, la défaite du sujet dans le sujet ou comme le sujet: le (dé)constitution du sujet ou la ‘perte’ du sujet, du sujet ou la ‘perte’ du sujet,— si du moins l’on pouvait penser la perte de ce qu’on n’a jamais eu, une sorte de perte (de ‘soi’) ‘originaire’ et ‘constitutive.’<sup>14</sup>

responses is that the question of who comes *after* the subject is always also a question of a ‘before’ since, as Derrida explains with reference to Heidegger: “Dès la ‘naissance,’ sans doute avant elle, l’être-jeté se réapproprie, ou plutôt s’ex-approprie dans des formes qui ne sont pas encore celles du *sujet* ou du *projet*. La question ‘qui?’ devient alors ‘qui (est) jeté?’ ‘*qui*’ devient ‘*qui*’ depuis la destinérance de l’être-jeté? Qu’il s’agisse toujours de la trace, mais aussi d’itérabilité, cela signifie que cette ex-appropriation ne peut pas se stabiliser absolument dans la forme du sujet” (ASQV, 101/106. My emphasis). In other words, the trace not only comes after something that would once have been present, the trace also comes from whence we begin.

<sup>11</sup> ASQV, 7/4.

<sup>12</sup> ASQV, 90/95.

<sup>13</sup> D, 11/5.

<sup>14</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe 1979, 151/81–82.

Hence, this thesis is not about mourning some subject who was originally present to itself but then got lost in the deconstruction of itself; it investigates a relation of self that emerges as a relation of originary disappropriation. However, as Blanchot points out in *L'écriture du désastre*, such an originary disappropriation of itself also implies that “le ‘moi’ ne se perd pas parce qu’il ne s’appartient pas. Il n’est donc moi que comme non-appartenant à soi, et donc comme toujours déjà perdu.”<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, what will be repeated throughout this thesis is that *someone* (but who?) *still remains*, who relates to itself even if only in the experience of the abandonment of itself, as of any properties of its own, or any sense of ownership regarding its ‘own.’ Hence, as Derrida describes it, the auto-deconstruction of ‘the self’ concerns an exploration of the “[f]in ou interruption du cercle, césure du tour dans le retour à soi, même quand le soi ‘reste soi.’”<sup>16</sup>

In this regard, we might recall the Kierkegaardian definition, provided pseudonymously in *The Sickness unto Death* from 1849, of a self as “a relation that relates to itself and *in* relating to itself relates to another,”<sup>17</sup> whose conciseness pertains to the way in which it captures the irreducible inconciseness of what it means to relate to oneself. With respect to Anti-Climacus’ definition, the question of this thesis would be how we may come to understand a relation of self that relates to itself only in the abandonment or withdrawal of itself—that is, as a caesural relation. Anti-Climacus may give us an indication of how to approach such a relation of inaccessibility when he points out that his definition of a self may lead to an experience of a double-bound impossibility that can be quite despairing. On the one hand, this understanding of self-relation can lead to an experience of the impossibility of “being oneself [*være sig selv*]” and, on the other hand, to an experience of the impossibility of “getting rid of oneself [*blive af med sig selv*].”<sup>18</sup>

In a certain sense, then, in the course of this thesis we will be exploring this double-bound experience of being stuck with oneself even if this self perpetually eludes the one to whom it was supposed to belong. Such a double-bound experience appears to be repeatedly articulated in the writings of Beckett, as when one of the disappropriated voices of *L’innommable* utters: “les yeux ouverts, les yeux fermés, rien, je ne vois plus rien, ça alors, c’est décevant, je m’attendais à mieux que ça, c’est ça ne pouvoir me perdre.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> EdD, 105/64.

<sup>16</sup> V, 71/35.

<sup>17</sup> SKS 11, 130/14.

<sup>18</sup> SKS 11, 130/14. Translation modified.

<sup>19</sup> Beckett 2004, 173.

On this view, the title ‘Remains of a Self’ is ambiguous. It can be read as a questioning of the left-overs, residues, remnants, ruins, scraps, bits and pieces left behind in the auto-deconstruction of *the* subject that would have been the property of *the* self. Yet, it can also be read as a certain resistant insistence or rather a certain *desistance*, as Lacoue-Labarthe will come to say, of some irreducible and excessive remainders of self that remains despite the abandonment of *its own* subject or *its own* self. These remainders offer no qualities of stance or stability, no values of permanence or presence, and no sustained relation of a self that relates to itself as the selfsame, but rather a plurality of interrupted relations to otherness upon which any sense of self depends.

Why then, one might ask, add the subtitle ‘Solitudes and Responsibilities’? To which we could respond, because as one is abandoned by oneself, in the same stroke one is also delivered over to others in order to be able to relate oneself in the first place, and this dependence on others in the abandonment of oneself is at once a very solitary experience and an experience of responsibility. The suggestion that this thesis explores is therefore that a sense of solitude and a sense of responsibility are some of the remains of a self that relates to itself in the originary disappropriation of itself, and that such relation even intensifies these senses because it calls their sense into question. Thus, even if these remaining senses of solitude and responsibility are by no means ‘new’ discoveries, the suggestion will be that they might have become more conspicuous and importunate in the—in some respects ruinous—landscape exposed by what we, for the sake of brevity, have referred to simply as the auto-deconstruction of the self. For what does it mean to be solitary if I have been abandoned by myself and therefore can no longer be alone with myself? What does it mean to be solitary if my being is fundamentally bound up and dependent on others, so that the other is more intimate to me than I am to myself? Furthermore, what does it mean to be responsible or to ‘take’ responsibility if ‘my’ authority and autonomy have already been intimately interrupted and infiltrated by multiple instances of heterogeneity and heteronomy?

To a certain extent, responding to these questions demands another way of speaking about solitude and responsibility and a ‘new’ way of writing on the subject of a self, in which, as Derrida says the “contrat entre la grammaire de sujet ou du substantive et l’ontologie de la substance ou du sujet”<sup>20</sup> is broken or deconstructed. However, as Artaud will come to say in Chapter I, this grammar is still to be found and, as we know from Nietzsche, ceasing to believe in grammar is perhaps the most difficult task yet. I do not pretend to

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<sup>20</sup> ASQV, 96/101.

invent a new grammar in this thesis, but, perhaps more modestly and with Artaud's encouragement, I venture to challenge language a little, to make it go a little out of its joints, in order to make it convey things that may at times go against its prevalent logic of sense but that for this reason need not be entirely nonsensical. As will become evident in the course of the thesis, we will draw resources for this linguistic endeavor not only from deconstruction but also from psychoanalysis, which, to a certain extent, is also concerned with remainders of a self or a subject that has been deprived of any definite article or personal pronoun. In psychoanalysis, these remainders are referred to as the 'subject of the unconscious,' *S* or *das Es*, which despite appearances and in the words of Lacan, designates a "sujet dépourvu d'aucun *das* ou autre article objectivant."<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, the remains of solitude with which this thesis is engaged therefore concerns something other than that which might occur when "I have withdrawn into seclusion alone [*solus secedo*],"<sup>22</sup> as Descartes famously notes in his first meditation, because it is our presentiment that the sense of solitude cannot be reduced to the empirical fact of being alone without others. Instead, the solitude that we will be questioning depends on a being *with* others, which complicates the sense of solitude as a being alone with oneself.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the remains of responsibility which this thesis calls

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<sup>21</sup> *Écrits*, 417/347.

<sup>22</sup> Descartes 1978, 17. My translation. We will return to this passage from Descartes in Chapter II.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* from 1951, Arendt operates with a distinction between 'solitude,' understood as a state of being alone with oneself which is desirable and may be actively sought in the internal dialogue of one's soul, and 'loneliness' or 'isolation,' understood as a deprivation not only of others, and of the social world these others make possible, but ultimately also of oneself, which is undergone passively and involuntarily. Arendt explains the distinction as follows: "In solitude, in other words, I am 'by myself,' together with my self, and therefore two-in-one, whereas in loneliness I am actually one, deserted by all others" (Arendt 1973, 476). Even though this distinction between a voluntary solitude and an involuntary isolation or loneliness is undoubtedly relevant and useful in other contexts—whether political or otherwise—it appears to lose its relevance, and even to become obfuscated and undone, with regard to the aspects and experiences of solitude that we will be interrogating throughout this thesis. This is not least because this distinction presupposes that it is actually possible to be alone with oneself in solitude, which is a presupposition that this thesis calls into question. Arendt does appear to be attentive towards a possible porosity in the distinction between a presumably constructive or creative solitude and a presumably destructive or degenerative loneliness or isolation. However, since the concern of her work is to develop the hypothesis of an interrelation between loneliness, political isolation, and totalitarianism, Arendt does not go into a further questioning of this porosity and therefore

to question concerns, as Derrida says in his response to Nancy, a sense and an experience of being “responsable sans autonomie, avant et en vue de toute autonomie possible du qui-sujet.”<sup>24</sup>

Hence, the subtitle of this thesis concerns a solitude of being unable to be alone, and a responsibility without and before autonomy, because the very *autos* of whomever is in question only arises as a response to the other on which it depends. Put differently, it is a question of a solitude and a responsibility on the part of a self, whose relation to itself is already a trace of alterity since it only gathers itself together “pour reprendre à l’autre, dont l’appel précède en quelque sorte sa propre indentification à soi.”<sup>25</sup>

To conclude this introduction on a general note about the relation between the remains of a self, solitude, and responsibility this thesis explores how a self bereft of ownership of itself still remains as the only one left to answer for this originary bereavement, that is, the sole being responsible for the disrobement or disappropriation of itself. There therefore remains an irreplaceability connected to such remains of a self even if the place of *the* self has deconstructed itself and even if the only place left for such a self does not belong to itself. Throughout the thesis, we will be questioning and exploring such a self-relation of self-abandonment and its remains of solitude and responsibility from different angles and approaches, ranging from deconstruction and psychoanalysis to poetry and literature. Even though it is the question of solitude that will take center stage, the question of responsibility will play a more subdued, but nonetheless consistent and significant, role in the side wings of our considerations until it is finally brought to the fore in the concluding remarks. Thus, before proceeding with some methodological considerations, we will close this introduction with a brief outline of the thesis that has gone before it.

#### OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The first two chapters focus on the double-bind that the other(s) is both a condition of possibility and of impossibility for a solitude of one’s own, because without the other(s) everything that one calls one’s ‘own’ ceases to exist, including one’s ‘own’ existence. This, it will be argued, implies that what we call our ‘own’ is never owned by ourselves alone due to the otherness that interrupts our relation to ourselves. Via a specific trope of solitude, which we have chosen to call ‘the solitude of not being able to be

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does not pay attention to the risk of an autoimmune collapse into loneliness inherent to solitude, even in its creative form.

<sup>24</sup> ASQV, 95/100.

<sup>25</sup> ASQV, 95/100.



alone,’ the first chapter investigates the experiences of disrobement and disappropriation on the part of the solitary one, which may ensue from auto-heteronomous conditions of existence, as these become manifest in the writings of Artaud. The second chapter tries to unfold the dependency on others at the heart of a solitude of one’s own, on the one hand, through a thinking of the equiprimordiality of ‘being-with-others’ and solitude as we find it exposed in Heidegger; and, on the other hand, through the way in which this Heideggerian line of thought has been taken up by a range of French thinkers such as Bataille, Nancy, and Blanchot, together with their respective thoughts concerning a so-called ‘community without community.’ Finally, both of these aspects open up to a discussion of a certain ambiguous desire for solitude understood as a desire for absoluteness and sovereignty and the risk of auto-immunity therein.

Through a psychoanalytic lens, Chapters III and IV continue and sharpen some of the previous discussions by exploring various experiences and situations wherein the sense of personal selfhood is exposed to the threat of disappearing into a solitude of the impersonal. This exploration takes place by focusing on the way in which the impersonal German pronoun *Es* functions in the writings of Freud orientated by his psychoanalytic imperative ‘*Wo Es was soll Ich werden.*’ In Chapter III our reading concentrates on *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* from 1920 whereas in Chapter IV our focus shifts to *Das Unheimliche* from 1919 and its notions of ‘the uncanny homely’ and ‘the daemonic.’ These textual focal points lead to discussions of various aspects pertaining to the relation between the impersonal ‘It’ and the personal ‘I,’ especially in relation to notions such as ‘the automatic’ and ‘the autonomous,’ and not least to a certain duplicity of repetition.

Chapter V continues the psychoanalytic trajectory by a reading of Lacan’s tenth seminar from 1962–1963 on anxiety wherein we try to trace a relation of anxiety to the unhomely through what Lacan calls the ‘fading of the subject’ all the way to its dissolution in what we in turn have called a ‘reversal of the mirror stage.’ Finally, this experience of dissolution in anxiety leads to a consideration of what Blanchot, in contrast to ‘mundane’ or ‘worldly’ solitude, calls ‘essential solitude,’ which signifies precisely a solitude of the impersonal.

Whereas the previous chapters have mainly focused on the solitary one—its dependence, desires, and exposure to the impersonal in relation to the other(s)—the closing remarks to a certain extent overturns or shifts the focus to that of the other(s) upon whom the solitary one depend. However, seeing as every solitary one is also an other for the other, this shift of focus exposes us to questions regarding the responsibility that therefore befalls each and

every one for the solitude of each and every other. For this reason, the thesis ends by opening up to questions, which are undoubtedly inseparable from the questions that have been pursued up until this point, but which can only be indicated tentatively since their unfolding would constitute the beginning of another study. Consequently, the closing remarks on the one hand resumes some of the findings of the previous chapters, while, on the other hand, sketching the contours of a path to be pursued by future studies.

Finally, the thesis is supplemented with four excursus, which are not mandatory for understanding the main arguments but which offer elaborating discussions or reflections on particular aspects pertaining to these arguments.

#### METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

##### DECONSTRUCTION AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

In the development of this thesis, two trajectories of thought have been of utmost importance: deconstruction and psychoanalysis. In this regard, the ‘method’ of this thesis may be considered a ‘double reading,’ attending to what Derrida calls the “structure de la *double marque*”<sup>26</sup> in the texts with which it engages. From this double perspective, the aim of these methodological considerations is not to explain deconstruction or psychoanalysis ‘as such’ or in exhaustive terms, if such an endeavor were even possible. Instead, these considerations will be guided by two overall questions of specific relevance to the context of this thesis: ‘Can deconstruction be considered a method?’ And, ‘what are the reasons for bringing together deconstruction and psychoanalysis in the course of this thesis?’ We begin with the first question.

In his “Lettre à un ami japonais” from 1985, Derrida makes it explicit that “[l]a déconstruction n’est pas une méthode et ne peut être transformée en méthode,”<sup>27</sup> thereby implying that as soon as ‘deconstruction’ is employed as a method it has already ceased being deconstructive. Apparently, then, we have already answered our first methodological question: deconstruction is not a method, and this thesis will not employ it as one—but, evidently, this does not suffice in answering *why* this is so. In his letter, Derrida does not expand on why deconstruction is not a method but there are indications of more elaborate answers at other places in his writing. In this section, we will therefore attend to these indications in order to provide an outline of what can only be a tentative answer, since the methodological question of why deconstruction cannot be considered nor employed as a method is

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<sup>26</sup> D, 10/4.

<sup>27</sup> PSY, 390/(II) 4.

inexhaustible and the ways of answering it abundant. However, in order to begin *one* answer to this question, it might be advantageous to clarify the terms implied within it: ‘method’ and ‘deconstruction.’

Without pursuing a genealogy of methodology in the history of philosophy, we might say that, seeing as ‘method’ derives from the Greek juxtaposition of *μετά* and *ὁδός*, there appear to be roughly two prevalent ways of thinking about method: one way, according to which ‘method’ designates a more or less determined way of obtaining knowledge or clarity,<sup>28</sup> a mode of inquiry, a prosecution, or a set of rules and prescriptions about how to approach a given object of investigation; and another way, according to which ‘method,’ perhaps less rigidly, designates a ‘following of a path’ or a ‘proceeding along a road’ oriented, if not by some ‘intentional object,’ then at least, as Heidegger suggests, by something that ‘shows itself’ (*sich zeigenden Seienden*).<sup>29</sup> What these two modes have in common, however, is that they think of method as a possible form of *passage*, *procedure*, or *transport* towards something more or less determinable.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, methods are often concerned with more or less strategic ways of solving a problem that has somehow blocked or interrupted a passage, or with locating possible passageways from out of an impasse (*a-poria*) and thus also as a certain way of mastering. There are several reasons why none of these ways of understanding method are applicable to deconstruction, of which we shall mention but a few.

First, deconstruction cannot be understood as a method in the sense of a general set of rules or formulas external to whatever context they are applied to, simply because to deconstruction ‘there is no outside the context,’ to paraphrase Derrida,<sup>31</sup> which implies at least two things. On the one hand, it implies that deconstruction happens ‘infrastructurally,’ to use another term from *De la grammatologie*, meaning that it is already at work ‘within’ the structures of the work that is being deconstructed, because of “an inadequation, a certain inability to close itself off, to form, to formalize

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<sup>28</sup> For example, in the *Physics* Aristotle defines his method as an “advance from what is more obscure by nature, but clearer to us, towards what is more clear and more knowable by nature” (Phys. 184a).

<sup>29</sup> GA 54, 87.

<sup>30</sup> Even if we understand ‘method’ in the more ‘properly’ Greek way that Heidegger suggests—that is, not as a technical way of proceeding towards some more or less determined end-goal, but rather as a perpetual ‘staying under way’ (*Auf-dem-Weg-bleiben*) (GA 54, 87), which is not mapped out between two points marked in advance, and which never reaches what it approaches—it is nevertheless still conceived as “der Weg, auf dem wir einer Sache nachgehen” (GA 10, 92).

<sup>31</sup> I am of course thinking of the widely (mis)interpreted phrase from *De la grammatologie*, which reads “*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*” (G, 227/158).

itself.”<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, as the latter quote makes clear, it also implies that a context can never close in on itself, because there is no ‘outside’ to close itself off from and as such no demarcable inside to be safeguarded either. Therefore, a context can never complete or saturate itself but must remain open to ‘other’ contexts and to the ‘otherwise,’ which obliges one to take into account a ‘perhaps’ in everything one tries to read, to think, or to write.<sup>33</sup> Derrida explains:

There are only contexts, and this is why deconstructive negotiation cannot produce general rules, ‘methods.’ It must be adjusted to each case, to each moment without, however, the conclusion being a relativism or empiricism.<sup>34</sup>

Hence, the deconstructive insistence on an irreducibility and an insatiability of (con)textuality does not amount to the reduction of everything to written words on paper or in books, nor to a simple relativism according to which, echoing Ivan Karamazov, ‘everything is permitted.’ Rather, the ‘text’—as ‘archi-writing,’ ‘trace,’ ‘différance,’ or other quasi-concepts in Derrida’s writing—designates that which cannot be regulated by a transcendental principle nor determined with reference to a ‘transcendent signified’ or a ‘real referent’ situated somewhere ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ the context of that which it would regulate or determine. Yet, this lack of external or transcendental sanctioning does not amount to an absolutization of interiority or immanence; rather it displaces the entire architecture build on the foundations of a structure that opposes exteriority to interiority or transcendence to immanence, since, as Derrida writes:

S’il n’y a rien hors du texte, cela implique, avec la transformation du concept de texte en général, que celui-ci ne soit plus le dedans calfeutré d’une intériorité ou d’une identité à soi [...], mais une autre mise en place des effets d’ouverture et de fermeture.<sup>35</sup>

Second, deconstruction cannot be considered as a path by which one scientifically obtains more knowledge or clarity about something; or by which one dialectically resolves or ‘sublates’ problems of contradiction as the method exposes itself as being nothing other than the movement of

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<sup>32</sup> N, 193.

<sup>33</sup> With his thinking of the ‘perhaps,’ Derrida is referring to the passage in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* where Nietzsche, another important precursor of deconstruction, anticipates the arrival of new philosophers who would be “*Philosophen des gefährlichen Vielleicht in jedem Verstande*” (KSA 5, 17).

<sup>34</sup> N, 17.

<sup>35</sup> D, 43/36.

science itself as logic;<sup>36</sup> nor as the phenomenological approach to something ‘as such’ (*als solche*) or as it ‘reveals itself.’<sup>37</sup> This is because deconstruction is provoked or called forward by experiences of ‘the impossible,’<sup>38</sup> that is, by that which interrupts all procedure, program, or progression of or towards the possible with all its connotations to the ability of mastering and the power of realization. Thus deconstruction is an experience of a certain paralysis of power and of the possibility of proceeding, or of that which has no possible way of coming to pass but which nevertheless remains inescapable and undecidable; wherefore deconstruction takes place where “[i]l n’y a plus de chemin (*odos, methodos, Weg, ou Holzweg*).”<sup>39</sup>

Exposed to such aporetic experiences, what is required of deconstruction is therefore not to seek out possible escape routes from or ways of resolving their impossibility, but rather to invent ‘other’ resources and path-breaking approaches in order engage and to remain with their irreducible insolvency and aporetic undecidability. As Derrida says: “Deconstruction is an explanation *with*, an experience *of* the impossible.”<sup>40</sup>

However, this paralysis of the possible in the experience of impossibility is in no way tantamount to a total standstill; it is the paralysis of a certain form of approach oriented by axiological, topological, or archeo-teleological coordinates operative within the structure that is in the process of deconstructing itself. Therefore, deconstruction is not without a certain gait (*démarche*) or a certain movement; in fact, deconstruction is a movement that cannot be put to rest by settling in a position or making a decision once and for all. Deconstruction is a restless movement of negotiation,<sup>41</sup> which is concerned with the irreducible remainders that cannot be resolved without

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<sup>36</sup> After claiming that method is the very movement of science and that this movement belongs to logic, or rather, *is* logic, Hegel adds the following explanation in his preface to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*: “Denn die Methode ist nichts anderes als der Bau des Ganzen, in seiner reinen Wesenheit aufgestellt” (HW 3, 47).

<sup>37</sup> According to Heidegger, even if the path we tread along (*ἡ μέθοδος*) is a side way or detour that leads us astray (*ἀπάτη*) from the straight path, it is nonetheless still so that “der Ab- und Seitenweg, der somit einen anderen Ausblick zustellt und so unterstellt, als Weg sei er doch das ‘gerade aus und hin’ zum Unverborgenen. Der Seiten- und Abweg läßt solches entgegenkommen, was das auf dem geraden Weg Erscheinende nicht zeigt” (GA 54, 87).

<sup>38</sup> Derrida employs this phrase in several places, for instance, in *Force de loi* where he writes that deconstruction “est possible comme une expérience de l’impossible” (FL, 35/243).

<sup>39</sup> AP, 47/21.

<sup>40</sup> N, 192.

<sup>41</sup> With his association of deconstruction with negotiation, Derrida is as always emphasizing its Latin heritage and etymological sense as a negation of rest, repose, peace, or leisure (*neg-otium*). In other words, the work of deconstruction is interminable.

rest and which therefore calls for infinite responsibility and interminable decisions—and this restless movement “ne se contente pas de procédures méthodiques.”<sup>42</sup>

Does this mean that deconstruction has no rudiments of methodology at all and that this thesis is therefore entirely bereft of a method? Not entirely no, because, even though deconstruction cannot be considered a method, understood as a set of technical procedures applicable to a context from the ‘outside’ in order to locate viable ways of solving a problem, deconstruction still moves in language, which can never become pure idiom but always reproduces generalities. Deconstruction is still a reading and a writing, and for this reason it is not exempt from certain stylistic or signatory gestures that, to some extent, are detachable from a particular context and thus contain the rudiments of a method. As Derrida explains:

[I]l y a de l’idiome et il y a aussi de la méthode, de la généralité, et la lecture est un mixte d’expérience de l’autre en sa singularité et puis de contenu philosophique, d’informations qui peuvent être arrachées à ce contexte singulier. Les deux à la fois.<sup>43</sup>

In what follows, we shall therefore try to sketch out some of these signatory gestures by attending to what Derrida refers to as the ‘double gesture’ or the ‘double writing’ of deconstruction.<sup>44</sup>

In “Ousia et grammé” from 1968, Derrida explains how Heidegger’s destruction (*Destruktion*) of metaphysics, as a decisive precursor of deconstruction,<sup>45</sup> does not so much concern a thinking of the ‘unthought’ in the sense of thinking something entirely ‘new’ or wholly ‘other’ than what

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<sup>42</sup> PSY, 35/(I) 23.

<sup>43</sup> PS, 214/201.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. M, 392/329.

<sup>45</sup> In the early texts of Derrida, but also of Gerard Granél, the French word *déconstruction* is employed primarily as a translation of Heidegger’s *Destruktion*, with a view to its affiliation with the Husserlian *Abbau*, in order to emphasize that this Heideggerian destruction is not merely destructive in the negative sense. Rather, as Derrida explains in his 1964–1965 seminar *Heidegger: la question de l’Être et l’Histoire*, “la destruction heideggerienne n’est ni la critique d’une erreur, ni l’exclusion simplement négative d’un passé de la philosophie. C’est une destruction, c’est-à-dire une déconstruction, c’est-à-dire une dé-structuration, c’est-à-dire l’ébranlement qui est nécessaire pour faire apparaître les structures, les strates, le système des dépôts” (HQE, 34/9). The word ‘deconstruction,’ however, was not a neologism since it had already figured in the French language prior to its inscription in the writings of Derrida and Granél. According to *Litttré*, for example, deconstruction may be regarded as a ‘*Dérangement de la construction*,’ that is, as a disturbing displacement of a given construction—whether this construction is of a grammatical, semantic, architectonic, or structural constitution.

has previously been thought in this tradition. Rather, the Heideggerian leitmotif in and of deconstruction concerns a thinking of how and why what has been thought could *not* have been thought otherwise, that is, to think the “*impossibilité de l’autrement*”<sup>46</sup> within the metaphysical structures under deconstruction, and yet to think about why this impossibility offers reserves for the possibility of thinking ‘the same’ otherwise.

To Derrida, then, what becomes obvious in Heidegger’s writing is that in the attempt to overcome metaphysics it still, to a certain extent, remains within the metaphysical discourse. However, this remaining in transgression is not a fault inherent to Heidegger’s thinking, but rather a condition and even a formalizable law of thought and language in general, which dictates the necessity of borrowing concepts and terms from the very tradition that one seeks to transgress. Accordingly, what is excessive of metaphysics can only announce itself in the fissures and the marginal interlacing of the metaphysical text itself, such that, for example, the ‘same’ text can contain both the resources for developing a substantial concept of subjectivity and a certain reserve that can be employed in the (auto-)deconstruction of the very same concept.<sup>47</sup>

Deconstruction therefore reads the texts of the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy doubly—both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of this tradition—by reading the outside that is already encrypted in the textuality of its inside, which also means that deconstruction always happens as the auto-deconstruction of whatever is under deconstruction. In other words, a transgression of metaphysics is only possible through a reading of the traces of an impossible otherwise already inscribed in its writing, which does not imply that deconstruction rejects or refuses traditional matters or problems of metaphysical thought. On the contrary, in order to understand deconstruction it is prerequisite to understand, and to a certain extent even to repeat, the hypotheses, conclusions, and truths of the systematic theories and their architectural structures that are under deconstruction—without such critical analysis of these metaphysical constructions their ‘deconstruction’ would turn into empty slogans and ‘dogmatic stupidity (*niaiserie*)’ against which Derrida repeatedly warns.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> M, 41/38.

<sup>47</sup> Lacan appears to make a similar point when, in *L’éthique de la psychanalyse*, he writes: “On ne dépasse pas Descartes, Kant, Marx, Hegel et quelques autres, pour autant qu’ils marquent la direction d’une recherche, une orientation véritable. On ne dépasse pas Freud non plus. On n’en fait pas non plus—quel intérêt?—le cubage, le bilan. On s’en sert. On se déplace à l’intérieur. On se guide avec ce qu’il nous a donné comme directions” (Sem VII, 244–245/206).

<sup>48</sup>Cf. M, 42/39.

This double reading of the traditional texts of Western philosophical thought also results in a double writing or a double gesture of deconstructive writing. The first of these gestures consists in a critical–genealogical analysis of the historical trajectory of a certain concept in relation to the concept(s) to which it is opposed in a hierarchical system. Examples of such traditional hierarchical oppositions are substance–attribute, subject–predicate (or object), essence–existence, necessary–contingent, original–copy, presence–absence, inner–outer, universal–particular, or—an opposition that has become something of a hallmark for Derridean deconstruction—speech–writing. During the course of this critical–genealogical analysis, however, moments occur in which the hierarchical binary logic interrupts and overturns itself in such a way that the seemingly derived, dependent, or secondary concept suddenly appears as the more original, fundamental, or primary insofar as it functions as the very condition of possibility for the concept that represses or excludes it. According to Derrida, these moments of reversal or overturning are necessary and unavoidable in order not to avoid or ignore the fact that traditional conceptual oppositions are never ‘neutrally’ constructed or constructed without bias; rather, as Derrida explains:

Un des deux termes commande l’autre (axiologiquement, logiquement, etc.), occupe la hauteur. Déconstruire l’opposition, c’est d’abord, à un moment donné, renverser la hiérarchie. Négliger cette phase de renversement, c’est oublier la structure conflictuelle et subordonnante de l’opposition.<sup>49</sup>

Yet, the interminable work of deconstruction does not cease with an inversed Platonism that simply reverses a given traditional opposition at a given moment, all the while maintaining its hierarchical structure; rather, the other gesture of deconstruction performs a dismantling of the entire order of hierarchical binary structures. Accordingly, deconstruction does not rest at demonstrating how the primacy or superiority of one concept over another can be reversed; it also shows how the very structure upholding such an opposition fails to ground itself and is thus (dis)placed ‘*en abyme*’ where it “entame spontanément sa propre déconstruction.”<sup>50</sup>

The insistence upon the necessity of such reversals and displacements in the hierarchically structured logic of oppositions is of course a heritage of Nietzsche’s venture towards a ‘revaluation of all values beyond good and evil.’ Yet, this Nietzschean heritage also brings with it an affirmative aspect of deconstruction, which overflows the critical–genealogical gesture of overturning. This is because in the dismantling of more or less rigid logics,

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<sup>49</sup> POS, 57/41.

<sup>50</sup> PS, 88/82.



systems, or structures, deconstruction also releases the dissonant and disorganizing resources (dis)lodged in the fissures and hiatuses of their sediments that are excessive to and resist the rules and procedures of these logics, systems, or structures.

At times, Derrida calls this other, affirmative gesture of deconstruction ‘the invention of the other’ (*l’invention de l’autre*), because it entails the irruptive invention of the so-called infrastructural quasi-concepts that, to a certain extent, deconstruct the very concept of ‘concept,’ including their own, because in different ways they re-mark the otherness or heterogeneity always already at work in the act of conceiving or naming something as something. The quasi-concepts resist conceptualization by retaining a decisive undecidability that withholds them from becoming reinstalled in a hierarchical system structured by conceptual oppositions.<sup>51</sup> This undecidability also entails that none of the quasi-concepts can occupy a superior or inferior position in relation to any of the others, nor function as a principle for the others; rather, one is substitutable by another even if none of them are synonymous.

It is in light of this other ‘inventive’ or ‘affirmative’ deconstructive gesture that we must understand another negative statement regarding deconstruction that Derrida makes in his letter to a Japanese friend, namely that, in spite of appearances, “la deconstruction n’est ni une *analyse* ni une *critique*.”<sup>52</sup> This hesitance towards identifying deconstruction with analysis leads us to our second methodological question regarding the reasons for bringing together deconstruction and psychoanalysis in this thesis—a complex question to which we shall attempt to respond only in brief. So, besides the palpable fact that Derrida’s engagement with psychoanalysis is long and persistent—spanning more than 35 years, during which Derrida engages, not only with the work of Freud and Lacan, but also with that of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok<sup>53</sup>—why have we found it necessary to

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<sup>51</sup> For instance, *différance* oscillates somewhere in between ‘difference or differentiation’ and ‘deferral or deferring’; the *spacing* in between ‘the timing of space’ and ‘the spacing of time’; the *trace* in between ‘a presence of absence’ and ‘an absence of presence’; the *pharmakon* in between ‘remedy’ and ‘poison’; the *supplement* in between ‘the additional’ and ‘the constitutive’; the *parergon* in between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’; *et cetera*—without, however, any of them being reducible to the determinations in between which they oscillate.

<sup>52</sup> PSY, 390/(II) 4.

<sup>53</sup> One of Derrida’s earliest texts from his engagement with psychoanalysis is “Freud et la scène de l’écriture” published in *L’écriture et différence* in 1967, while one of the last texts is *États d’âmes de la psychanalyse: l’impossible au-delà d’une souveraine cruauté* from 2000. In between, in 1976 Derrida’s text “Fors” was published as the foreword to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s *Cryptonymie: le verbier de l’homme aux loups*.

engage with both deconstruction and psychoanalysis in the course of this thesis?

Heidegger had already emphasized a certain kinship between ‘analysis’ and what he called the ‘*Destruktion*’ or, echoing Husserl, the ‘*Abbau*’ of traditional metaphysics, which, as we have seen, Derrida translated into ‘deconstruction.’ According to Heidegger, one of the oldest usages of the word analysis can be found in Homer’s *Odyssey*, where it is employed to describe the nocturnal occupation of Penelope whilst waiting for her husband’s return: “nämlich für ihr Auflösen des Gewebes, das sie tagsüber gewebt hatte.”<sup>54</sup> As Heidegger further explains, the Greek *ἀναλύειν* refers to an unweaving of a weave, an unraveling of a knotted texture or a coming apart or dissolution of something into its elemental or component parts (*Bestandteile*).<sup>55</sup>

Despite his refusal to reduce deconstruction to analysis, Derrida, in one of his most elaborate engagements with psychoanalysis entitled *Résistances de la psychanalyse*, nevertheless affirms that deconstruction “obéit indéniablement à une exigence *analytique*, à la fois critique et analytique. Il s’agit toujours de *défaire, désédimenter, décomposer, déconstituer* des sédiments, des *artefacts*, des présuppositions, des institutions.”<sup>56</sup> However, as Derrida continues, deconstruction also takes its departure from a resistance against the two predominant motifs that orient analysis, that is, “le motif *archéologique* ou *anagogique* du retour vers l’ancien comme archi-originaire et le motif *philolytique* de la déliaison dissociative.”<sup>57</sup>

By calling the desire for the original and the belief in the elemental into question, deconstruction can, in a certain sense, be regarded as hyper-analytic and hyper-critical insofar as it subjects analysis and criticism to a critical analysis, which results in their auto-deconstruction. However, the simultaneous insistence on and resistance to the analysis of deconstruction is not as paradoxical as it might seem, since, as Derrida argues, it is precisely “parce qu’il n’y a pas d’élément indivisible ou d’origine simple que l’analyse

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<sup>54</sup> Zoll, 148.

<sup>55</sup> Derrida, to a certain extent, repeats this etymological interpretation of Heidegger, adding to it a Latin supplement: “Le mot grec *analuein*, c’est bien connu, signifie délier et donc aussi dissoudre le lien. Il se laisserait ainsi rigoureusement approcher, sinon traduire, par le *solvere* latin (détacher, délivrer, absoudre ou acquitter). La *solutio* et la *resolutio* ont à la fois le sens de la dissolution, du lien dissous, du dégagement, du désengagement ou de l’acquiescement (par exemple de la dette) *et* de la solution du problème: explication ou dévoilement” (RES, 15/3).

<sup>56</sup> RES, 41/28.

<sup>57</sup> RES, 41/28.

est interminable.”<sup>58</sup> This is a point where deconstruction comes into close, even if only tangential, contact with psychoanalysis, because psychoanalysis also contains hyper-analytic moments where analysis encounters its limit and a certain excessive and resistant remainder of analysis spurs on an interminable analysis.<sup>59</sup>

These hyper-analytic moments, which at the same time resist and require analysis, take place at the uncircumventable place where Freud famously located the ‘knot,’ weave,’ ‘navel’ (*Knäuel, Geflechts, Nabel*), or the ‘netlike entanglement’ (*netzartige Verstrickung*) of the dream.<sup>60</sup> However, these places of psychoanalysis, which to a certain extent are unanalyzable, do not call for a relinquishing of further analysis but solicits interminable analysis because they are abysmally unfathomable: “Jeder Traum hat mindestens eine Stelle, an welcher er *unergründlich* ist, gleichsam einen Nabel, durch den er mit dem Unerkannten zusammenhängt.”<sup>61</sup>

Thus, psychoanalysis works not only with the premonition (*Ahnung*) of a ‘hidden sense’ (*Verborgne Sinn*) to be deciphered by the analytic desire, but also with the omphalos of an absolute unknown, which remains absolved from analysis even while spurring it on, and which designates an impenetrable, inexhaustible, and irresolvable *topos* (*Stelle*) that the desiring analyst must therefore leave in the obscure (*im Dunkel lassen*).<sup>62</sup> One can perhaps say that this tension in psychoanalysis between a resolving and terminable analysis aiming at a ‘cure’ or a ‘completed interpretational work’ (*vollendeter Deutungsarbeit*)<sup>63</sup> and an interminable analysis confronted with the irresolvable that no longer belongs to the reserve of analysis but rather exceeds it, also makes psychoanalysis into something of a ‘double science.’

As these considerations indicate, what is at issue concerning the ‘remains of a self’ with which this thesis is engaged is the shared resistance of psychoanalysis and deconstruction against that which, as Derrida writes in

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<sup>58</sup> RES, 48/33–34. At times, Derrida even puts deconstruction and interminable analysis on the same footing. Cf. PdM, 23/51.

<sup>59</sup> Derrida also remarks on this proximity in distance, when he writes that deconstruction happens “en un coin, introuvable dans l’espace d’une topologie ou d’une géométrie objectives, là, *entre* la restance et la résistance: dans le *re-* d’une répétition qui, ne répétant ou ne représentant rien qui soit avant elle ou devant elle [...] dans leur *entre* même, dans leur entrelacement, leur invagination chiasmatisque, leur *symplokè* ou leur *Geflecht*; toutes ces figures apparaissaient *en série* à l’analyse, tout en y dérochant la présence pleine de leur *comme tel*, s’annonçant plutôt que se donnant à l’analyse” (RES, 44–45/30).

<sup>60</sup> GW II/III, 530.

<sup>61</sup> GW II/III, 116.

<sup>62</sup> GW II/III, 530.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. GW II/III, 126. See also Freud’s essay ‘Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse’ from 1937 (GW XVI, 57–99).

his essay “Moi—la psychanalyse,” “aura toujours lié le sens à la présentabilité.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, both ‘double sciences’ are concerned with what essentially escapes (re)presentation—traces, resistances, repetitions, returns, specters, and hauntings, all of which signal towards an excess of analysis and of ‘proper’ knowledge—both in the sense of a property of ownership and a pure propriety, since, as Derrida writes, “plus rien n’est propre ici.”<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the question of both psychoanalysis and deconstruction is also “de part en part *la question de la traduction*,”<sup>66</sup> since they are, each in different ways, confronted with the difficult task of translating the almost untranslatable—whether this is called the unconscious, the idiom, singularity, or otherwise.

Deconstruction has to translate what essentially escapes translation because its meaning is already disseminated, already different from itself; psychoanalysis has to translate into the discourse of consciousness what essentially escapes it. One insight from Freudian psychoanalysis is that consciousness may not be the most general or prevalent character of the psychical processes (*nicht der allgemeinste Charakter der seelischen Vorgänge*) but only one particular function among others.<sup>67</sup> To Derrida, this psychoanalytic insight that the subject is not just a unified and self-transparent ego, but rather endlessly divided and multiplied in itself, obliges us to reconsider not only the concepts of ‘subject,’ ‘self,’ ‘(self-)consciousness,’ and ‘reason,’ but also those of ‘autonomy,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘responsibility,’ and, I will argue, also ‘solitude.’

On a final note, I will say that the readings in this thesis, like any reading, will obey the unavoidable ‘law of selective economy,’<sup>68</sup> seeing as the texts with which it engages far exceed its limits. This means there will be filterings, discriminations, calculated citation, omissions, and a whole series of mechanisms that—more or less abusively, more or less shamelessly—make the texts accommodate the limited context and perspective of the thesis. Nevertheless, my intention has been to try to open the texts by drawing attention to their inexhaustible ambiguities, contradictions, and divergences, and thereby not to pretend to provide an exhaustive reading of

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<sup>64</sup> PSY, 154/(I) 138. For instance, Derrida writes that the hiatus which separates the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ escapes phenomenological reflexivity and thereby “l’*autorité de la présence à soi et à tout ce qu’elle commande. Ce hiatus de la non-présence à soi conditionne le sens dont la phénoménologie fait son thème mail il n’est lui-même ni un sens ni une présence*” (PSY, 147–148/(I) 131–132).

<sup>65</sup> PSY, 153/(I) 137.

<sup>66</sup> PSY, 387/(II) 1.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 23.

<sup>68</sup> PC, 397/372.

them, but instead trying to exempt them from “la requête de dernière instance, voire d’instance tout court.”<sup>69</sup> Not least because it is my assumption that this thesis shares with both psychoanalysis and deconstruction the conjecture that, in the non-closing words of Derrida, “*il reste toujours à analyser.*”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> PC, 279/261.

<sup>70</sup> RES, 49/34.



## I. THE SOLITUDE OF NOT BEING ABLE TO BE ALONE

Dans le sommeil, on dort, il n'y a pas de moi et personne que du spectre,  
arrachement du têtème de l'être, par d'autres êtres (à ce moment-là éveillés),  
de ce qui fait que l'on est un corps  
– Antonin Artaud, *Suppôts et Supplications*

J'ai toujours eu la sensation qu'il y avait en moi un être assassiné.  
Assassiné avant ma naissance.  
Il me fallait retrouver cet être assassiné.  
Tenté de lui redonner vie.  
– Samuel Beckett, *Rencontres*

### I.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to begin drawing up the contours of the strange sounding 'solitude of not being able to be alone,' perhaps it would be helpful to turn to the very place where it first made itself noticeable to me, namely, in the writings of Antonin Artaud. More specifically, my initial encounter with this sense of solitude took place when reading Artaud's text *Van Gogh le suicidé de la société* published in 1947—just one year before his death. On my reading, this unique piece of writing offers an extraordinary reflection, or perhaps more of a resonance, both *of* and *on* this specific sense of solitude that stems from not being able to be alone. One paragraph in particular makes this apparent, which is why we will render it in its entirety. Here is Artaud:

De plus, on ne se suicide pas tout seul.  
Nul n'a jamais été seul pour naître.  
Nul non plus n'est seul pour mourir.  
Mais, dans le cas de suicide, il faut une armée de mauvais êtres pour décider le corps au geste contre nature de se priver de sa propre vie.  
Et je crois qu'il y a toujours quelqu'un d'autre à la minute de la mort extrême pour nous dépouiller de notre propre vie<sup>71</sup>

One of the striking features of this paragraph is that even though it laments the impossibility of ever being completely alone on one's own, not even at the moment of death where no one can accompany another, it still exudes an immense sense of solitude. The question that therefore suggests itself is how

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<sup>71</sup> OC XIII, 61/SW, 511.

to understand this sense of solitude that appears to be essentially bound up with the impossibility of being alone by and with oneself. Were we to suggest a first preliminary response to this question it might come in the form of an exclusion, since such a sense of solitude does not appear to be a serene solitude of voluntary and possibly self-authenticating seclusion, or a withdrawal into some individual, insular, or solipsistic solidity. Nor, however, does it appear to be a solitude of involuntary isolation, let alone a longing for the company of others. Instead, the voice that seems to speak in Artaud's text, almost inaudibly, like a murmur, resembles an incessantly interrupted solitude. It resembles a solitude of profoundly superficial restlessness and unease, which seems to suffer from its inability to become properly solitary, as if from a distance within itself that keeps it from ever being completely alone with itself, almost to the point of being bereft of itself—that is, like a *solitude without solitude*.<sup>72</sup>

Why, then, retain the word solitude? To this question, another tentative response could be that one bereft of his or her (as if there were only two genders) own solitude is also the only one left to answer for this theft, that is, the sole one responsible for the disrobement and disappropriation of his or her own solitude. Accordingly, there is still a relation to solitude even if such a relation is only sustained in the experience of its own impossibility; and yet the impossibility of relating to one's own solitude may be the utmost solitary experience.

Other aspects of the relation between responsibility and solitude will be developed in the concluding remarks. In the present chapter, however, my intention is to explore and expound upon the experience of a disappropriated solitude understood precisely as a solitude bereft of itself because of its inability to be alone with itself. In order to further sketch out such 'disappropriated solitude,' we will proceed with our reading of Artaud's texts, guided and inspired by the seminal readings provided and transmitted to us by Derrida over a course of more than three decades.<sup>73</sup> In particular, Derrida's 1965 essay on Artaud "La parole soufflée," wherein he pursues what he calls the 'structure of theft' or the 'structure of disrobement'

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<sup>72</sup> As Allen has put it, this solitude is "an imperfect solitude insofar as it is complex rather than simple, shared rather than unitary, and inescapable rather than isolated" (Allen 2015, 69).

<sup>73</sup> As such, Derrida's engagement with Artaud, his writings and drawings, has been persistent throughout most of his philosophical career. I shall mention four of Derrida's most remarkable texts on Artaud here: "La parole soufflée" from 1965 (ED, 253–292/169–195); "Le théâtre de la cruauté et la clôture de la représentation" from 1966 (ED, 341–368/232–250); "Forcener le subjectile" (AA, 55–105/61–148); *Artaud le Moma—Interjections d'appel* from 2002.



(*structure du vol ou dérobement*), which he sees as permeating most of Artaud's work, will be of utmost importance throughout this chapter. Before we go any further into the investigation of this structure, however, allow me first to make some brief remarks about certain difficulties in reading and writing on Artaud.

## I.2 A PRELIMINARY REMARK ON THE CRITICAL AND THE CLINICAL

In “La parole soufflée,” Derrida suggests that a certain naïveté is indispensable for approaching the textual corpus of Artaud. Among other things, this suggestion concerns the way in which Artaud's texts have been subjected to both critical and clinical exegesis, which, in Derrida's view, share the tendency of making ‘examples’ or ‘cases’ out of their subject matters.<sup>74</sup> In other words, both the clinical and the critical discourses risk constructing the texts with which they are engaged into examples of a more general essence or an underlying or overarching structure—whether this be the ‘essence of poetry’ or the ‘structure of schizophrenia’—thereby inevitably reducing that which in these texts singularly or idiosyncratically resists such reductions.<sup>75</sup>

According to Derrida, the clinical and the critical discourses can only uphold their procedures by maintaining a reference to metaphysical dualities such as those between ‘mind’ and ‘body,’ ‘author’ and ‘text,’ ‘life’ and ‘thought,’ ‘example’ and ‘exemplary,’ or ‘work’ and ‘madness’—even if the aim is to criticize them.<sup>76</sup> For Derrida, the pressing problem with reading Artaud through such binary lens of either the critical or the clinical is that it is precisely the whole arsenal of such binary distinctions, which Artaud unrelentingly and persistently calls into question, or puts on trial, in order to make manifest the vacillating ground of their dissociation. Therefore, when confronted with the unruliness of a text whose madness is not distinct from its reason or whose ‘material body’ is not distinct from its ‘eidetic form,’ “la

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<sup>74</sup> On Derrida's critical deconstruction of the logic of the example and its political implications, see Michael Naas' introduction to the English translation of *L'autre cap*. Cf. AC, vii–lix.

<sup>75</sup> We should note, however, that in one of his *écrits* Lacan also calls for the necessity of a certain ignorance in order to avoid violating and to open up a space for the unforeseen and undecidable singularity of the analysand when working within the clinical discourse. As a reminder of the analyst's never omniscient point of view in the relation to the analysand, Lacan therefore emphasizes the necessity “de son ignorance toujours neuve à ce qu'aucun ne soit un cas” (*Écrits*, 824/699).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. ED, 260/174.

*réduction psychologique* et la *réduction éidétique* fonctionnent de la même manière, ont à leur insu la même fin.”<sup>77</sup>

Derrida stresses the difficulty of reading Artaud even for an infinitely attentive and profound reader as Blanchot, who risks falling prey to the movement of exemplification when he presents Artaud as yet another poetic victim of and witness to the scandalous separation of thought from life, in line with other exemplary examples of poetic insight such as Hölderlin or Mallarmé.<sup>78</sup> For Derrida, the main reason for Blanchot’s risk of succumbing to such exemplification is that, even though he recognizes that Artaud will never accept a separation between life and thought, he still leaves out “l’affirmation propre qui soutient la non-acceptation de ce scandale.”<sup>79</sup> Yet, as Derrida stresses, it is precisely this idiosyncratic affirmation of non-acceptance that produces the resistance of Artaud’s writing to exemplification thus reserving and retreating the secret of his texts from the judgments of clinical or critical exegesis.

Derrida’s insistence on displaying a certain naïveté in his writing on Artaud’s body of texts therefore has a double concern; it concerns an ‘ignorance,’ or at any rate a suspension of judgment, as to whether this body belongs to either of these discourses—the clinical *or* the critical—but it also concerns the way in which this body to a certain extent deconstructs and thereby exceeds the very difference within which both of these discourses operate.<sup>80</sup>

In questioning the shared tendency of the critical and clinical discourses— notwithstanding their methodological and conceptual differences—towards exemplification in confrontation with what exceeds exemplification, that is, with the singular or the unique, Derrida argues that this tendency is so strong

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<sup>77</sup> ED, 255/171.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. LV, 58/40.

<sup>79</sup> ED, 256/171. We shall return to Blanchot’s reading of Artaud in a later section of this chapter.

<sup>80</sup> According to Derrida, any diminishment of such naïveté would require that a genuine dialogue between the critical and the clinical discourses would finally be opened, and for that, Derrida says, “il eût fallu attendre longtemps” (ED, 253/169). Twenty-eight years after Derrida’s “La parole soufflée,” Deleuze published his *Critique et clinique* (1993), in which he reopens and reengages precisely with a discussion of the relation between a supposedly critical and a supposedly clinical discourse. More significantly, however, in these essays Deleuze also displaces the discussion of the critical and the clinical insofar as he writes ‘beyond’ their opposition in a zone of indiscernibility between these two regions of discourse. A zone that could perhaps be called ‘literature’ or ‘writing’ since, as Deleuze writes: “Ecrire est une affaire de devenir, toujours inachevé, toujours en train de se faire, et qui déborde toute matière vivable ou vécue. C’est un processus, c’est-à-dire un passage de Vie qui traverse le vivable et le vécu” (Deleuze 1993, 11/1).

because by definition “de l’unique il n’est rien dit.”<sup>81</sup> In other words, it is precisely *because* there is nothing to say about the absolutely unique without, at the same time, reinscribing it in the general economy of what is sayable, that the question of the unique is inseparably bound up with the logic of the example—understood either as *a sample of* or as *a model for* something more general or universal, or both at the same time—wherefore the notion of a ‘unique example’ or an ‘example of the unique’ must remain irreducibly paradoxical or even impossible.

However, Derrida’s naïvité does not amount to a belief in the sanctity of the unique or the purity of the singular over against the reductive structures of generality or essentiality, and when he reproaches both the critical and the clinical discourses for their silent resignation in confrontation with the unique, it is not because he believes in the possibility, or even in the desirability, of recovering such singular uniqueness in an expression that would be uncontaminated by such structures. On the contrary, Derrida objects to this silent resignation before the unique precisely because, as he proclaims, “nous croyions à la nécessité de réduire l’unique, de l’analyser, de le décomposer en le brisant davantage.”<sup>82</sup> In other words, Derrida’s reproach to both the critical and the clinical discourses concerns the circumventions that they make in order to avoid engaging with the unavoidability of the generality and iterability that makes the singular repeatable, and with impossibility of ever obtaining a discourse idiomatic enough to capture and express the unique in its pure difference—not least because, as Derrida puts it elsewhere: “Le désir de l’idiome, rien n’est moins idiomatique.”<sup>83</sup> Despite the unavoidable necessity of analyzing the singularly unique, however, Derrida pays close attention to that which nevertheless continues to resist such analysis, thereby making it interminable. Hence, Derrida concludes his remarks on the yet-to-be-opened discussion between the clinical and the critical:

Si Artaud résiste absolument—et, croyonsnous, comme on ne l’avait jamais fait auparavant—aux exégèses cliniques ou critiques—c’est parce que dans son aventure (et par ce mot nous désignons une totalité antérieure à la séparation de la

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<sup>81</sup> ED, 257/172.

<sup>82</sup> ED, 260/174.

<sup>83</sup> CP, 382/360. As Derrida remarks in a footnote to “La clôture de la représentation” the desire to reintroduce a purity into the concept of difference ends up returning it to non-difference, because a pure difference would no longer be different from a pure identity. According to Derrida, one only escapes returning difference to non-difference is one attamps to think “la différence comme impureté d’origine, c’est-à-dire comme différence dans l’économie finie du même” (ED, 366/333).

vie et de l'oeuvre) est la protestation *elle-même* contre l'exemplification *elle-même*.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, if Artaud's texts forcefully push us into thinking about singularity—even if this thought is nothing more than an interminable analysis of that which secretly resists analysis—then, as Derrida continues, “ce n'est plus comme l'exemple d'une structure puisqu'il s'agit de cela même—le vol—qui constitue la structure d'exemple comme telle.”<sup>85</sup> If one therefore to some extent writes ‘on Artaud,’ as one says, one does so only as one writes on what Artaud calls a *subjectile*, that is, as a textual material that withdraws itself secretly in offering its surface as the support for ever renewed inscriptions.<sup>86</sup>

In what follows, we will return to these themes of idiosyncratic resistance, secrecy, and singularity, as well as to their respective relations to solitude. First, however, we will have to attend in more detail to the above-mentioned structure of theft, brought to our attention by Derrida in the attempt to illustrate its permeation of Artaud's work.

### I.3 ARTAUD AND THE STRUCTURE OF THEFT

Resisting the temptation of making them into examples of a particular genre, experiences of deprivation, disappropriation, and theft are scattered throughout Artaud's texts. Artaud writes repeatedly of experiences of having been stolen from himself, from his own birth, and from a death of his own. He writes of a sense of having his body, his breath, and his speech spirited away from him, and of being disrobed and vacated in and by his own thinking as well as in and by other modes of both impression and expression and inspiration and expiration.

Indeed, for Artaud the very respirational condition of existing constitutes a symptom of the fundamental or, more precisely, the abyssal structure of theft, which makes him consider his whole existence as having been exiled or aborted from its origin (*ab-oriri*) and as being continuously carried away or miscarried by something elusive, stealthy, or furtive. The motifs of

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<sup>84</sup> ED, 261/175.

<sup>85</sup> ED, 262/175.

<sup>86</sup> As Derrida explains, the notion of the *subjectile* “appartient au code de la peinture et désigne ce qui est en quelque sorte couché dessous (sub-jectum) comme une substance, un sujet ou un succube. Entre le dessous et le dessus, c'est à la fois un support et une surface, parfois aussi la matière d'une peinture ou d'une sculpture, tout ce qui en elles se distinguerait de la forme, autant que du sens et de la représentation, ce qui n'est pas représentable. Sa profondeur ou son épaisseur présumées ne donnent à voir qu'une superficie [...]. Une sorte de peau, trouée de pores” (AA, 56/64).

abortion and birth, as of aborted births, are recurrent throughout Artaud's writings, as is the stealthy work of death and the waste products it perpetually leaves behind. Moreover, it is not only the respiratory but also the alimentary condition of existence that Artaud experiences as thieving, but also as intrusive and violating with regard to any sense of autonomy or independence of the one existing.

It is not only that as existing one constantly and involuntarily has to take in something of the 'outside'—inhale oxygen, uptake nutrition, *et cetera*—in order to continue existing. It is also that once one has taken in this 'outside' one cannot even fully absorb, appropriate, or digest its otherness in order to make it into one's own, even though one's entire existence depends on it. Something or other will always remain inappropriable and indigestive, leaving one with no choice but to somehow abject or excrete these leftovers of otherness without these processes being able to entirely purge themselves of their traces of alienation—thus upsetting the very distinction between 'inside and outside' or 'other and own.'<sup>87</sup> Perhaps one could say that Artaud experiences the movement of dialectics gone astray since there is no 'own' other to be reappropriated *via negativa* by someone who would then come to be confirmed retrospectively as the proper owner.

Artaud's conclusion therefore appears to be that there is nothing pure about existing. Rather, to exist means to have always already received the imprint of impropriety, always already to have been exiled from one's own property—and no matter how fervently Artaud nevertheless continually attempt to extract a purity of 'life' from this exile the very fact of its originally contaminated existence cannot be undone.<sup>88</sup> This originary impropriety of existing is also the reason why, with some precaution, we can make the prefatory suggestion here that Artaud's writing bears testimony to the fact that a proper birth of one's own will always have been aborted, just as a proper death of one's own, as we glimpsed in the initial quote, will

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<sup>87</sup> For instance, we read in *Artaud le Môme* from 1947: "L'imposition du dehors qui dort / comme un dedans, eclate des latrines / du canal où l'on chie la mort" (OC XII, 31/WRS, 121). And further ahead, Artaud le môme will write that the creation of the fact of being or existence that we call 'reality,' is nothing more than the outcome of a criminal fornication of non-being with the possibility of chance: "D'une préméditation de non-être, d'une criminelle incitation de peut-être est venue la réalité, comme du hasard qui la forniquait" (OC XII, 36/WRS, 125).

<sup>88</sup> Following a lecture by the psychiatrist José Solanes on the vicissitudes of exile, Artaud wrote him a letter in 1945 expressing his sympathy and understanding for what he had undergone in being expatriated from his native country. Artaud compares this state of political exile with the state of exile in which he finds his body and soul: "car le corps est comme une interne patrie dont aucun morceau ne doit être enlevé sans voir exiler chaque fois un peu d'âme" (OC XI, 161).

always remain in deferral, since—*‘il y a toujours quelqu’un d’autre à la minute de la mort extrême pour nous dépouiller de notre propre vie.’*

Throughout the years, especially at Rodez and afterwards,<sup>89</sup> Artaud’s writings on the different aspects of the structure of theft—alimentational, respirational, or spiritual—become increasingly occupied with theological, scatological, and secretional vocabularies and focused on their essential interconnections. Texts such as the *Cahiers de Rodez*, *Artaud le Môme*, and the late radio play *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu* (1947) are thus infused with images relating God and the genesis to the original and structural theft of any proper life. Accordingly, Artaud describes his improper life as being “emprunté, vole et violé de Dieu”<sup>90</sup> and as existing only in terms of the “parasitisme de Dieu sur moi.”<sup>91</sup> As such, ‘God’ will become the proper name, or the name *par excellence*, designating the furtive and thieving other who continually purloins my body from me by spiriting it away and separates me from myself by aborting my birth and suspending any relation to a death of my own.<sup>92</sup>

In the French title of Derrida’s essay “La parole soufflée,” which is left untranslated in the English text, the verb *souffler* brings together a whole series of meanings significant to the structure of theft in Artaud’s text. These meanings all have something to do with respirational mechanisms, not only with breathing, inhaling, exhaling, losing one’s breath in astonishment, suffocating, and so forth, but also with the Latin *spirare* of spirituality, inspiration, and with being spirited away.<sup>93</sup> Of particular importance in “La parole soufflée,” however, is the fact that one has to draw in breath in order to be able to speak; and, in Derrida’s view, Artaud’s work comes to establish an essential yet furtive communication between “l’essence du vol et l’origine du discours en général.”<sup>94</sup> This communication between theft and discourse will be a recurrent motif in Artaud’s work, from early till late, but it will

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<sup>89</sup> From 1942–46 Artaud was a patient at the psychiatric hospital in Rodez. The *Cahiers de Rodez* constitutes volumes 15–21 of the OC and is a compilation of Artaud’s letters and other documents from these years of internment.

<sup>90</sup> OC XV, 147.

<sup>91</sup> OC XV, 304–5.

<sup>92</sup> Derrida even calls Artaud’s thinking and writing on the relation between the thieving god and the disrobement of man a ‘scato-theology.’ With reference to Freud, Derrida explains: “La défécation ‘séparation quotidienne d’avec les selles, parties précieuses du corps’ (Freud) est, comme une naissance, comme ma naissance, le premier vol qui à la fois me dé-précie et me souille. C’est pourquoi l’histoire de Dieu comme généalogie de la valeur dérobée se récite comme l’histoire de la défécation” (ED, 270–271/182).

<sup>93</sup> One of Artaud’s mantras, which he repeats in a manifold of ways, reads: “devenir corps en entier, dans la haine de la spiritualité” (OC XIV, 2; 48).

<sup>94</sup> ED, 262/175.

continually change its emphasis and operate at different levels: sometimes at the level of thinking; sometimes at the level of speaking; sometimes at the level of language or signification in general; and most often at several levels at once. We will therefore proceed by trying to unravel some of these levels through different down-strokes in Artaud's text.

In one of his letters to Jacques Rivière, the editorial director of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*,<sup>95</sup> Artaud describes how 'something furtive' (*quelque chose de furtif*) continually steals away his thoughts and robs him of his words in order to leave his speech, his thinking, and his very existence in abeyance.<sup>96</sup> In his 'extraordinary precision' of self-diagnosis, as Rivière calls it, Artaud observes the strange mechanism by which the closer and more meticulously he inspects his mental activities and movements of thinking, the more they seem to lose any supposed continuity, solidity, or substantiality. A couple of years following the correspondence with Rivière, in 1925, Artaud will name this highly refined ability of meticulous self-scrutiny his 'nerve meter' (*pèse-nerfs*) with which, as he writes, "Je me considère dans ma minutie."<sup>97</sup>

The aim and desire of Artaud's nerve metering is to reappropriate the perpetual disappropriation of his thoughts in order to become able: "Penser sans rupture minime, sans chausse-trape dans la pensée, sans l'un de ces escamotages subits dont mes moelles sont coutumières comme postes-émetteurs de courants."<sup>98</sup> However, the more painstakingly sophisticated his methods of auto-inspection become, the clearer all the little gaps, faults, halts, unadmitted slips, and imperceptible lapses stand out and reveal the discontinuous and interrupted mesh-work of what is called thinking.<sup>99</sup> It is

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<sup>95</sup> In 1923 Artaud submitted some of his poetry for publication in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. Rivière declined to publish the poems but in return expressed interest in the biography and pathology of their author. After some time of exchanging letters, Rivière finally suggested that he publish their correspondence instead, which Artaud agreed to on the condition that at least an excerpt of the poetry discussed in the letters were to be included. The correspondence ended up including just one poem, "Cri," published in 1927.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Artaud, OC I, 36/SW, 35. In another of these letters, Artaud makes an explicit reference to his aborted existence, which he nonetheless still seeks to reappropriate: "Car je ne puis pas espérer que le temps ou le travail remédieront à ces obscurités ou à ces défaillances, voilà pourquoi je réclame avec tant d'insistance et d'inquiétude, cette existence même avortée" (OC I, 31/SW, 32).

<sup>97</sup> OC I, 119/SW, 85.

<sup>98</sup> OC I, 108/SW, 81.

<sup>99</sup> When Artaud discerns a "séparation anormale des éléments" in his thinking, along with "l'impulsion à penser, à chacune des stratifications terminales de la pensée, en passant par tous les états, toutes les bifurcations de la pensée et de la forme" (OC I, 36/SW, 35), his scrutinizing auto-inspections and his awareness of the paradoxes of reflexivity come

not that thought thereby loses all coherent sense, but rather that sense comes to disclose itself as being conditioned by intervals of nonsensical vacuity. Thus, in *Fragments d'un journal d'enfer* from 1925, Artaud will lament the discovery of his nerve meter: “Ni mon cri ni ma fièvre ne sont de moi. [...] j’ai comme une conscience nouvelle de mon intime déperdition.”<sup>100</sup>

This hyperawareness of unawareness, that is, the hyperawareness of all the leakages, holes, and gaping intervals, not only in the fabric of thinking but also of language and of bodily existence, along with the desire to mend them, is a recurrent subject in Artaud’s writings and drawings.<sup>101</sup> Undoubtedly, Artaud’s hyperawareness of instances of vacuity in awareness stems from tormenting experiences of self-abandonment or theft of self, but, as we shall come to see, they are also an effect of the very austere demand for thinking to which Artaud, at least in his earlier writings, complies. This demand for thinking stems from Artaud’s definition of what it means, not merely to think, but to *have thought sensu stricto*.

In a lengthy footnote to the passage in *L’ombilic des limbes* entitled “Lettre a Monsieur le législateur de la loi sur les stupéfiants” also from 1925, Artaud concisely explains why he insists upon the thought that he has no

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very close to resembling the ‘hyperreflexivity’ that Louis A. Sass has found to be a movement of thought particularly prevalent in people who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Sass describes hyperreflexivity as an excessive alertness toward the very structure of thinking that continuously analyzes the thought processes while they proceed, breaking them up, and picking them apart into dismembered pieces separated by intervals of vacuity. This incessant decomposition of any composition of thought can lead to a radical detachment and “entrapment in a sort of morbid wakefulness or hyperawareness” (Sass 1992, 8). In a later article, Sass draws explicit attention to Artaud’s ‘autobiographical’ writings as a first hand description of an ‘operative hyperreflexivity.’ See Sass 2003, 153–180. The question is, however, whether anyone, regardless of their diagnosis or lack of diagnosis, would experience such discontinuity, inconsistency, and obscurity if they subjected their thought processes to the same vigilant scrutiny as Artaud.<sup>100</sup> OC I, 135–136/SW, 91.

<sup>101</sup> As Deleuze emphasizes in *Logique du sens*, this hyperawareness of holes and leakages pertains to the experience of the schizophrenic body, which Deleuze explains as follows: “Le premier aspect du corps schizophrénique, c’est une sorte de corps-passoire: Freud soulignait cette aptitude du schizophrène à saisir la surface et la peau comme percée d’une infinité de petits trous. La conséquence en est que le corps tout entier n’est plus que profondeur, et emporte, happe toutes choses dans cette profondeur béante qui représente une involution fondamentale. [...] Comme il n’y a pas de surface, l’intérieur et l’extérieur, le contenant et le contenu n’ont plus de limite précise” (Deleuze 1969, 106–107/87). Yet the skin is in fact somewhat of a meshwork of little holes and the experience of a schizophrenic body as penetrated by the outside as its insides are exposed in and to the outside need not be limited to the clinical diagnosis of schizophrenia even if it might be more conspicuous and more intense within its domain.



thought, even if this odd claim makes his friends laugh (nervous laughs perhaps) and try to prove the opposite.

To be sure, Artaud acknowledges that he cannot claim not to be thinking at all, since that would simply mean to be without any brain activity whatsoever, and yet he nevertheless maintains that there is a difference between merely thinking and *having* thought. The well-meaning attempts by his friends to prove to Artaud that he is *in fact* thinking, for instance by demonstrating his capacity to think something adequately or correctly with respect to ideas, norms, or objects on which they can agree, that is, in correspondence with some *sensus communis*, are not sufficient in convincing him of his *having* thought. This is so, Artaud explains, because “avoir de la pensée, pour moi, c’est *maintenir* sa pensée, être en état de se la manifester à soi-même et qu’elle puisse répondre à toutes les circonstances du sentiment et de la vie. Mais principalement *se répondre à soi*.”<sup>102</sup> In other words, for Artaud *having* thought means that not only should one *maintain* or *sustain* one’s thought—by which he means that one should be constantly conscious of the movements and contents of one’s thought—, one should also be *responsible* for one’s thought by having it respond to oneself *at all times*.

In order to legitimately testify to oneself, and others, that one is actually thinking or having thought, one should never, not even for the smallest lapse of time, be absent-minded or let the movements or the contents of one’s thoughts escape one’s hold on them (*main-tenir*). Not being entirely aware of every little intricacy in the workings of one’s thinking is, in Artaud’s view, the same as not *actually* thinking at all, that is, as not having thought due to letting it slip through one’s fingers. Artaud unfolds his strict demand for proper thinking as follows:

[C]’est ne cesser à aucun moment de se sentir dans son être interne, dans la masse informulée de sa vie, dans la substance de sa réalité, c’est ne pas sentir en soi de trou capital, d’absence vitale, c’est sentir toujours sa pensée égale à sa pensée, quelles que soient par ailleurs les insuffisances de la forme qu’on est capable de lui donner.<sup>103</sup>

From these requirements of sustainability and responsibility, we see that for Artaud *having* thought signifies nothing less than the absolute self-presence, self-sensing, and self-transparency of thinking by and to itself. That is to say, a thinking capable of hearing itself speak with full clarity and of responding to itself immediately with equal clarity and without intermediary or

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<sup>102</sup> OC I, 82/SW, 69.

<sup>103</sup> OC I, 83/SW, 70.

interruption thereby eliminating the possibility of misunderstanding, uncertainty, doubt, conflict, or splitting.<sup>104</sup>

At this crucial point, as with many other points, in Artaud's writing we come to encounter a desire for what one—with Derrida in mind—could call a 'pure auto-affection,' that is, a desire for a complete convergence between the affecting and the affected. Also remarkable about this desire as it is manifested in Artaud's ideal demand for 'having thought' is its close proximity to the Aristotelian conception of the 'thought thinking thought' (*νόησις νοήσεως νόησις*), understood precisely as a thought that thinks itself immediately without any difference or distance, not even that of time, interrupting its relationship with itself—wherefore Aristotle conceives of it as eternal.<sup>105</sup> Yet, as Derrida has shown in one of his elaborations of auto-affection, the auto-affection of a finite existence will always turn out impure

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<sup>104</sup> In this regard, it is of relevance to note that Melanie Klein, in her fine little text "On the Sense of Loneliness" from 1963, has suggested that the sense of what she calls loneliness (and not solitude), irrespective of any external circumstances, is "the result of an ubiquitous yearning for an unattainable perfect internal state." Klein explains this yearning as emerging from the *double bind* of existence that "together with the urge to split there is from the beginning of life a drive towards integration", the prime example being the necessity of the infant to split itself off from the symbiotic relationship with the mother in order to reconstruct an integrated ego-identity of its own. However, the splittings necessary for the constitution of an ego-identity leave traces of an irretrievable loss (of wordless understanding, of wholeness, of symbiosis) and no matter how strongly the integration process proceeds "it cannot do away with the feeling that certain component of the self are not available because they are split off and cannot be regained." Furthermore, Klein remarks that in the schizophrenic condition these split-off parts of the self continues to haunt the self with such a force that "the schizophrenic feels that he is hopelessly in bits and that he will never be in possession of his self." Finally, the excessive use of projective identification the schizophrenic therefore enacts causes him to experience himself "not only to be in bits, but to be mixed up with other people" (Klein 2011, 303–313). We will return in more detail to the psychoanalytic understanding of an originary split or cut in the succeeding chapters on Freud and Lacan.

<sup>105</sup> In book 12 of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle writes of this idol of the eternal mind: "Therefore Mind thinks itself, if it is that which is best; and its thinking is a thinking of thinking" (Met. 1074b). The life of this self-thinking thought, Aristotle further says, is a supreme joy comparable only to what we might enjoy for a brief span of time (*μικρὸν χρόνον*) in our temporal lives, since it is both the object and the subject of its own desire and thus able to enjoy its own pleasure, or its pleasure of itself—*immediately*, that is, without distance, interval, or mediation and without the resistance of time. Thus Aristotle infers that self-thinking thought must be eternal, which leads to his influential corrective of Plato's source of motion as 'that which moves itself' (*τὸ αὐτὸ ἐαυτὸ κινεῖν*). According to Aristotle, the principle of movement cannot itself have been moved, not even by itself, since that would already presuppose the time of movement; rather, "there is something which moves without being moved; something eternal which is both substance and actuality" (Met. 1072a). See also, Lawrence 1988, 155–174.

since it will always already have been haunted—“mais *constitutivement hantée*”<sup>106</sup>—by some infinitesimal hetero-affection related to the spacing of time, also famously called *différance*.<sup>107</sup>

Derrida’s deconstructive engagements with the structure of auto-affection are manifold and the technicalities intricate and difficult. In order to offer a brief, and no doubt insufficient, clarification of the deconstruction of auto-affectivity I will therefore restrict my focus to one such instance of engagement in an early text only recently published.<sup>108</sup> In his 1964–1965 seminar *Heidegger: la question de l’Être et l’Histoire*, Derrida reads Heidegger’s *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* of 1929, where Heidegger discusses the *aporia* of time as pure auto-affection (*die Zeit als reine Selbstaffektion*) as it is laid out in Kant’s first *Critique*. The *aporia* that Kant envisages in his transcendental aesthetics on time concerns the fact that the relation to oneself can never be immediate since it is always already affected by its own relating to itself. Kant explains:

Wenn das Vermögen sich bewußt zu werden, das, was im Gemüte liegt, aufsuchen (apprehendieren) soll, so muß es dasselbe affizieren [...] in der Vorstellung der Zeit bestimmt, da es denn sich selbst anschaut, nicht wie es sich unmittelbar selbsttätig vorstellen würde, sondern nach der Art, wie es von innen affiziert wird, folglich *wie es sich erscheint, nicht wie es ist*.<sup>109</sup>

In other words, it is the temporal auto-affection ‘itself’ that prevents ‘itself’ from ever being pure because it always already dissimulates and alters itself in its own affecting of itself. Indeed, in his *Kantbuch*, Heidegger unfolds how Kant’s analysis discloses that time cannot simply be conceived as a pure form of intuition for a transcendental subject but that the pure auto-affection of time is what makes the very notion of a subject possible in the first place. According to Heidegger, the pure auto-affection of time is therefore not something that comes to affect a self already present-at-hand (*vorhandenes*

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<sup>106</sup> T, 205/179.

<sup>107</sup> The term *différance*, deriving from the French verb *différer*, carries with it references both to the spacing of *differing* in the sense of separating, setting apart, making different, dissimilar, unlike, and to the temporalizing of *deferring* in the sense of putting off, delaying, or postponing. As Derrida clarifies in an interview with Antoine Spire, *différance* is “un mouvement dans lequel la distinction de l’espace et du temps n’est pas encore advenue: espacement, devenir-espace du temps et devenir-temps de l’espace, *différenciation*, processus de production des différences et expérience de l’altérité absolue” (PM, 384/150).

<sup>108</sup> Besides this early instance, some of Derrida’s most elaborate and seminal engagements with the structure of auto-affection can be found in the following places: VP, Ch. 6; T, §§ 2–3 and 8–13; ADS, Chs. 1–2.

<sup>109</sup> KW 3–4, A 49/B 69. My italics.

*Selbst*), since it constitutes the very concern of the relation to oneself (*sich-selbst-angehen*). This circumstance further means that the self can no longer be perceived as existing *in* time because its very existence is constituted *as* the pure auto-affection of time, so that “das Ich so sehr ‘zeitlich’ ist, daß es die Zeit selbst ist.”<sup>110</sup>

In his double reading of Heidegger and Kant,<sup>111</sup> but also elsewhere, Derrida then comes to remark that the auto-affection of time cannot be conceived of without the intervallic spacing by which time affects itself, and therefore cannot be conceived of as pure. In other words, there is no pure ‘living present,’ since every present can appear only as an interval constitutively marked by its own disappearance as having been and coming to be. As such, there is no present of self-presence without the supplementary gift of death insofar as “[I]’espace est ‘dans’ le temps il est la pure sortie hors de soi du temps, il est hors-de-soi comme rapport à soi du temps.”<sup>112</sup> Consequently, if the auto-affection of time always already dissimulates itself in and as spacing and the self is constituted as the auto-affectivity of time, then the auto-dissimulation of time as spacing is the primordial heterogeneity that always already makes the auto-affection of the self into a trace of its own hetero-affection.<sup>113</sup>

The crux of Derrida’s deconstruction of auto-affection is not simply to show that it is impossible but that is possible only in terms of an auto-hetero-affection, which further means that strictly speaking one can no longer speak of self-alienation in general since there no longer is or never was a self to be

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<sup>110</sup> GA 3, 192. In his preface to the English translation of *La philosophie critique de Kant*, Deleuze suggests that Kant’s conception of the relation of the I (*je*) to itself (*moi*), constituted as the auto-affection of time whereby the *I* is separated from itself as “an Other which affects it” may be read the philosophical rendition of Rimbaud’s poetic formula ‘I is another.’ According to Deleuze, Kant in certain sense even goes further than Rimbaud insofar as Rimbaud “relates back strangely to an Aristotelian way of thinking” in keeping with the division of form and matter, whereby time would designate the changing form of the matter, which in this case would be the I becoming other. In contrast, Kant internalizes time as the exteriority that alters the *I* from within its very matter, that is, as “an infinite modulation, no longer a mould.” This further means that “not only that time is internal to us, but that our interiority constantly divides us from ourselves, splits us in two: a splitting in two which never runs its course, since time has no end. A giddiness, an oscillation which constitutes time” (Deleuze 1963, viii–ix).

<sup>111</sup> See especially HQE, 263–299.

<sup>112</sup> VP 96/86.

<sup>113</sup> This movement is also what Derrida in some contexts refers to as the ‘archi-trace’ or ‘archi-writing,’ which are supplementary names, but not synonyms, for what he in other contexts calls *différance* and which constitutively haunts the present of self-presence whether this is sought in the presence of the silent voice of hearing oneself speak or elsewhere. Cf. M, 13/13.

alienated in the first place. Moreover, to speak of an original self-alienation of a self already subverts the very distinction between the presupposed self and its alienation. As Derrida explains: “L’auto-affection n’est pas une modalité d’expérience caractérisant un étant qui serait déjà lui-même (autos). Elle produit le même comme rapport à soi dans la différence d’avec soi, le même comme le non-identique.”<sup>114</sup> In other words, the relation of a self to itself might be no-thing but the altering of itself, which cannot be determined by a definite article, yet this altering is not simply nothing.<sup>115</sup> Despite its impossibility, however, a desire for a pure auto-affection may continue in spite of its phantasmatic nature; yet, as Derrida emphasizes: “On ne peut pas penser le fantasme sans cette dimension auto-hétéro-affective,” that is, without thinking “de l’imagination et de la sensibilité (espace et temps) comme auto-hétéro-affectation.”<sup>116</sup>

Returning to the writings of Artaud, they appear to be infused with experiences in which such a phantasmatic desire for a pure auto-affection continually suffers the hetero-affection that makes self-sensing possible in the first place, but in doing so also makes it impossible as anything other than an auto-hetero-affection. Hence, Artaud’s writings display experiences where the striving for a pure self-touching of thought is perpetually disappointed by the recurrence of its self-betrayal, self-dissimulation, and self-abandonment since, as Artaud writes: “*Ma pensée m’abandonne à tout les degrés.*”<sup>117</sup>

Artaud therefore considers his thinking apostate because it does not live up to its own demands of responsibility and vigilance but proceeds instead to think at an ‘inferior rate’ to itself.<sup>118</sup> At this stage, one cannot help but wonder if what Artaud refers to as an ‘inferior rate’ of vigilant thinking might not have something in common with what in psychoanalytic vocabulary is called the unconscious. Since, as Lacan clarifies it in his inventive return to Freud:

[T]he unconscious has nothing to do with instinct or primitive knowledge or preparation of thought in some underground. It is a thinking with words, with

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<sup>114</sup> VP, 92/82.

<sup>115</sup> In a Q and A session with children from 2002, Nancy unfolds this tension between the no-thing and nothing as follows: “Rien, c’est le quelque chose de ce qui n’est aucune chose. Donc ce n’est pas quelque chose. Et pourtant, ce n’est pas rien, c’est le fait qu’il y ait [...]. S’il y avait eu quelque chose à la place du monde, on n’aurait pas pu y mettre le monde. Donc, justement, il y a le rien. Et le monde vient dans ce rien” (CT, 54–55/92).

<sup>116</sup> BS II, 244/170.

<sup>117</sup> OC I, 30/31.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. OC I, 83/SW, 70.

thoughts that escape your vigilance, your state of watchfulness. The question of vigilance is important. It is as if a demon plays a game with your watchfulness.<sup>119</sup>

We shall return in more detail to this demonic aspect of self-consciousness and vigilance in Chapter IV on Freud's *Das Unheimliche*. For now, however, we will stay with Artaud and attempt to better understand the distance within thinking that keeps it from ever thinking at an equal rate to itself, but instead makes it abandon and betray itself. In order to do so, we will bring forth yet another aspect of the structure of theft having to do with the vicissitudes of representational thought.

#### I.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THEFT AS A PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION

In Artaud's writings, the structure of theft does not appear solely as a personal matter pertaining to the author's private life and register of experience; rather, the structure of theft comes into view as a *metaphysical* matter, pertaining to what Artaud sometimes simply calls 'life' and to all the mechanisms that continually purloin the living away from the forces of this life and thereby away from themselves.

In this section, I shall try to show how one aspect of this metaphysical structure of theft is concerned with the representational logic that, according to Artaud, has played a significant and damaging role in the history of Western metaphysics, which Artaud opposes to what he refers to a 'metaphysics of life.' Before proceeding to address the relation between the metaphysical structure of theft and the logic of representation some remarks concerning Artaud's understanding of metaphysics are therefore required.

Artaud's notion of metaphysics, which is a word he excuses himself for using—"je regrette beaucoup de prononcer ce mot-là"<sup>120</sup>—seeing as he is

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<sup>119</sup> SIO, 189. "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever" is the title of a speech delivered by Lacan at the Johns Hopkins symposium on "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" in 1966 at which, among other great names, Derrida too attended. With his reference to a demon who plays tricks on one's vigilance, Lacan is of course referring to Descartes' *cogito* of radical doubt. Over the years, Lacan revised his earlier opposition to the Cartesian *cogito* in favor of the Freudian unconscious and in his later writings instead came to align the *cogito* with the subject of the unconscious. This alignment made sense since the certainty of the unconscious, like that of the *cogito*, stems precisely from the fact that "ça pense avant qu'il entre dans la certitude" (Sem XI, 37/37). Moreover, like the subject of the unconscious, it is only "de prendre sa place au niveau de l'énonciation qui donne sa certitude au *cogito*" (ibid. 128/140). In other words, the *cogito* reveals itself as the subject of the unconscious because it is constituted as such only belatedly and only in the field of the Other: "Le sujet ne voit pas où ça mène, il suit" (ibid. 72/75).

<sup>120</sup> OC IV, 44/TD, 25.

fully aware of its historical associations, differs significantly from the way in which this notion is frequently employed in philosophical contexts, including this one. I shall focus on two distinct but equally important aspects of Artaud's ambiguous understanding of metaphysics. *First*, in Artaud's view the term 'metaphysics' is restricted neither to philosophical thought nor to a monolithic Western tradition; on the contrary, it is Artaud's impression that the East is "the only part of the world where Metaphysics is part of the daily practice of life."<sup>121</sup>

In contrast to Western metaphysics schematized by hierarchical dualities—such as 'mind and body,' 'form and matter,' 'theory and praxis,' 'thought and life,' but very important in this context also between 'presence and representation'—Artaud instead speaks of a "*métaphysique en activité*" or a "*métaphysique de gestes*,"<sup>122</sup> which can be experienced in theatrical practices of the East—for instance in the Balinese theatre. Artaud therefore explicitly distinguishes between an Oriental theatre with metaphysical tendencies and an Occidental theatre with psychological tendencies, where the Oriental theatre breaks down the dual schemata of Western theatre, which is based on a metaphysics of representation, thereby coming into closer contact with the metaphysics of life—to which we shall return shortly. *Second*, 'metaphysics,' for Artaud, is essentially artistic and poetic, meaning that it creates and affirms life in all of its complexity and cruelty. According to Artaud, truly metaphysical theatre is *cruel* not because it is evil or vicious but because it pushes us to the limits of what it called 'reality' and exposes us to the anarchical, chaotic, and abyssal forces of life that remain inaccessible and de(con)structive in the face of such construction.<sup>123</sup> In Artaud's view, poetry is anarchic because it radically calls into question the ground of the dichotomous relations between a subject and an object as between a form and its meaning, furthermore, poetry "est anarchique aussi dans le mesure où son apparition est la conséquence d'un désordre qui nous rapproche du chaos."<sup>124</sup>

Accordingly, when Artaud refers to metaphysics in an affirmative tone it actually functions as a designation of that which destabilizes metaphysical dualities in a liberation of the anarchic surging-forth of life 'before' or

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<sup>121</sup> SW, 191. I have not been able to locate the reference in OC.

<sup>122</sup> OC IV, 54; 67/TD, 31;40.

<sup>123</sup> Artaud further explains: "Et quelque aveugle rigueur qu'apportent avec elles toutes ces contingences, la vie ne peut manquer de s'exercer, sinon elle ne serait pas la vie; mais cette rigueur, et cette vie qui passe outre et s'exerce dans la torture et le piétinement de tout, ce sentiment implacable et pur, c'est cela qui est la cruauté. J'ai donc dit 'cruauté,' comme j'aurais dit 'vie' ou comme j'aurais dit 'nécessité'" (OC IV, 137/TD, 82).

<sup>124</sup> OC IV, 52/TD, 30.

‘beyond’ its dichotomous separation from itself.<sup>125</sup> Bearing these two remarks on Artaud’s notion of metaphysics in mind, let us return to the discussion of the relation between the metaphysical structure of theft and the logic of representation.

By a ‘logic of representation,’ I refer to a logic or a structure of language and thought based on the presumption that there is something ‘behind’ the representation—something, namely, that would itself have been a presentation and of which the representation would form a substituting delegation.<sup>126</sup> Representational language, thought, and, of great importance to Artaud, representational theatre come to represent something other than themselves *in absentia*; e.g. a script, a meaning, an intention, a feeling, an idea, etc., that would in its turn have been a presentation and not a representation.

The logic of representation therefore works on the background of an absence, namely, the absence of the presentation that would have been present once but no longer is. Representational language consists of substituting signs that replace something else; signs replacing places that have been abandoned by something else, and that can only be represented on the condition of such abandonment. Thus, representation appears to be both too late and too early for the encounter with the presentation that it was meant to represent. Re-presentation is *too late* for encountering what it represents since it can only represent it in terms of its already absencing. Representation is *too early* because it always precedes itself by turning what it seeks to reach or achieve as a singular presentation into a generalized representation in and by this very reach, thus already finding what it seeks to represent to be unreachable.<sup>127</sup> This is precisely the problem of representational language,

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<sup>125</sup> In this respect, Artaud’s cruel metaphysics comes close to resembling the tragic or Dionysian ‘Metaphysik der Kunst’ with which Nietzsche was so occupied in the years surrounding his writing of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* published in 1872 and which he opposes to a ‘Metaphysik der Logik’ initiated by Socrates and Euripides and sees resulting in the suicide of the attic tragedy. Unfortunately, a discussion of the respective metaphysics of Artaud and the early Nietzsche is far too demanding a task to embark upon here, wherefore we will have to suffice with offering a reference to Nietzsche’s own remarks in his *Nachgelassene Fragmente* from 1869–1874 (KSA 7).

<sup>126</sup> Regarding the logic of representation, see Derrida’s “Envoi” (PSY, 109–144/(I) 94–128).

<sup>127</sup> This aporetic movement is resonant of Hegel’s famous analysis of sense certainty and its dialectical reversal in *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. In brief, what Hegel demonstrates is that any supposed immediacy is always already mediated, and that any singular (*Einzelne*) *hic et nun* is always already mediated by the general (*das Allgemeine*), since the singular, as the “now,” can only ever appear *as such* through its dialectical relationship to other singulars or other nows, thus already negating itself as singular. As Hegel



entailing that one cannot articulate the singular inasmuch as the very articulation already negates or undermines that which it seeks to articulate. It is this inaccessible other of representation that Artaud calls ‘life’ and that Derrida translates as the “l’origine non représentable de la représentation.”<sup>128</sup>

Because of this untimeliness pertaining to the logic of representation, the encounter between the representation and the presentation it is supposed to represent will remain a missed or deferred encounter—or, as we shall come to see in Chapter V, what Lacan with reference to Aristotle calls a *dystychia*. Consequently, what we could identify as an *aporia* of representational logic concerns the problem of gaining access to an originary presentation without this access turning it into a representation and thereby making it inaccessible as such, that is, as a presentation. This *aporia*, however, is that which representation is prone to forget, and when it does it also forgets the life that it dissimulates.<sup>129</sup>

Returning to Artaud’s texts, there are different levels upon which the metaphysical structure of theft operates and these correspond in turn to different levels of ‘representational dissimulation.’ At least three such levels may be discerned in Artaud’s work:

1) The dissimulation of an immediate and singular self-sensing of thought into the mediate ‘mentalization’ or representation of that thought. Hence in a letter to George Soulié de Morant from 1932, Artaud complains about a perpetual ‘miscarrying’ of his thought that makes it impossible for him to “traduire les impressions les plus simple, de témoigner de ma façon proper

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articulates it: “Sage ich: ein *einzelnes Ding*, so sage ich es vielmehr ebenso als ganz *Allgemeines*, denn alle sind ein einzelnes Ding” (HW 3, 92). This last part of the sentence, “alle sind ein einzelnes,” which is almost a *contradictio in adjecto*, nicely construes the *aporia* of representation since it expresses the very generality of singularity. This *aporia* of representation is also the reason why language, according to Hegel, kills what it names and why, as Kojève has remarked in his reading of Hegel, “all *conceptual* understanding (*Begreifen*) is equivalent to a *murder*” (Kojève 1969, 140). Indeed, as Hegel concludes his *Enzyklopädie* the very *télos* (*Ziel*) of nature is to commit suicide (*sich selbst zu töten*), or to sacrifice itself as a phoenix in order “als Geist hervorzutreten” (HW 9, 538). For a further discussion of the essential relation between language and death in Hegel and beyond, see also, Bataille 1955 and Agamben 1991.

<sup>128</sup> ED, 343/234.

<sup>129</sup> As Blanchot has shown in *L’entretien infini* from 1969 this logic tells us something not only about representation but also about presence, since “la présence immédiate est présence de ce qui ne saurait être présent, présence du non-accessible, présence excluant ou débordant tout présent. Cela revient à dire: l’immédiat, débordant infiniment toute possibilité présente de par sa présence même, est présence infinie de ce qui reste radicalement absent, présence toujours infiniment autre dans sa présence, présence de l’autre dans son altérité: non-présence” (EI, 54/38).

de réagir.”<sup>130</sup> Accordingly, this first level of dissimulation concerns the transformation of presumed singular presentations into general representations.

2) The dissimulation of an ‘internal’ mentalization or representation of a sensation, thought, or an idea into their ‘external’ articulation. Thus, for instance, in *Le théâtre et son double* from 1938, where Artaud writes that confusion is a sign of our epoch and that confusion emerges from “une rupture entre les choses, et les paroles, les idées, les signes qui en sont la représentation.”<sup>131</sup> Moreover, Artaud discerns that this confusion is fortified by the circumstance that: “Tout vrai sentiment est en réalité intraduisible. L’exprimer c’est le trahir. Mais le traduire c’est le *dissimuler*.”<sup>132</sup> Thus, the second level concerns the impassable passage of the *impression* of a feeling, sensation, thought, or an idea to its *expression* and the confusion that arises when one tries to transport oneself through this passage via translation.

3) The dissimulative survival of expressions and significations which continue to circulate after their time of articulation and thus independently of the one who expresses them. Here we can recall Artaud’s complaint to Rivière that “un quelque chose de furtif qui m’enlève les mots *que j’ai trouvés*.”<sup>133</sup> Accordingly, we might say that this third level concerns a general dissimulation and disappropriation of signifying language as such, which is bound up with what Derrida has expounded as the irreducible dissemination and ‘iterability,’ belonging to and conditioning any signifying operation.<sup>134</sup> As Derrida further explains: “Artaud savait que toute parole tombée du corps, s’offrant à être entendue ou reçue, s’offrant en spectacle, devient aussitôt parole volée. Signification dont je suis dépossédé parce qu’elle est signification.”<sup>135</sup>

Undoubtedly, these three levels are neither exhaustive nor can they be clearly demarcated from one another in such a stratified fashion as is presented here. Rather, the levels are inseparably linked and continue to perforate their limits and overflow into each other’s domains, thereby producing more of the leakages that keep bursting open despite Artaud’s continuous mending. Nevertheless, the stratification of the different layers pertaining to the structure of theft might be helpful in trying to perceive how the dissimulation of thought and language is for Artaud essentially bound up with the problem of representation and the logic that governs it.

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<sup>130</sup> OC I, 320/SW, 294.

<sup>131</sup> OC IV, 12/TD, 3.

<sup>132</sup> OC IV, 86/TD, 51.

<sup>133</sup> OC I, 36/SW 35.

<sup>134</sup> We shall return to the notion of iterability in Chapter IV.

<sup>135</sup> ED, 261/175.

The relation of Artaud's writing to such representational logic remains irreducibly ambiguous. In one sense, Artaud is obeying this logic himself when he repeats a whole metaphysical chain of oppositional pairs such as 'thing and word,' 'signified and signifier,' 'body and spirit,' 'matter and form,' *et cetera*—and when he complains about the dissimulation of a non-representable life in the endless circulation of representations. Indeed, to Artaud, when representation forgets its untimeliness and thereby forgets its own forgetting of that which it represents, this is the time when 'life' is most in danger of complete extermination, that is, of erasing every singular trace of itself leaving nothing but cinders behind, which are traces of nothing. Artaud sees the signs of such an all-destructive forgetting—namely the forgetting of forgetting—in his time, providing him with the sense that in the absentminded yet prevalent logic of representation, "ce monde qui glisse, qui se suicide sans s'en apercevoir."<sup>136</sup>

In another sense, however, that which Artaud calls 'life' cannot be conceived of as an original yet forgotten presence underlying yet supporting its representational history, like an ancient presentation to be excavated from its many layers of representation, since such a notion of an original presence of life would itself be a myth fostered by the logic of representation. Rather, what Artaud calls 'life' resists and seeks to undo the very splitting up of life into an opposition between presentation and representation, along with all the other oppositional pairs that go with it. With the notion of 'life,' Artaud is signaling an opening, a surging forth of a spectacle that would no longer reflect or represent anything other than its taking place in time and space, or, as Derrida puts it, a spectacle that would be "l'archi-manifestation de la force, ou de la vie."<sup>137</sup>

The question remains, then, whether and how Artaud can somehow force 'life'—whether the life of thought, of language, of work, or of 'Artaud'—to manifest itself despite the dissimulating and insufficient mechanisms of articulation and representation that continually break an entry into its process of archi-manifestation in order to steal life away from itself. We will return to this question in the last part of this chapter. First, however, we will take a closer look at the irreducible ambiguity or duplicity of Artaud's work in relation to the logic of representation as an instance of the structure of theft.

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<sup>136</sup> OC IV, 39/TD, 22.

<sup>137</sup> ED, 349/238.

## I.5 PAINFUL REVERSALS IN ARTAUD'S TEXT

In *Le livre à venir* from 1959, Blanchot has remarked that it is not difficult to observe how Artaud, in his desire for an absolute presence of life to itself, appears to be a “victime de l’illusion de l’immédiat.”<sup>138</sup> Yet, according to Blanchot, what is more difficult to discern in reading Artaud is how

tout commence avec la manière dont il est écarté de cet immédiat [...], par une rupture si évidente qu’elle introduit au centre de lui-même l’affirmation d’un détournement perpétuel qui devient ce qu’il a de plus propre et comme la surprise atroce de sa véritable nature.<sup>139</sup>

According to Blanchot, this perpetual turning-away gradually brings about a painful development in Artaud’s writing, beginning in the time following the Rivière correspondence and accelerating in the 1925 writings. This painful development, which is also a development of pain, is one by which Artaud “vient-il à renverser les termes du mouvement et à placer en premier lieu la dépossession, et non plus la ‘totalité immédiate’ dont cette dépossession apparaissait d’abord comme le simple manque.”<sup>140</sup>

On this view, what is difficult to discern in Artaud’s writing is how a gradual reversal of the nostalgic and eschatological—since the *télos* is always the *archē* yet to come—longing for a restoration of original immediacy turn into an acceptance and perhaps even an affirmation of the fact “qu’il n’y a jamais eu d’origine.”<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, the difficulty is to discern how such a reversal produces several other reversals such as a reversal of the desire for a pure auto-affection of a whole and hole-less body-of-thought into a naked exposure to and of the condition of auto-hetero-affection, according to which thinking is always already fractured and perpetually leaking from its several holes and openings.<sup>142</sup> Thus, as Blanchot

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<sup>138</sup> LV, 55/38.

<sup>139</sup> LV, 55/38. With this perpetual turning-away Blanchot is presumably paying tribute to Hölderlin who in his *Anmerkungen zum Ödipus* from 1803 writes about the ‘categorical turning about’ (*kategorische Umkehr*) whereby God as time turns away from the human being thus effecting a caesura in time by which beginning and end no longer rhyme (*schlechterdings nicht reimen*). Cf. HSW 10, 161. On the subject of Hölderlin’s ‘categorical turning,’ see Lacoue-Labarthe 1998.

<sup>140</sup> LV, 55/38.

<sup>141</sup> This quotation is from Derrida’s epitaph to “Le théâtre de la cruauté et la cloture de la représentation,” who attributes it to “Artaud, 6 June 1947,” but I have not been able to locate the reference in OC. The epitaph reads: “...quant à mes forces / elles ne sont qu’un supplément / le supplément à un état de fait / c’est qu’il n’y a jamais eu d’origine...” (ED, 341/232).

<sup>142</sup> One such place of reversal could be in *Artaud le Mômô* where the holes or lack of being and the alienation appears to be ‘older’ than any fullness of being or self-presence:

continues, “que ce qui est à penser est dans la pensée ce qui se détourne d’elle et s’épuise inépuisablement en elle; que souffrir et penser sont liés d’une manière secrète.”<sup>143</sup>

The only minor and supplementary notes that I would wish to add to Blanchot’s rendition of such painful reversal in Artaud’s writing would be, first, that the reversal must be rendered in the plural since, as I read it, there is not one single reversal gradually developing over the course of Artaud’s writing. Instead, it seems as if something like a perpetual shifting of reversals takes place, which is therefore not equivalent to a unidirectional development from original self-possession to original dispossession, let alone from original presence to original representation; rather Artaud’s writing shifts back and forth between these alternatives and in some passages even sustains both at the same time.<sup>144</sup> Second, even if there is undoubtedly suffering in these painful reversals a certain affirmation nonetheless also appears to come about in them. We will come to this second supplement in the following section, but for now we will stay with the first supplementary note.

Even if Artaud at certain times comes to recognize the lack of immediate origin as the very origin of origin, at other times he reverses this reversal back into thinking mediation or representation as a loss of original immediacy or presentation. Furthermore, this perpetual shifting back and forth of reversals is essential to the duplicity of Artaud’s work which, in Derrida’s view, makes him one of the most critical and radical challengers of metaphysical duality. This is because the radicality of Artaud’s critique of the oppositional logic of Western metaphysics results precisely from his strict fidelity to it.<sup>145</sup> Derrida explains the duplicity as follows:

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“Lesquels, et de quoi ces trous? / D’âme, d’esprit, de moi, et d’être; mais à la place où l’on s’en fout, père, mère, Artaud et itou [...] le membre coupé d’une âme (l’âme n’est plus qu’une vieux diction) mais l’aterrante suspension d’un soufflé d’aliénation” (OC XII, 15–17/SW, 524–526).

<sup>143</sup> LV, 58/40.

<sup>144</sup> For instance, it would appear that Artaud had already in the correspondence of 1923–1924 acknowledged that the dissimulation and dispossession of thought in an essentially furtive way (*essentielle à la fois et fugace*) belong to the very movement of thinking as such, even if he still desires a thinking that would be in full possession of itself. Cf. OC I, 35/SW, 35.

<sup>145</sup> What Lacoue-Labarthe has shown in his reading of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* can, whilst remaining sensitive toward the significant differences between Nietzsche and Artaud and their respective quarrels with metaphysical duality, to a certain extent be shown in Artaud text as well. Namely, that the work of Nietzsche, and I would say Artaud alike, can be read “au moins deux langages: l’un où se confirme en effet la plus grand part de la métaphysique posthégélienne et de la métaphysique tout court; l’autre (mais

Artaud *sollicite* cette métaphysique, *l'ébranle* lorsqu'elle se ment et met pour condition au phénomène du propre qu'on se départisse proprement de son propre (c'est l'aliénation de l'aliénation); la *requiert* encore, puise encore à son fonds de valeurs, veut y être plus fidèle qu'elle-même en restaurant absolument le propre à la veille de toute discession.<sup>146</sup>

Hence, in being rigorously faithful towards metaphysical oppositions such as those between the proper and the improper, or between presentation and representation, and in adhering stringently to metaphysical principles of the pure immediacy or pure presence to itself of self, of thought, or of life, Artaud causes the very architectural foundations of this metaphysical building to vacillate.

In order to come to a further understanding of the difficulty of discerning the reversals in Artaud's text—from originary self-possession and self-presence to originary dispossession and representation and back again—, let us turn for a moment toward a lengthy footnote in *L'ombilic des limbes* in which Artaud draws a distinction between two different forms of derangements, disorders, or disturbances (*troubles*) of what he calls 'personality.'

According to Artaud, the first and most severe form is the disturbance of personality that may result in a total loss of any sense of self or of 'ownness' in regard to one's 'own' experiences—like a self abandoned by itself, but with no remaining relation to this self-abandonment. In such a deserted state, Artaud writes, "la conscience demeure intacte mais ne se reconnaît plus comme s'appartenant (et ne se reconnaît plus à aucun degré)."<sup>147</sup> The second,

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c'est très souvent le même en train de se défaire) où s'organise déjà la 'déconstruction'" (Lacoue-Labarthe 1979, 23/10).

<sup>146</sup> ED, 272/183.

<sup>147</sup> OC I, 81/SW, 69. My italics. Artaud does not develop this most severe form of disturbance any further thus leaving his readers to a mere guessing. One guess, however, could be that Artaud might be referring to certain states following severe brain lesions, brain damage, traumas, or other forms of cerebral pathologies such as Alzheimer's disease, wherein all relation with the state prior to the catastrophic event appear to be completely broken resulting in a strange interruption of the relation to one's own experience, which may manifest itself as an utter indifference to one's 'own' suffering. In their 'neurological novels,' both Luria and Sacks portray conditions following different kinds of brain damage where an emotional, and perhaps even existential or ontological, indifference on the part of the person inflicted seems to occur both towards his or her surroundings but also towards his or her own condition. Cf. Luria 1987; Sacks 1998. In her philosophical work, Malabou has tried to give a voice to this traumatic indifference by calling it into question: "Could it be that the brain suffers? Could it be that this suffering manifests itself in the form of indifference to suffering? In the form of the inability to experience suffering as one's own? Could it be that there is a type of suffering

less severe but in Artaud's view more painful (*douloureux*) and potentially more ruinous (*ruineux*) disturbances of personality occurs when "la conscience s'approprié, reconnaît vraiment comme lui appartenant toute une série de phénomènes de dislocation et de dissolution de ses forces au milieu desquels sa matérialité se détruit."<sup>148</sup>

In the distinction between these two disturbances of personality, one can perhaps discern an instance of the reversal from the thought of originary self-possession to originary dispossession, to which Blanchot has drawn our attention. In the first case, the disturbance results in an utter break or rupture of the self-relation of a self that was once said to belong to itself; there is still someone there who consciously registers the state of things but there is no longer anyone who in relating to the state of things also relates to him- or herself. Whereas in the second case we have a disturbance of personality that leaves a certain self-relation to remain albeit only as a relation in which a self recognizes an otherness, which belongs to it in such an intimate way that it subverts the very sense of belonging to itself of this self.

Hence, what subtly comes to the fore in this second form of disturbance is that it brings the self to recognize instances of otherness or disturbing 'phenomena' as belonging to its relation to itself such that they dislocate and dissolve this relation in its very relating to itself. Thus, the disturbances of dislocation and dissolution no longer appear to happen to a self that was already *there*, established in all its undisturbed presence to itself as a substance of its own experience. Instead, and here the reversal comes into view, these disturbances now appear as inherent to the very possibility of relating to oneself, dislocating and dissolving this relation from the very moment it begins to take place. In more Derridean words, the appropriation of which Artaud speaks in the second form of disturbance will only be possible as an exappropriation according to which its very taking place will already have become displaced.

In light of this other form of disturbance, we come to see how Artaud, following his strict demands of thinking, can write: "moi, entre autres, que je n'ai pas de pensée."<sup>149</sup> With a slight interpretive twist of the sentence, we might read it as announcing something along the lines of: 'I, among others, have no thought because there are always others between me and myself and

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that creates a new identity, the unknown identity of an unknown person who suffers?" (Malabou 2012, xii) Further on, Malabou raises the vertiginous questions of "*the psyche's survival of its own annihilation*" and the "deserted identities of cerebrality, living figures of death" that such cerebral annihilation leaves behind (ibid. 56; 209), which are not unrelated to our questioning of the remains of a self.

<sup>148</sup> OC I, 81/SW, 69. My italics.

<sup>149</sup> OC I, 82/SW, 69.

I am nothing other than the in-between of these others, neither less nor more.’ In still other words, because of an original disappropriation the ‘in-between-others’ is the only proper place of what I call ‘my’-self. Perhaps we can even allow ourselves to make the bold move of hyphenating the words of the sentence here in order to emphasize the continual displacement of an auto-affectation into an auto-hetero-affectation: *moi-entre-autres*; *I-between-others*, or even better perhaps, *between-others-me* or *others-between-me*. Yet, as Artaud discerned as early as in his letters to Rivière: “Un homme se possède pas éclaircies, et même quand il se possède, il ne s’atteint pas tout à fait [...]. Cet homme cependant existe.”<sup>150</sup>

Artaud’s early distinction from 1925 between two forms of disturbances of selfhood is particularly noteworthy with respect to a later letter to the psychiatrist Jacques Latrémolière of January 1945, in which Artaud compares his condition before and after undergoing multiple electric-shock treatments. More specifically, Artaud compares his experience of “ces abominables dédoublements de personnalité,”<sup>151</sup> which he had already written about in the correspondence with Rivière, with the experiences of separation and doubling he is undergoing after the shock treatments two decades later. To Artaud, the fundamental difference setting these experiences apart is that in the twenties the redoublings, as abominable as they might be, were at least accessible to him as a ‘perceptual knowledge,’ whereas the treatments have transformed his very experience into nothing but ‘agony.’<sup>152</sup> Electric shock, Artaud informs Latrémolière, has reduced his existence to utter despair by turning him into “un absent qui se connaît absent et se voit pendant des semaines à la poursuite de son être.”<sup>153</sup>

If we are to try to understand the difference that Artaud is describing in this late letter, perhaps we could read it as a *displacement of relating to separation*. Before the treatments Artaud had at least been able to maintain a relation to the experiences of splitting and to the nothing separating him from his words and thoughts, and by virtue of such a *relation to separation*, he was also able to work on these experiences as material for writing and drawing. After the treatments, however, Artaud complains of being “détache de tout et de la vie,” and this absolute separation has made it impossible for him “de travailler, de penser *et de me sentir être*.”<sup>154</sup> Consequently, the treatments have divested Artaud not only of his sense of being but also of his means of *relating to such separation* from himself through poetic writing

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<sup>150</sup> OC I, 49–50/SW, 43.

<sup>151</sup> OC XI, 13/SW, 438.

<sup>152</sup> OC XI, 13/SW, 438.

<sup>153</sup> OC XI, 13/SW, 438.

<sup>154</sup> OC XI, 13/SW, 438.



and drawing. The transformation that the numerous electro shocks have induced appears, then, to concern different experiences of relation and separation, and of relating to the separation from oneself.

In the letters to Rivière, Artaud is still able to uphold a poetic working relationship to the absences separating him from himself and keeping his life in suspense. By contrast, in his letter to Latrémolière, Artaud despairs not of these absences *per se* but rather of the fact that he himself has become absent “comme un mort à côté d’un vivant qui n’est plus lui.”<sup>155</sup> Thus, another agonizing dimension of theft seems to be added here—namely, the theft of the ability to sense one’s sensations or to feel one’s feelings, as Artaud later writes: “souffrir c’est ne pas pouvoir vivre ses sensations.”<sup>156</sup> Yet, someone who calls himself ‘Artaud,’ still remains to write about his experience of not being able to write and to write of this experience as the suffering of a living death, even if this name has become nothing but a memorial to him—in other words, there is still a relation to self even if this relation is only one of self-abandonment.<sup>157</sup>

As mentioned, Artaud’s writing appears to provide us with extremely meticulous descriptions of the experiences of undergoing auto-affection *as* hetero-affection. In the course of his hyperaware or hyperreflexive auto-inspections, Artaud testifies to the incessant becoming other of self-consciousness by virtue of which consciousness to a certain extent encounters its own unconscious as that which eludes and withdraws it in itself.<sup>158</sup> As Derrida argues, such an encounter of consciousness with itself entails that “cette fois sera cruellement présente à elle-même et s’entendra parler.”<sup>159</sup> Cruelly present to itself, because consciousness can only be

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<sup>155</sup> OC XI, 13/SW, 438.

<sup>156</sup> OC XVI, 288.

<sup>157</sup> In his essay “La naissance est la mort” written in 1994, Lacoue-Labarthe suggests that Artaud’s experience of dying in electric-shock treatment and returning from the beyond to a life that is the living of death is nothing less than the experience, which constitutes the primal scene of literature recounted in the myth of Orpheus. As Lacoue-Labarthe writes: “L’origine de la littérature serait elle aussi immémoriale. À cette différence près, toutefois, qu’elle se soutiendrait d’un souvenir encore plus impossible, bien qu’il en soit le revers exact, que l’impossible souvenir de la naissance: le souvenir de la mort. C’est ce donc témoignerait—*exemplairement*, me semble-t-il—Artaud” (Lacoue-Labarthe 2011, 120/63).

<sup>158</sup> The attempt to master this perpetual tension between consciousness of unconsciousness and the unconsciousness of consciousness is no doubt also a matter of control or lack of it. In an untranslated passage from 1945 in the *Cahiers de Rodez*, Artaud states: “L’inconsient est d’avoir perdu le contrôle de soi-même, et d’avoir été pris par le néant. Il faut regagner l’éternelle conscience” (OC XV, 160).

<sup>159</sup> ED, 263/176.

present to itself in the absence of its immediate self-presence, whereby consciousness will only be able to hear itself speak and to respond to itself in a voice that is never simply its own but is always already infiltrated with that of others.

As Derrida further clarifies, the experience that Artaud undergoes is therefore not only one of self-alienation it is also an experience of “l’irresponsabilité radicale de la parole.”<sup>160</sup> Irresponsible precisely because speech—like linguistic and signifying practices in general including the hearing-oneself-speak that is sometimes called thinking—is conditioned by that which Artaud considers to be an original theft that robs the speaker of the possibility of ever having complete authority or ownership of his or her own thoughts and words. Yet speaking of an *original* theft implies that there could not have been any property to be stolen in the first place, since whomever begins to speak was not there before speaking but only comes to be in and as speech. Language—and therefore also thought, since there is no thought, not even the unconscious, without language<sup>161</sup>—is never something one can own or appropriate, because one only comes into one’s own in and as language. If anything, the one who speaks is a property rather than a proprietor of the language spoken.

As subject of thinking and speaking, I have no *anterior* authority in deciding the thoughts and words that make themselves available to me, and in doing so defines who I think I am; or rather, they are inherited from elsewhere. Likewise, I have no *subsequent* authority over the way in which these thoughts and words will be conceived and received by others in the aftermath of their articulation. As Derrida emphasizes, this irreducible irresponsibility even holds for the idea of a soliloquy, or a silent dialogue of the soul with itself, because from the moment that “je m’entends, le je qui s’entend, qui m’entend, devient le je qui parle et prend la parole, *sans jamais la lui couper*, à celui qui croit parler et être entendu en son nom. S’introduisant dans le nom de celui qui parle, cette différence n’est rien, elle est le furtif.”<sup>162</sup>

At this point, another meaning of the verb *souffler* comes to the fore, which is that of its substantiation into *souffleur*, that is, into the prompter who dictates to me what to say as a whispering voice from ‘behind the scenes,’ or from a hidden center of the stage that comes to spirit away the possibility of speaking in a voice of one’s own. This radical irresponsibility of speech also speaks, of course, in the voice of *inspiration*—meaning,

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<sup>160</sup> ED, 263/176.

<sup>161</sup> I am alluding here to Lacan’s frequently repeated statement that “l’inconscient est structuré comme un langage” (Sem III, 187/167; Sem XX, 20/15; 25/21; 47/48; 49/51).

<sup>162</sup> ED, 265/177–178.

precisely, *a voice from elsewhere*<sup>163</sup> that comes to speak in my voice in advance, thus making it into an always already borrowed voice, and causing Artaud to exclaim in capital letters filled with awe and terror alike: “CERTAINEMENT L’INSPIRATION EXISTE.”<sup>164</sup>

Finally, if we return to the distinction in *L’ombilic des limbes*, in comparison to the first disturbance in which the relation of the disturbed one to him- or herself has evaporated, what makes the second form of disturbance, in which the self recognizes itself only as another, more painful is the circumstance that *someone* still remains to relate to the painful experience. If a total loss of self-relation had actually occurred then no one would be left to experience the pain of being separated from or abandoned by oneself. The difficulty here is precisely in trying to understand the pain that *remains* to be suffered by a self who experiences itself as dispossessed of itself, and to understand the painful suffering of remaining in abeyance of oneself. Who is the *I* or the *me* suffering such painful dispossession? Who is it that can say ‘I am dispossessed of myself and suffer my own abandonment or the abandonment of my own’? Who is the remainder of such a disappropriation and what sense of solitude remains in such an expression of self-abandonment?

In a similar manner, the one whose voice is stolen is never entirely cut off from itself, as Derrida underlines, but remains as a sort of witness to its own disappropriation or perhaps rather to the disappropriation of its ‘own,’ a strange witness indeed, a witness *of* estrangement in the double genitive. The difficulty in this regard is trying to listen to this voice that speaks, almost in spite of itself (*malgré moi*), in a disappropriated voice, and to try to understand how someone is still left to respond to the irresponsibility of speech. We will return to these vertiginous questions more than once in the chapters to come. For now, however, we will turn to our second supplementary note on Blanchot’s discernment of a painful reversal in Artaud’s writing by taking a closer look at one of Artaud’s strategies for countering the structure of theft, which, as Derrida remarks, also implies a certain ‘idiosyncratic affirmation.’

## I.6 THE STRATEGY OF COUNTER-THEFT

As both Blanchot and Derrida point out, Artaud will develop a strategy in order to steal life back for itself from its dispossessions in representative thought and language. As we have already glimpsed, Artaud’s exceptionally

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<sup>163</sup> This italicized sentence is a reference and reminder of Blanchot’s *Une voix venue d’ailleurs* (2002), which among other things is concerned with literature and the voice of inspiration.

<sup>164</sup> OC I, 112/SW, 82.

refined strategy against the structure of theft and its representational logic will paradoxically consist in employing language and thinking in order to enact a counter-theft towards the initial theft of language and thinking.<sup>165</sup>

The strategy of counter-theft therefore has a double aim: one is critical and destructive; the other is affirmative and inventive. *On the one hand*, then, Artaud's strategy aims at forcing representative thought and language to testify to their own insufficiencies in representing any form of 'life' or any living singularity by revealing themselves as dissimulative and thereby exposing their limits. *On the other hand*, Artaud's strategy aims at inventing a poetic language that would counter the false premises of language that pretends to represent the unrepresentable by no longer performing a representation of anything but itself. This double aim of the strategy of counter-theft can be seen in the following paragraph from *Le théâtre et son double* where Artaud writes of forcing language to convey otherwise than usually by making a material metaphysics out of the spoken word:

[C]'est s'en servir d'une façon nouvelle, exceptionnelle et inaccoutumée, c'est lui rendre ses possibilités d'ébranlement physique, c'est le diviser et le répartir activement dans l'espace, c'est prendre les intonations d'une manière concrète absolue et leur restituer le pouvoir qu'elles auraient de déchirer et de manifester réellement quelque chose, c'est se retourner contre le langage et ses sources basement utilitaires, on pourrait dire alimentaires, contre ses origines de bête traquée, c'est enfin considérer le langage sous la forme de l'*Incantation*.<sup>166</sup>

Hence, the affirmative side of the double aim of Artaud's counter-theft consists in rediscovering the 'magical,' 'metaphysical,' or 'incantational' forces of language and restoring to it its very flesh of sonority, inflection, color, materiality, texture, etc. In short, Artaud aims at restoring life to the expressions, ideas, thoughts, and words of language, which will now be

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<sup>165</sup> As Lacoue-Labarthe has remarked, this counter-theft of especially Artaud's late writings, could also be called, and not haphazardly so, *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*. Yet, as Lacoue-Labarthe further remarks: "Comprenons bien: il y a jugement, mais pour en finir avec le jugement. Jugement dernier du 'Jugement dernier,' fin du 'règne des Fins.' Artaud proteste et demande, comme Achille (ou Job), réparation. C'est l'essai, dans la véhémence et la révolte—la 'sainte colère'—d'achever la spoliation théologico-métaphysique, le vol de l'âme. Une telle colère est comparable à celle de Nietzsche, aussi douloureuse, aussi pathétique. Mais peut-être en plus dur. Il est demandé que cesse—enfin—la dépossession, la dépropriation. Nietzsche jubilait, Artaud souffre le martyr" (Lacoue-Labarthe 2011, 121–122/63). Undoubtedly, there is suffering and martyrdom in Artaud's writing of protest and resistance, yet as we will come to see, there might also be some jubilation not least regarding a certain enjoyment (*jouissance*) of this very resistant writing.

<sup>166</sup> OC IV, 56/TD, 32–33.

powerful in itself and not merely by virtue of serving as an instrument for facilitating the representation of something else. This is to say, a useless language that strictly speaking means to say *no-thing*.<sup>167</sup>

This restoration of life to the *body* of thought and language that means to say no-thing would, according to Artaud, be the invention of a concrete, material, and physical language, or a ‘poetry for the senses’ sieving through “la trame serrée et subtile de gestes.”<sup>168</sup> That is, a poetic body-language whose gestures exceed and “échappent au langage articulé,”<sup>169</sup> and moreover, an inventive language capable of conveying the “*côté révélateur de la matière*.”<sup>170</sup> Thus, for Artaud poetic writing, drawing, and theatre will be the privileged means of warfare in trying to conquer back the life of language for itself, or, in trying to give birth once more to an originally aborted life. Yet this poetical rebirth, as it were, demands a violent self-destruction of language in its instrumental and representative functions, a hunting itself down like a beast towards its own (stolen) origins in order to reinvent itself from these ruinous foundations.

Hence, Artaud’s strategy is to fight thinking from within thinking and to wage war on language from within language in order to force it to convey what it usually hides, that is to say, to convey both itself as dissimulation and the life it dissimulates. To some extent, this double gesture brings Artaud’s strategy of counter-theft into proximity with what one could call an auto-deconstruction, *avant la lettre*, of language. This is because one way of describing the movement of deconstruction is precisely that it consists in borrowing the means and mechanisms of whatever is being deconstructed in order to perform the deconstruction itself, which further means that deconstruction is always also an auto-deconstruction insofar as it is not applied to the deconstructed as if from the outside. If anything, deconstruction shows how the outside is already within the *autos* that deconstructs itself.

In a similar manner, Artaud is battling the mechanisms of thought and speech by their own means, that is, through the mechanisms of thought and speech displacing themselves in order to make them testify to their own

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<sup>167</sup> As Blanchot writes in *La part du feu* from 1949, this nothing is nothing short of the very imperative of literature: “ne rien dire, parler pour ne rien dire” (PF, 314/324)—an imperative that Blanchot sees well performed in the writing of Artaud, as he quotes from one of his letters: “*Je n’ai jamais écrit que pour dire que je n’avais jamais rien fait, ne pouvais rien faire et que faisant quelque chose en réalité je ne faisais rien. Toute mon oeuvre a été bâtie et ne pourra l’être que sur le néant...*” (LV, 54/37).

<sup>168</sup> OC IV, 69/TD, 41.

<sup>169</sup> OC IV, 45/TD, 26.

<sup>170</sup> OC IV, 72/TD, 42.

insufficiencies and forcing them to confront their uncertain foundations and anarchical origins in order to reinvent themselves. As Esther Rowlands points out, this turning of language against itself means that language becomes the witness of its own impossibility of bearing witness.<sup>171</sup>

In his essay “Le théâtre de la cruauté et la clôture de la représentation,” Derrida demonstrates how Artaud’s battle against the representational language and its logic in *Le théâtre et son double* goes hand in hand with his struggle to finally break away from the prevailing Western conception of art as merely representative or imitative of what is then in contrast called ‘reality’ or ‘life.’<sup>172</sup> Concerning theatre as a privileged scene for a creative auto-manifestation of life, Artaud writes:

[L]e théâtre, qui ne se fixe pas dans le langage et dans les formes, détruit par le fait les fausses ombres, mais prépare la voie à une autre naissance d’ombres autour desquelles s’agrège le vrai spectacle de la vie. Briser le langage pour toucher la vie, c’est faire ou refaire le théâtre.<sup>173</sup>

Furthermore, theatre has the potential to liberate what is called ‘man,’ the man of ‘humanity,’ from his ‘habitual limitations’ and thereby “rendre infinies les frontières de ce qu’on appelle la réalité.”<sup>174</sup> Only by way of such

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<sup>171</sup> Rowlands writes: “Acts of ‘parler’ and ‘témoigner’ are placed within an antithetical structure, as language becomes a ‘témoignage’ of its own incapacity to ‘témoigner’” (Rowlands 2004, 140).

<sup>172</sup> This Western conception of the imitative nature of art goes back to Plato and Aristotle, and to the latter’s theory of ‘mimesis’ (μίμησις), which is usually translated as ‘imitation’ or ‘representation’ of reality or life. The contextualized way in which Aristotle employs the term ‘mimesis’ and how it should be translated are widely disputed matters that require a study of their own. All that may be said in the brevity of a footnote is that in the *Poetics* the artist is described as ‘representing’ or ‘imitating’ the raw impressions presented by reality through his preferred artistic medium, be it music, poetry, or drama, thereby bringing to it a coherent meaning. Aristotle writes: “Epic poetry, then, and the poetry of tragic drama, and, moreover, comedy and dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and harp-playing, these, speaking generally, may all be said to be ‘representations [μιμήσεις] of life.’ But they differ one from another in three ways: either in using means generically different or in ‘representing’ [μιμεῖσθαι] different objects or in ‘representing’ [μιμοῦνται] objects not in the same way but in a different manner” (Poet. 1447a). On the matter of Aristotle’s ‘mimetology’ and its history of reception, see also Lacoue-Labarthe 1986.

<sup>173</sup> OC IV, 18/TD, 7. In reading this passage, one is struck by its resemblance to Beckett’s description in his famous ‘German letter’ of 1937 to Axel Kaun of his incentive for writing: “Ein Loch nach dem andern in ihr zu bohren, bis das Dahinterkauernde, sei es etwas oder nichts, durchzusickern anfängt—ich kann mir für den heutigen Schriftsteller kein höheres Ziel vorstellen” (Beckett 1983, 52/172).

<sup>174</sup> OC IV, 18/TD, 7.

an infinite extension of the borders of reality will ‘man’ ever reach that shadowy part where he “impavidement se rend le maître de ce qui n’est pas encore, et le fait naître.”<sup>175</sup>

Cruel theatre and material poetry will have the powers to turn language against its origins as a hunted beast, that is, to force language into a confrontation with its original abortion of life in order to remind it of its abyssal foundations and forgotten anarchic powers, which will now be employed in stealing life back to itself by reinventing its body, thus giving it another birth from the shadows of its stolen origin. It is in such a utopian place of anarchic shadow that “le théâtre loin de copier la vie se met en communication s’il le peut avec des forces pures.”<sup>176</sup> I employ the word ‘utopian’ not in a pejorative sense but in the sense of that which has not yet arrived at its proper place but remains yet to come since, as Artaud remarks, “ce nouveau langage la grammaire est encore à trouver.”<sup>177</sup>

Nonetheless, the continual attempt to invent another language—a purely inventive language that would no longer abide to the laws and logic of representation, a material language of gesture, a body-language that would represent and signify nothing other but the (re)invention of its own body—is what Derrida is referring to when he speaks of the ‘idiosyncratic affirmation’ that accompanies Artaud’s resistant writing. As mentioned earlier, this idiosyncrasy affirms besides, despite, and in defiance of the scandalous separation of thought from life continually resisting its disappropriations by language from within language. As Rowlands concisely puts it, Artaud forces language “to create new meanings, through the violent destruction of its own structures,” a destruction and restructuration leading at times to an outright “abandonment of language, within language.”<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> OC IV, 18/TD, 7.

<sup>176</sup> OC IV, 98/TD, 58. Artaud gives the following illustration of a non-imitating theatrical gesture: “l’apparition d’un Etre inventé, fait de bois et d’étoffe, créé de toutes pièces, ne répondant à rien, et cependant inquiétant par nature, capable de réintroduire sur la scène un petit souffle de cette grande peur métaphysique qui est à la base de tout le théâtre ancien” (OC IV, 53/TD, 31).

<sup>177</sup> OC IV, 132/TD, 79. Again we find echoes of Nietzsche in Artaud, who in stating the necessity of reinventing grammar in order to be rid of the metaphysic-theological structure of theft and reconquer life to itself appears to share Nietzsche’s fear in *Götzen-Dämmerung* that “wir werden Gott nicht los, weil wir noch an die Grammatik glauben...” (KSA 6, 78).

<sup>178</sup> Rowlands 2004, 151. This resistance of language within language comes very close to resembling the function of what Deleuze calls a ‘minor literature’ which installs itself within a major literature and there invents a sort of ‘foreign language’ (*langue étrangère*) bringing about both “une décomposition ou une destruction de la langue maternelle, mais

In the most palpable manner, we experience such abandonment of language within language in Artaud's experiments of *glossolalia* or *glossopoeia*.<sup>179</sup> That is to say, experiments in a form of babbling that is not purely nonsensical, but rather produces a nonsense whose sense consists in breaking down grammatical and sentential structures and decomposing words into syllables so as to make manifest both the anarchic material forces of language and the nonsensical origin of sense.<sup>180</sup>

In a letter to Henri Parisot from 1945, Artaud compares his own abyssal nonsense with the 'anal infantilism' of Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky" from *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), which he finds to be superficial yet without the abyssal aspect of superficiality where the surface is penetrated by its bottomless depths.<sup>181</sup> As Artaud explains: "On peut inventer sa langue et faire parler la langue pure avec un sens hors grammatical mais il faut que ce sens soit valable en soi, c'est-à-dire qu'il vienne d'affre."<sup>182</sup>

Hence, the invention of another language within language must not be done for the sake of something else, harboring within it a hidden meaning to be revealed like in a riddle or in a game of hermeneutical crossword puzzle.

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aussi l'invention d'une nouvelle langue dans la langue, par création de syntaxe" (Deleuze 1993, 16/5).

<sup>179</sup> As Derrida explains, this *glossopoeia* is "ni un langage imitatif ni une création de noms, nous reconduit *au bord* du moment où le mot n'est pas encore né, quand l'articulation n'est déjà plus le cri mais n'est pas encore le discours, quand la répétition est *presque* impossible, et avec elle la langue en général" (ED, 352/240).

<sup>180</sup> In this regard, Artaud's poetic babbling, which he both 'theorized' and 'practiced,' has striking resemblances to what Lacan in his later writings calls *lalangue*, which is precisely the language that the unconscious is structured *like* because it is not yet a language understood as a dialogical means of communicating sense. Rather, *lalangue* is the rambling monologue of the unconscious, or the unconscious monologue of language, providing the reserves that conscious language and speech disciplined by the *sensus communis* draw upon. Lacan writes: "Le langage sans doute est fait de lalangue. C'est une élucubration de savoir sur lalangue. Mais l'inconscient est un savoir, un savoir-faire avec lalangue [...]. Lalangue nous affecte d'abord par tout ce qu'elle comporte comme effets qui sont affectés. Si l'on peut dire que l'inconscient est structuré comme un langage, c'est en ceci que les effets de lalangue, déjà là comme savoir, vont bien au-delà de tout ce que l'être qui parle est susceptible d'énoncer" (Sem XX, 127/139).

<sup>181</sup> In the thirteenth series of *Logique du sens* "du schizophrène et de la petite fille," Deleuze measures out the distance separating the superficial nonsense of Carroll from that of Artaud's abyssal nonsense. Regarding Artaud's relation to Carroll's work, Deleuze writes: "Artaud dit: ce n'est que de la surface. La révélation qui va animer le génie d'Artaud, le moindre schizophrène la connaît, la vit à sa manière aussi: pour lui *il n'y a pas, il n'y a plus de surface*. Comment Carroll ne lui paraîtrait-il pas une petite fille maniérée, à l'abri de tous les problèmes de fond?" (Deleuze 1969, 106/86)

<sup>182</sup> OC IX, 185/SW, 449.



Rather, the invention of a body-language of extra-grammatical non-sense must come out of nothing but its own necessity without ulterior meaning or purpose. Hence, it is a language that no longer *effects* contents to be deciphered or meanings to be interpreted but instead *affects* bodies directly and which may produce anguish or anxiety in confrontation with its full sense of meaninglessness or with its sense of no-thingness.

The double strategy of counter-theft is related to the irreducible duplicity of Artaud's writing, which never leaves its reader certain whether the counter-theft strives for the *re*-creation of an original self-possession or self-presence of life to itself lost through representational-theological dispossession, or whether the counter-theft strives for the *creation* or *invention* of a life that never came to be because of its originary disappropriation. Again, this alternative remains irreducibly undecidable in Artaud's text, but it is precisely this undecidability that makes the foundations of metaphysical duality and representational language tremble. Indeed, the very fact that we are posing this question of an alternative between an 'original' presence and possession or an 'originary' absence (representation) and disappropriation shows how indebted and entrapped we still are by the very way of thinking that Artaud (and deconstruction) seeks to dismantle.<sup>183</sup> Yet, as I shall attempt to show in what follows, this dismantling pertaining to Artaud's double strategy also exposes itself and his text to the risk of *autoimmunity* inherent in the counter-theft.

#### I.7 THE RISK OF AUTOIMMUNITY INHERENT TO THE COUNTER-THEFT

In brief, autoimmune processes occur when mechanisms of self-defense, self-protection, and self-preservation turns harmful or even become fatal for the very 'self' which they were supposed to defend, protect, and preserve. In biological or physiological terms, autoimmune processes arise due to a failure or an inability on the part of an organism to recognize certain elements as constitutive of itself, treating them instead as though they were destructive. Such misrecognition therefore results in an autoimmune response on the part of the organism against a constitutive part of itself. Yet

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<sup>183</sup> In order to liberate ourselves somewhat in (not from) this relation of indebtedness, the challenge is perhaps to inherit our debts in a different manner. The challenge is perhaps to alter our nostalgic thinking, to dislocate our ceaseless tarrying with origins whether these origins concern an originary presence (of self, of God, of the present) or an originary loss (of origin, of presence, of self, of God), in order to begin thinking more affirmatively in the Nietzschean sense about alteration and dislocation. To quote Lacoue-Labarthe paraphrasing Nietzsche, the question is if we can 'cease to be pious': "Sommes-nous capables d'athéisme?" (Lacoue-Labarthe 1979, 28/13)

a certain degree of autoimmune activity pertains to every living organism (every vertebrate organism at least), and the threshold at which benign autoimmunity turns into malign autoimmunity is difficult to delineate with precision.

From a deconstructive perspective as well, autoimmunity “se trouve logée dans la structure même du present et de la vie”<sup>184</sup> because the presence of life is inscribed in the spacing of temporalization. The temporal spacing of the very structure of life has the implication that the living must remain essentially open to an otherness that may come to alter them in some respect, that is, both to the promise of that which may come to strengthen them but also to the threat of that which may come to destroy them.

Without this constitutive exposure to otherness, and thus to the possibility of surprise as well as corruption or violation, life ceases living. However, all living also has a tendency towards self-preservation and self-protection against what may come to mutilate it, which can result in more or less fatal attempts to close off its constitutive openness. In other words, processes of trying to protect and preserve life can become self-violating and self-destructive as the result of not recognizing the constitutive ‘other’ of itself. In *Voyous*, Derrida calls this logic of constitutive autoimmunity an ‘illogical logic’ since it does not obey the principle of non-contradiction, and since it is a logic “par laquelle un vivant peut spontanément détruire, de façon autonome, cela même qui, en lui, se destine à le protéger contre l’autre, à l’immuniser contre l’intrusion agressive de l’autre.”<sup>185</sup>

In view of this illogical logic, then, Artaud’s endeavors to purge thought and language of every trace of heteronomy and to remake a body uncontaminated by foreign elements also risk eliminating the very life they are trying to (re)create. As we have seen, the aim was to invent a language that would be capable of bearing faithful testimony to the uniqueness of every singular impression, sensation, or thought without always already dissimulating it in generalizing representations—a singular language, then, inaccessible to hermeneutical endeavors of interpretation and translation, since such endeavors require the possibility of repetition whereas the purely singular can occur only once.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> V, 179/127.

<sup>185</sup> V, 173/123.

<sup>186</sup>As Artaud writes, “une expression ne vaut pas deux fois, ne vit pas deux fois; que toute parole prononcée est morte” (OC IV, 91/TD, 54). According to Artaud, the privilege of the art of theatre with regard to the invention of singular language is that “theater is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, is never repeated in the same way” (ibid.). As Derrida has pointed out, Artaud’s attempt to save “la pureté d’une présence

The reinvention of material language must therefore be undecidable and undecodable because, as Rowland remarks, “uncoded sounds, they cannot be realised as ‘secret,’ because the language which follows no code, cannot be decoded.”<sup>187</sup> Moreover, it is precisely because of the keeping secret of the secret that its singularity is kept safe, which is the reason why a “true secret cannot be stolen.”<sup>188</sup>

However, Artaud is not content with inventing a language that would be secret and singular simply because it would be purely nonsensical; rather, he desires a language capable of giving truthful testimony of his singularity. Thus, Artaud dreams of “un mot-témoin, un mot précis, un mot subtil, un mot bien macéré dans mes moelles, sorti de moi, qui se tiendrait à l’extrême bout de mon être.”<sup>189</sup> In order to obtain such absolute proximity in witnessing himself it is therefore not enough to exorcise the thieving others ‘inside’ of thinking and language, Artaud must also cleanse himself of the others ‘out there’ in the ‘world’ who in one way or another keep interrupting his solitary testimony: “J’ai pour me guérir du jugement des autres toute la distance qui me sépare de moi.”<sup>190</sup>

In other words, Artaud wants to invent a language purified of any sort of heteronomy, in order to reach an absolute proximity to himself, absolved from others in a pristine solitude where he would finally become the sovereign witness of himself: “Je suis témoin, je suis le seul témoin de moi-même.”<sup>191</sup> The question, however, is how one bears witness to pure singularity. How can one recognize singularity *as* singularity, or even *as such*, without thereby also misrecognizing it? How can one bear witness to oneself in an absolute proximity without distance, that is, without introducing a gap of possible dissimulation, or without representing oneself to oneself? How does one bear witness to one’s solitude without stating to oneself, ‘I am solitary,’ and by this very statement also bearing witness to the doubling which separates one from oneself as the one who is both the enunciating subject and the subject of enunciation?<sup>192</sup> That is, how does one

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sans différence intérieure et sans répétition” paradoxically amounts to an attempt to save “une différence pure” (ED, 366/249).

<sup>187</sup> Rowlands 2004, 152.

<sup>188</sup> Rowlands 2004, 152.

<sup>189</sup> OC I, 108/SW, 81. Accordingly, in *Le théâtre et son double* Artaud writes that the aim of true theatrical language is not to “résoudre des conflits sociaux ou psychologiques, de servir de champ de bataille à des passions morales, mais d’exprimer objectivement des vérités secrètes” (OC IV, 84/TD, 50).

<sup>190</sup> OC I, 34/SW, 34.

<sup>191</sup> OC I, 108/SW, 81.

<sup>192</sup> In his essay “Nous autres” from 2003, Nancy concisely describes the separation of enunciation, which does not take place secondarily in regard to some original unity of the

prevent this very testimonial from also bearing witness to the fact that the word ‘I,’ as well as the words ‘singular,’ or ‘solitary,’ are as “*général que le mot pain*,”<sup>193</sup> and as such conditioned by the possibility of dissimulating dissemination, repetition, and representation. In short, how does one bear witness to a solitary singularity without at the same time erasing it?

With a view to Artaud’s strict demand for a wholly unified body of thought and language—a thought-body and a body-language without organs, a body without parts or members, which for Artaud is always equivalent to a dismembering<sup>194</sup>—Artaud’s singularity repeatedly undergoes violation by the erosions and internal thefts of thinking. As we saw above, one aspect of the strategy of counter-theft that Artaud also employs against the incessant interruptions that deprive him of any sense of self-consistency and self-possession is to intensify his auto-inspections. However, as we also saw, this was a double-edged strategy since the hyperreflexive auto-inspections tend to accentuate the gaping intervals they aim to close. Thus, the perpetual dissimulation of thought by itself brings it to the point where, in trying to coincide with itself, it “*désespère maintenant de s’atteindre*.”<sup>195</sup>

The problem thus appears to be that in trying to close off his singularity from purloining and separating others, Artaud also risks effacing this very singularity by closing the constitutive openness to otherness along with it. In his attempt to get rid of the judgment of others, and especially of the judgment of God as the great thief of all singular life, Artaud might end up eliminating his own life along with it, which, as we saw earlier, only exists in a constitutive openness to otherness even when this openness is experienced as a non-mutual symbiotic relation of divine parasitism. This is the double bind of autoimmunity, which, as Derrida emphasizes in *Le toucher*, is always a “[q]uestion de cœur, et de corps étranger.

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one but as that by which the one separated from itself first comes into being as such: “Celui qui dit ‘je’ se distingue en le disant. Il ne fait même que cela: il se sépare, il s’écarte, voire il se retranche. Que *je est un autre*, comme le dit Rimbaud, c’est une évidence qui précède tout sentiment possible d’étrangeté à soi ou d’aliénation” (NA, 4/100).

<sup>193</sup> FP, 9/1.

<sup>194</sup> For Artaud, the reconquering of life, and more specifically the life of the human being, to itself consists also in a remaking of its anatomy. As he writes in *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*: “Lorsque vous lui aurez fait un corps sans organes, alors vous l’aurez délivré de tous ses automatismes et rendu à sa véritable liberté” (OC XIII, 104/SW, 571). Artaud’s phantasm of a body without organs is akin to the cosmic ‘body’ (σῶμα) of Plato’s *Timaeus*, which is described as a ‘blessed God’ (εὐδαίμονα θεὸν) that has no need of ‘organs’ (ὀργάνου) because it is wholly ‘self-sufficient’ (αὐταρκές) and designed to feed on its own ‘wastage’ (φθίσιν). See Tim, 33b–34b.

<sup>195</sup> OC I, 82/SW 69.

D'exappropriation du plus propre, comme désir, dirais-je, auto-immunitaire du propre."<sup>196</sup>

This autoimmunity of the life that Artaud so yearns to touch entails that the more he attempts to make his thought and language coincide by bearing witness to their singular unicity, the more the interval of separation *and* relation seems to expand, through a movement that defers the self-testimony of solitary existence endlessly. Paradoxically, Artaud's strategy of trying to keep his singularity safe from theft, by preserving it as a non-translatable secret to which only he and his solitary word can bear witness, risks destroying what it aims to save.

At this point, we seem to be approaching the end of this adventure with Artaud in the vicinity of the very place where we began, that is, at the 'extreme moment of death,' where Artaud dreads that even if this death were to be a death caused by one's own hand, it would still not be a death of one's own. Are we now at a place where this fear might no longer appear so strange, no stranger at least than we remain to ourselves? If autoimmunity does indeed imply suicidal tendencies, it can only result in a suicide entirely devoid of any sense of authenticity, authority, or propriety, that is, in a suicide that, as a realization of Artaud's fear, would be nothing but a death stolen away from the dying. In fact, as Derrida has shown in *Voyous*, the autoimmunity at the heart of the living consists "pas seulement à se suicider mais à compromettre la sui-référentialité, le soi du suicide même," thus threatening "toujours de priver le suicide lui-même de son sens et son intégrité suppose."<sup>197</sup>

Certainly, Artaud suffered the *aporia* of solitary witnessing as the *aporia* of bearing witness to a secret. Yet, as Derrida has shown in *Poétique et politique du témoignage*, this *aporia* might be essentially linked to what he calls a poetic experience "au-delà ou en deçà de toutes les traductions possible."<sup>198</sup> In writing on Celan's poem *Aschenglorie*, Derrida suggests that a poem retains its irreplaceable singularity precisely in bearing witness to the impossibility of bearing witness and to the solitary responsibility that comes with this impossibility, seeing that "Niemand / zeugt für den / Zeugen."<sup>199</sup> This irreplaceability of the poem is, as Derrida writes:

[L]à où il se tait, là où il garde son secret, tout en nous disant qu'il y a du secret, révélant le secret qu'il garde *comme* secret, ne le révélant pas, tandis qu'il témoigne

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<sup>196</sup> T, 77/63.

<sup>197</sup> V, 71/45.

<sup>198</sup> PPT, 76/95.

<sup>199</sup> Celan 2000b, 72. We shall return to Celan in the closing remarks.

encore qu'on ne peut pas témoigner pour le témoin, qui finalement reste seul et sans témoin.<sup>200</sup>

On this view, the essential solitude of the witness “n’est pas une solitude comme un autre—ni un secret comme un autre. C’est la solitude et la secret mêmes.”<sup>201</sup> Artaud’s despairing attempt to find the proper word that would finally allow him to become the sole witness of himself and the secret of his own singularity might, in this respect, turn out to be a poetic accomplishment—a poetic accomplishment insofar as this ever-missing word, a hole-word in the sense of Duras,<sup>202</sup> ends up bearing witness to a secret so secret that it is secreted away from any possible relation of witnessing. An *ab-solute* secret,<sup>203</sup> at last, which preserves itself in a solitude that belongs to no one, not even to itself, and that therefore can never be stolen by anyone.

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<sup>200</sup> PPT 77/96.

<sup>201</sup> PPT 77/96.

<sup>202</sup> In *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, Duras lets Lol’s lover speculate in her silence is not due to her belief in the existence of a certain “mot-trou, creusé en son centre d’un trou, de ce trou où tous les autres mots auraient été enterrés” (Duras 1994, 54). Since she has not yet found this ever-missing word, Lol remains silent even when speaking.

<sup>203</sup> We should bear in mind here the many different connotations that the word ‘absolute’ composed of *ab-* (‘away from,’ ‘out of’) and *solvere* (‘loosen,’ ‘unbind,’ ‘release’) carries with it from its Latin heritage such as ‘completeness,’ ‘detachment,’ ‘exculpation,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘perfection,’ and ‘unboundedness.’ The absolute is a paradoxical construction since it must both be complete in itself and detached from something else. Yet, as Nancy has emphasized in *La communauté désœuvrée*, with this double-bound demand: “La logique de l’absolu fait violence à l’absolu. Elle l’implique dans un rapport qu’il refuse et exclut par essence” (CD, 18/4). Furthermore, as Nancy remarks in his *L’expérience de la liberté*, it is not enough that the absolute merely be separated from *something*, and thereby implicated in a relation of separation, because “Être absolu, c’est être détaché de tout lien et de toute présence, y compris à soir-même” (EL, 140/109).

## II. THE SOLITUDE OF DEPENDENCY

La plus grande chose du monde c'est de savoir être à soi  
– Michel de Montaigne, 'De la Solitude'

Je sais bien, moi, à qui plus personne ne vient  
prêter un visage et des secrets—que je ne suis  
qu'un trou noir au milieu de Speranza, un point  
de vue sur Speranza—un point, c'est-à-dire rien  
– Michel Tournier, *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique*

### II.1 INTRODUCTION

Let us now return to our point of departure for exploring the remains of solitude in the auto-deconstruction of the self, namely, to the so-called 'solitude of not being alone,' which we encountered it in the initial passage from Artaud, in order to see what other aspects of solitude might still lie concealed behind this solitary figure of the first section.

To begin again, then, perhaps we should be more emphatic, or more precise, in our pronunciation, when attempting to sketch out this figure of solitude that, as we have argued, holds Artaud under siege. More emphatic, that is, since what is at stake here concerns precisely a solitude of not being able *to be* alone, that is, of not being able *to exist as oneself*, or of not being able *to sustain one's being* by oneself or on one's own. The question to be pursued in the following chapter, therefore, is that of the specific nature of this inability. Can it be isolated to an emotional, a psychological, or perhaps even a pathological inability—or is there more to it than that? Does such a distinctive isolation appear unsatisfactory because the inability that we are trying to approach is much more general? Might the inability to exist as oneself by oneself perhaps be an effect of the very ontological structure of what we more or less readily call a 'self' due to the fact that 'others,' in whatever shape or form, condition *both* the possibility *and* the impossibility of the very sense of such a self?<sup>204</sup> These are the questions that we will be

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<sup>204</sup> In *The Divided Self*, Laing tells of a patient who begins her treatment because of what appears to be a severe agoraphobia. However, since Laing observes that she is not afraid to be outside in the streets when somebody that knows her is with her, it soon becomes evident that what frightens her is not the open streets as such but rather that she is afraid of disappearing in the anonymity of the streets. Laing therefore infers that the cause of her anxiety is her "lack of ontological autonomy" since, as he explains: "If she is not in the actual presence of another person who knows her, or if she cannot succeed in evoking this person's presence in his absence, her sense of her own identity drains away from her."

posing again and again in the course of this chapter, perhaps without reaching any final responses.

We deliberately say ‘others in whatever shape or form’ because, as we saw in the previous chapter, the otherness that prevents a self from being entirely on its own alone is not necessarily, or not only, restricted to the otherness of other people. Rather, we also saw that it is not only the alimentary and respiratory, but also the linguistic and representative conditions of existence that are experienced by Artaud as estranging him from his own proper solitude and as divesting him of his own proper life from its very beginning. In this respect, it is not difficult to imagine how such symptomatic conditions of existence may lead to fantasies or phantasms of an absolutely pure and sovereign solitude, hermetically self-enclosed and self-sufficient. Cast in one piece, without organs, and detached from any dependency upon others, such a sovereign solitude would be protected against all influences from the outside, never quavering in or doubting the stability of its inside. However, as we also came to witness in the previous section, and as we shall come to witness again in this and the following sections, the attempts to purge oneself of others also entail great risks: they can bring about autoimmune responses fatal to the very self that one wishes to purge of and preserve from all otherness.

Leaving Artaud somewhat in the shadows but never entirely out of mind, the present section will further develop the risks associated with the desire for a sovereign solitude that are precipitated by the solitary experience of not being able *to be* alone in order to try to unfold the proposition that others constitute *both* a condition of possibility *and* of impossibility of the solitary self. We shall do so by concentrating on the solitary self’s dependence on different instances of otherness—although the otherness treated in the present section will mainly be the otherness of other selves, primarily in the sense of other human selves.<sup>205</sup>

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Her panic is at the fading away of her being. She is like Tinker Bell. In order to exist she needs someone else to believe in her existence” (Laing 1969, 56). The question we are raising in this chapter is, whether we are not all frangible tinker bells to some extent? Is anyone, inside or outside of treatment, capable of existing as someone without someone else believing in the unique existence of this someone? Otherwise put, without the sustaining belief of the other, would not anyone turn into no one?

<sup>205</sup> The intriguing and important question of whether or not what—in a problematic categorization—are frequently called ‘animals’ or ‘plants’ can be said to have or to be selves, and if so, whether or not any distinct borders may be drawn in order to delimit the animal or the vegetative from the human selves is a question that demands more attention than this thesis can afford it. For some of Derrida’s most elaborate discussions of the question of the animal and its difference to the human, see BS I–II and ADS.



## II.2 SOLITUDE AND ORIGINARY BEING-WITH-OTHERS

Perhaps it is no more than a triviality, or a mere statement of the obvious, to say that solitude—whether as a sense or as a notion—depends on a relation with others. Nevertheless, in this section we will investigate whether this apparent triviality might turn out to be more intricate than it appears. In order to launch this closer inspection, we will turn to Heidegger who, despite remaining a strong adherent of the proper *Einsamkeit* and *Vereinzelung* pertaining to every single *Dasein*, recognizes that such singular solitude is only possible because *Dasein* is always already a *Mitsein* or a *Miteinandersein*: in other words, that being-there always already means being-with-others.

In his 1959 essay “Der Weg zur Sprache,” Heidegger explains the equiprimordial intrigue of singular solitude and being-with-others as follows: “Doch einsam kann nur sein, wer *nicht* allein ist; nicht allein, d. h. nicht abgesondert, vereinzelt, ohne jeden Bezug. Im Einsamen west dagegen gerade der Fehl des Gemeinsamen als der bindendste Bezug *zu* diesem.”<sup>206</sup> By way of translation, then, what Heidegger’s sense of solitude discerns is that only one who is *not* alone, secluded, or isolated without any relations or bonds to others can be said to be solitary. Moreover, in solitude it is precisely the *absence* or *lack* of a common ground of being that binds the solitary one most strongly or most forcefully to what we can call the being-in-common (*Gemeinsamen*) with other beings.

Despite the originary being-with-others, however, there nevertheless remains an irreducible solitude (*Einsamkeit*) of each and every singular *Dasein*. We shall attempt to come to a better understanding of this irreducible solitude by reading Heidegger’s 1929–30 lecture course on *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit* in tandem with Derrida’s last seminars on *La bête et le souverain*, given from December 2001 to March 2003 and dedicated, among other readings, to a double reading of none other than Heidegger’s 1929–30 lecture course together with Defoe’s 1718 novel *Robinson Crusoe*.

To begin with Derrida: a recurrent refrain of his final seminars concerns the significant relation that he draws between a desire for solitude or for being all ‘alone’ (*seul*) with oneself, and a desire for sovereignty or for being ‘the only one’ (*le seul*), that is, in more Heideggerian terms, between *Einsamkeit* and *Einzigkeit*. As Derrida demonstrates, this relation between a certain solitude and a desire for sovereignty can be detected not only in the works of Heidegger and Defoe, but throughout the abundant discourses—whether philosophical, theological, fictional, or otherwise—where solitude

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<sup>206</sup> GA 12, 254.

figures as something that is both longed for and shied away from, both desired and dreaded.

We will return to this significant relation between solitude and sovereignty in more detail in the course of the following section. At this preliminary stage, however, we shall pause to ponder the strange circumstance that, in this context of drawing a connection between solitude and sovereignty, Derrida merely takes note of but does not expand on the fact that the word *Einsamkeit*—which figures as the last of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics in the subtitle of Heidegger’s lecture course—more or less disappears from the course’s main text, where it is replaced by the word *Vereinzelnung*.<sup>207</sup> This circumstance becomes all the more strange given that one could in fact read Derrida’s entire seminar as devoting itself to, and unfolding in, precisely the trembling difference between these two German words, that is, between *Einsamkeit* and *Vereinzelnung*, which Derrida more or less consistently translates into French as *solitude* and *esseulement*.<sup>208</sup>

Throughout their respective texts, then, Heidegger will write more or less unsteadily of both *Vereinzelnung* and *Einsamkeit*—although *Vereinzelnung* definitely takes the more prominent role throughout the lecture course—without clearly specifying when and why he uses one word instead of the other, much as Derrida will write in translation of both *esseulement* and *solitude*. But alas, the difficulties of translation between languages and texts, or within the same language and text, do not end here. Since we are currently reading and writing in English, a further complication attaches itself to this

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<sup>207</sup> To my count, the word *Einsamkeit* only appears twice in the lecture course, apart from the subtitle (GA 29/30, 8; 19), whereas *Vereinzelnung* appears more times than it would make sense to count. As one can discern from the editor’s epilogue, the substitution of words taking place in the lectures, on which Heidegger himself does not comment, was also a cause of doubt for the editors during their preparation of the German text for publication. Adding to their confusion, the editors report that two statements offered to them independently of each other by two participants of the lectures both affirm that Heidegger in his handwritten announcement of the lecture course on the blackboard had, in fact, assigned it the subtitle “Welt—Endlichkeit—Vereinzelnung” instead of “Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit” as was written in his manuscript. Because Heidegger did not decide to overwrite the word *Einsamkeit* with *Vereinzelnung* in any of the manuscripts for the lecture course, however, the editors finally came to the decision to publish it without changes.

<sup>208</sup> Derrida himself emphasizes that the difference between the two terms marks an ‘unstable differentiation’ (cf. BS II, 152/98) in Heidegger’s text as well as his own. That Derrida does not expand more on the substitution of words in Heidegger’s text could of course have something to do with the format of the text. Philological considerations are perhaps more accommodable to a text written mainly to be read and less so to a text that also serves as a manuscript for an oral presentation at a seminar where the listeners do not have the possibility of reading along to keep track of the complexities.

already complex matter, inasmuch as the English language offers (at least) two possible translations of the German *Einsamkeit*, namely, as *loneliness* or *solitude*; and when it comes to the English translation of *Vereinzellung*, matters become even more complicated, which is why we must briefly digress here in order to try to disentangle them a little.

In McNeill's English translation of Heidegger's 1929/1930 lecture course, *Vereinzellung* is translated as *individuation* and *Einsamkeit* as *solitude*, whereas the word *loneliness* does not figure at all. In contrast, Bennington seems reluctant to use the word *individuation* in his English translation of Derrida's seminar, and most frequently translates Derrida's French translation of Heidegger's *Vereinzellung* to *esseulement* as *loneliness*, sometimes inserting a note marking the difference from McNeill's choice of words. However, in at least one quotation from Heidegger's text in Derrida's seminar, Bennington chooses to keep McNeill's English translation of *Vereinzellung* as *individuation*, despite the fact that Derrida's French translation still employs *esseulement*.<sup>209</sup>

At this point, it seems unavoidable that we must address—albeit in a preliminary manner—the problematic issue of translating Heidegger's *Vereinzellung* with the term *individuation*, whether in the 1929/1930 lecture course or elsewhere. What makes this translation problematic can be discerned by considering some of Heidegger's more or less explicit, but most often quite critical or directly disapproving comments pertaining to the notion of the 'individual,' and all of its inflections, scattered across his writings.<sup>210</sup> Overall, one can say that for Heidegger, concepts such as 'individuality,' the 'individuum,' and the 'individual,' but also the 'subject' or the 'person' all presuppose what he seeks to designate in a more original manner with terms such as *Dasein*, *Jeweiligkeit*, or *Jemeinigkeit*. A more

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<sup>209</sup> Cf. BS II, 163/108.

<sup>210</sup> This is already evident in one of Heidegger's earliest texts *Der Begriff der Zeit* from 1924, where time is rendered as the proper *principium individuationis* of *Dasein*, albeit a principle of individuation that only individuates inasmuch as it breaks down every possibility of standing out from others as someone uniquely outstanding (cf. GA 64, 82). Rather, time individuates in such a manner that it makes everyone equal inasmuch as it brings every single one before his or her death *in exactly the same way*. The way in which time serves as a principle of individuation without, however, producing outstanding individuals is precisely the movement that Heidegger sought to capture with his notion of an "each-time-ness that is mine" (*Jeweiligkeit als meiniges*) already in 1924, and which in *Sein und Zeit* and later became amalgamated in the notion of *Jemeinigkeit* (cf. GA 64, 112). See also §31 of *Sein und Zeit*, where Heidegger in a subsequently added comment explicitly distinguishes the self (*selbst*) that *Dasein*, as existing, already is but also always has to become, from the mode of the being of both the 'subject,' the 'individuum' and the 'person' (cf. GA 2, 146).

original manner, because these terms indicate how the workings of both time (*je, weil*) and space (*Da*) precondition the constitution of any individual, or rather of any separated or singular human being as a being-with-others.

In the 1929/1930 lectures specifically, Heidegger links the notion of the individual to the Apollonian in Nietzsche's sense of this word, inasmuch as he detects in the *individuum* a need (*Drang*) for a complete being-for-itself (*vollkommenen Für-sich-sein*). For Heidegger, this need for being-for-oneself connotes not only a representation of oneself before oneself (*Vorstellung*) as an object, but also the technical enframing (*Gestell*) of oneself as disposable to oneself. According to Heidegger, this need for representation pertains to all of the mechanisms that seek to simplify whatever is encountered in experience, making it clear and distinct only by abstracting it from any original ambiguity it might otherwise entail.<sup>211</sup> Further on in the lecture course, Heidegger also associates 'the individual subject' with the 'everyday personality,' which is obviously reminiscent of the notion of *Das Man* from *Sein und Zeit*, which, within the logic of fundamental ontology, is precisely the mode of being that every single *Dasein* must become dissociated from in order to experience its ownmost singularity.

It is precisely these everyday (read: naïve or vulgar) concepts of 'individuality' and 'personality' that encounter their porous limits and become insignificant in the fundamental moods, or the abyssal attunements, of ground (*Grundstimmungen*), i.e. both of anxiety, which exposes the anxious one to the original unhomeliness (*Unheimlichkeit*) of its *Dasein* as a relation to being,<sup>212</sup> and of a profound boredom, which discloses the essential

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<sup>211</sup> As Heidegger explains: "Mit dem Wort 'apollinisch' ist ausgedrückt: der Drang zum vollkommenen Für-sich-sein, zum typischen 'Individuum', zu Allem was vereinfacht, heraushebt, stark, deutlich, unzweideutig, typisch macht: die Freiheit unter dem Gesetz" (GA 29/30, 109). With 'the law,' Heidegger is here referring to what Nietzsche calls 'the aristocratic legislation' (*die aristokratische Gesetzgebung*) according to which "so soll es immer sein!" which is the moral aestheticism of the Apollonian illusion of eternally beautiful forms and norms. In contrast, the Dionysian knows that existence can also appear cruel and hideous but it affirms these as aspects of the creatively destructive and destructively creative forces of the world as 'continual creation' (*beständige Schöpfung*). Cf. KSA 12, 113.

<sup>212</sup> Accordingly, in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger clearly distinguishes the *Vereinzelung* of the anxious one from the isolation of some kind of transcendental subject: "Die Angst vereinzelt und erschließt so das Dasein als 'solus ipse.' Dieser existenziale 'Solipsismus' versetzt aber so wenig ein isoliertes Subjekt Ding in die harmlose Leere eines weltlosen Vorkommens, daß er das Dasein gerade in einem extremen Sinne vor seine Welt als Welt und damit es selbst vor sich selbst als In-der-Welt-sein bringt" (GA 2, 250).

emptiness and estrangedness of *Dasein* as a relation to time.<sup>213</sup>

Hence, in the 1929/1930 lectures the category of the ‘individual’ is construed as part of that shining veil *Schein*, which in our everyday affairs we cast upon existence in order to make it a little less complicated, a little less nuanced, a little more simple than it might actually be. In other words, the ready-made notion of the ‘individual’ is one of the lies we need to tell ourselves lest we perish from the truth. Accordingly, for Heidegger, clinging on to the assumption of the ‘individual’ is precisely what keeps us from becoming properly singularized (*vereinzelt*) in becoming finite (*Verendlichkeit*).

One must be careful, then, and attentive to Heidegger’s wording, which we know is never haphazard, and which distinguishes the proper (*eigentliche*) solitude of *Dasein* from an improper solitude of the individual, since, as Derrida emphasizes in “Il faut bien manger,” the concept of individuality “risque toujours de faire signe et vers l’*ego* et vers une indivisibilité.”<sup>214</sup> The conception of such an indivisible kernel of subjectivity—constructed along the lines of a simple understanding of the Bohrian atomic model that disregards the divisibility of the kernel—solicits a thinking that begins with the principle of an isolated individual that exists in and for itself independently of others, in order to subsequently, and only in a secondary move, proceed to thinking of an ‘intersubjectivity’ that allows such atomic subjects to relate and engage with one another.

In other words, the notion of ‘individuation’ bypasses, disregards, or overlooks the primordial link between, or the equiprimordiality (*Gleichursprünglichkeit*) of, solitude and being-with-others, which also implies the impossibility of being alone on one’s own, since ‘one’s own’ is always already infiltrated with an otherness that is also a condition of its possibility. As Nancy underlines, the question of singularity is always already plural and it always already lurks behind the conception of an atomic individual: “La singularité n’a pas lieu dans l’ordre des atomes, identités identifiables sinon identiques, mais elle lieu dans le plan du *clinamen*, inidentifiable.”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> In the context of profound boredom, Heidegger writes: “Denn mit diesem ‘es ist einem langweilig’ sind wir nicht bloß der *alltäglichen Personalität enthoben*, ihr irgendwie fern und fremd, sondern in eins damit *hinausgehoben* auch über die jeweilige bestimmte Situation und das *betreffende Seiende*, das uns da umgibt. Die ganze Situation und wir selbst als dieses individuelle Subjekt sind dabei gleichgültig” (GA 29/30, 207).

<sup>214</sup> ASQV, 102/107.

<sup>215</sup> CD, 25–26/6–7. Lucretius employs the notion of the *clinamen* in reference to the unpredictable swerve of atoms whose ‘inclination’ remains undetectable, that is, when atoms for no predictable or deductible reason infinitesimally deviate “at scarce

As already mentioned, Heidegger, avoiding the term ‘individuation,’ refers at times, and especially during the period of *Sein und Zeit*, to the irreducibly singular solitude of being-with-others under the heading of *Jemeinigkeit*, an untranslatable word which nonetheless has the advantage of emphasizing the finitude of the time and the space distributed to each and every single *Dasein*. The ‘each time’ of the *je-* is a timing of space, or a spacing of time, according to which the ‘mineness’ of *-meinigkeit* can never be replaced by another, but also according to which this same ‘mineness’ can only take place because of the interval separating it from other instances of ‘mineness.’

Therefore, the *Jemeinigkeit* or the ‘each-time-mineness’ of *Dasein* differs from the indivisibility of an individual inasmuch as it designates an intervallic structure according to which each and every *Dasein* is not only separated from each and every other *Dasein*, but also from itself in each and every time of another *je-*. Undoubtedly, then, there remains an irreducible singularity in this structure of *Jemeinigkeit* or *Vereinzelung* pertaining to *Dasein*, but this singularity is not that of the individual, which precisely denotes that which cannot be divided; whereas the singularity of the ‘each-time-mineness’ is always already divided, always already multiplied, always already differing in itself.<sup>216</sup>

As Nancy has concisely articulated the difference: “La singularité—pour cette raison distincte de l’individualité—a lieu selon cette double altérité de la ‘fois’, qui instaure le rapport comme retrait de l’identité.”<sup>217</sup> We shall return to Nancy and his conception of a certain ‘inoperative’ community of solitary singularities who share nothing but their differing later in this

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determined times [*incerto tempore*], in scarce determined places [*incertisque locis*], from their course” (Re.Nat. II.218–219). According to Lucretius, if this principal deviation from principles had not occurred “then collisions never could be nor blows among the primal elements; and thus Nature would never have created aught [*ita nihil unquam natura creasset*]” (ibid. II.224–225). In other words, the beginning always begins with a deviation, which again implies that there is no simple origin of beginning. Moreover, for Lucretius the fact that the human mind has no prefixed internal necessity (*necessum intestinum*) comes from the very unfixable swerve of the principles (*facit exiguum clinamen principiorum nec regione loci certa nec tempore certo*) (ibid. II.289–293). With Heidegger and Nancy, one could say that this is why every beginning of a singular plural is linked to ecstasy understood precisely as an original dislocation from the *stasis* of a steady time and place. On the notion of the *clinamen*, see also Deleuze’s essay “Lucrece et le simulacra” (Deleuze 1969, 307–324/269–270).

<sup>216</sup> We find the great fragment from Heraclitus referred to in Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*, both of which Heidegger had undoubtedly read: “Das große Wort, das *εν διαφορον εαυτω* (das Eine in sich selber unterschiedne) des Heraklit, das konnte nur ein Grieche finden, denn es ist das Wesen der Schönheit, und ehe es gefunden war, gabs keine Philosophie” (HSW 5, 182).

<sup>217</sup> EL, 92/68.

chapter. For now, however, we will not dwell any longer on this intricate matter of wording. Instead, and as a way of closing this long meditation on individuation, we will simply note the curious proximity between the simplification of the individual, this *Vereinfachung* of which Heidegger speaks mostly pejoratively, and his advancement of the term *Vereinzelung*, which can also, as it were—according to the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, that is to say, in ‘everyday’ German—signify simplification understood as the process of ‘dividing a whole into parts’ (*ein ganzes in theile zertheilen*).

Coming to the end of this translational digression, then, the question remains whether Bennington’s *loneliness*, undoubtedly preferable to the term ‘individuation,’ is the most appropriate translation of Derrida’s *esseulement*, which again figures as a translation of Heidegger’s *Vereinzelung*. I am doubtful that this is appropriate, for several reasons. To mention just one reason, the noun *loneliness* does not carry with it the sense of movement or of becoming found in either Derrida’s *esseulement* or Heidegger’s *Vereinzelung*, both of which are words that can function as a noun or as a verb, depending on the context in which they occur. In this respect, it seems to me that a word such as ‘singularization,’ always preferred by someone like Nancy, would perhaps be more appropriate—even if it is still inappropriate—than both ‘individuation’ and ‘loneliness.’

Yet one could also argue on behalf of retaining Bennington’s translation of *esseulement* as ‘loneliness’—*first*, because of the obvious reference to solitude that it bears, which makes the substitution of *Einsamkeit* for *Vereinzelung* in Heidegger’s text more marked. *Second*, and perhaps more far-fetched, because like both *Vereinzelung* and *Einsamkeit*, *loneliness* actually contains within it the *one* becoming singularized. In any case, to the question of whether the distinction between ‘*Einsamkeit und Vereinzelung*,’ ‘*solitude et esseulement*,’ or ‘solitude and loneliness and/or singularization’ could or even should be drawn clearly or strictly, whether in Heidegger, in Derrida, or in the present text, I cannot speak with confidence, and so in what follows I will leave these distinctions to their unstable differentiations, even if for the above reasons I happen to prefer one term over another.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> A couple of years following the seminar of *La bête et le souverain*, in *L’animal que donc je suis* from 2006, Derrida returns to this difficulty of translation when he cites one of the paragraph titles from chapter one of Heidegger’s lecture course, “Das Heimweh als die Grundstimmung des Philosophierens und die Fragen nach Welt, Endlichkeit, Vereinzelung.” Once again, Derrida translates *Vereinzelung* as *esseulement* but then adds a parenthesis noting his doubtful hesitation about this translation: “(Esseulement’ est-il la meilleure traduction pour Vereinzelung? Singularisation? Esseulement? Solitude? C’est très compliqué)” (ADS, 198/145). It is indeed very complicated; and we should not be so presumptuous as to think that we can resolve this complication any better than Derrida.

Returning to the texts of Heidegger and Derrida, it appears that Heidegger himself offers us a possible clarification of the substitution of *Einsamkeit*, or solitude, with *Vereinzelung*, or singularization, that takes place in his 1929/1930 lecture course, inasmuch as he introduces the solitude with which he is concerned as a question of becoming singular: “Was ist diese *Einsamkeit*, wo der Mensch je wie ein *Einzig*er sein wird?”<sup>219</sup> From this question, which appears at the very outset of the lectures, we can at least sense an intimation of the reason why the term *Einsamkeit* came to be replaced by the term *Vereinzelung*, inasmuch as Heidegger’s main interest in solitude is precisely as a question of singularization. Moreover, we might note that *Vereinzelung*, to a foreigner’s ear at least, sounds a lot like *Verinselung*, that is, insularization or islandization, which is of some importance in the context of Derrida’s double reading of Defoe and Heidegger. As it were, in *La bête et le souverain*, Derrida will come to show how the distance separating an eighteenth-century British novel about a man isolated for twenty-eight years on a desert island from the work of a twentieth-century German philosopher thinking about singularization might be slimmer than expected.

Hence, Heidegger’s initial questioning of the solitary singularization already discloses that the underlying question linking the three fundamental questions of metaphysics—‘What is world (*Welt*)?’ ‘What is finitude (*Endlichkeit*)?’ ‘What is solitude (*Einsamkeit*)?’—is the question of the human being, which for Heidegger is always a question of the being whose being consists in being *there* (*Dasein*), which is also a question of grounds. Heidegger interlaces these *four* fundamental questions into one as follows: “Was ist das in Einem: Welt, Endlichkeit, Vereinzelung? Was geschieht *da* mit uns? Was ist der Mensch, daß mit ihm solches in seinem Grunde geschieht?”<sup>220</sup>

What happens *there* that makes ‘us,’ the human beings, into the human beings that ‘we’ are? As Derrida affirms, this question of *Dasein* so significant to Heidegger’s thinking concerns precisely “la question de l’essence de l’homme dans l’expérience de ce *Da*.”<sup>221</sup> Where is this *there*, then? Well, according to Heidegger, it takes place right *there* in the interrelation of the three fundamental questions of world, finitude, and solitary singularization. It is *there* in between the difference separating and relating beings from and to their being, which is the also the ‘in-between’ or

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<sup>219</sup> GA 29/30, 8.

<sup>220</sup> GA 29/30, 8. Partly my italics.

<sup>221</sup> BS II, 161/106.



the interval that opens up the possibility of the apophantic, which again is the possibility for ‘having’ a world *as such*.

However, the *there* as the condition of both having a world and becoming solitary is in return conditioned by the finitude of its time and space, that is, by its essential mortality. According to Heidegger, the human being is the only being capable of dying properly, and because of this distinguished capability of being mortal, it is also the only being capable of solitude and of relating to the world *as such*. Neither the animal, the plant, nor the stone can die, and for this reason they can neither be solitary nor have a relation to something like a world, since ultimately they are not even *there*, in the determinate, or rather terminal, sense of being *Da*.<sup>222</sup> As such, the being called *Dasein*, which is human but also other than human, is the only being capable of both world, finitude, and solitude. It is also the only being capable of posing questions about these capabilities, and indeed of posing questions *at all* and *about the all*, that is, metaphysical questions (are there any other?)

Accordingly, in a paragraph that transports the reader through the entire referential chain of finitude–solitude–singularity–man–world, Heidegger unfolds the interweaving, or the *Verflechtung*, of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics—world, finitude, solitude—with that of the human being as follows: “Was sich in dieser Verendlichkeit vollzieht, ist eine letzte *Vereinsamung* des Menschen, in der jeder für sich wie ein Einziger vor dem Ganzen steht.”<sup>223</sup>

It is in the confrontation with finitude in the guise of one’s ownmost death that the human being experiences the solitary singularization of its *Da* at the edges of the world. For Heidegger, this singularization of *Dasein* does not amount to the stifling of a petty little ego (*ein schwächtiges und kleines Ich*), abstracted from the world of others. On the contrary, the singularization of which Heidegger is speaking is rather like a becoming solitary or a solitarisation (*Vereinsamung*), in which each and every human being first enters into proximity with the essence of everything, that is to say, with the

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<sup>222</sup> A small but significant correction must be inserted here, since according to Heidegger, animals do in fact have a relation to a world in a certain sense, namely, a relation of deprivation (*Entbehrung*) or poverty (*Armut*). Therefore the animal has a world in not having a world, or, as Heidegger puts it in his second thesis, ‘the animal is poor of world’ (*das Tier ist Weltarm*), the first thesis being ‘the stone is worldless’ (*der Stein ist weltlos*), and the third ‘the human being is worldbuilding’ (*der Mensch is weltbildend*). Obviously, the question of the animal world in distinction from the human world is important to Heidegger, and one might suspect also quite problematic, inasmuch as he spends no less than fourteen paragraphs and more than one hundred pages developing it. Cf. GA 29/30, §§ 45–63.

<sup>223</sup> GA 29/39, 12. In a preceding passage, Heidegger explained that in employing the notion of the ‘whole’ (*Ganzen*), he in fact means the ‘world’ (cf. GA 29/30, 8).

world.<sup>224</sup> In light of what we have discussed so far, one must wonder why, if *Vereinzelung* is really more like a *Vereinsamung*, Heidegger does not stick to the word *Einsamkeit* in the main text? *Einsamkeit*, after all, contains precisely—according to the Heidegger of decades later, with whom we initiated this section—the *sam* that, in resonating with both the Gothic *sama* and the Greek *ἄμα*, articulates the belonging-together of the other or each other and the same in solitude: “Einsam besagt: das Selbe im Einigen des Zueinandergehörenden.”<sup>225</sup>

I cannot claim to be capable of resolving this problem, as though Heidegger’s text sheltered some final solution to be excavated in the use of the right interpretive key, but will make do with suggesting that his advancement of the word *Vereinzelung* in place of the word *Einsamkeit* may have something to do, as Derrida appears to suggest, with the relation between a desire for solitude and a desire for sovereignty. A relation that, moreover, is not unrelated to what we have been calling so far the solitude of not being able to be alone.

We will engage in more detail with this relation between the desire for solitude and the desire for sovereignty in a later section of this chapter. Before we get that far, however, we shall have to dwell a bit longer on the strange community that initiated this discussion of solitude and singularization and which, according to Heidegger, is constituted only by its lack of communality.

### II.3 A COMMUNITY OF SOLITARIES

To Heidegger’s question of what makes the human being singular in solitude, Derrida in turn poses a series of counter-questions: “Est-ce que la solitude éloigne des autres? Qu’est-ce que je dis quand je dis ‘je suis seul’? Est-ce que cela m’éloigne ou me rapproche de l’autre ou des autres?”<sup>226</sup> These questions refer us to the apparent paradox in Heidegger’s thinking of the equiprimordiality of solitude and being-with-others with which we began this chapter. Namely, the paradox that the *lack of commonality* or of *something in common* (*Fehl des Gemeinsamen*) serves as the most binding bond to *being-in-common* or to *community* (*bindendste Bezug zu diesem*).

This paradoxical structure resembles that which, in a certain French tradition beginning with Bataille in the 1940s<sup>227</sup> and prolonged by thinkers

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<sup>224</sup> GA 29/30, 8.

<sup>225</sup> GA 12, 254.

<sup>226</sup> BS II, 103/62.

<sup>227</sup> In a post-script added ten years after the first publishing of *L'expérience intérieure* in 1943, almost as if as a note too himself, Bataille in extension of what he had earlier called

such as Nancy, Blanchot, and Derrida, has been construed in the negative as a ‘community *without* community’ (*communauté sans communauté*),<sup>228</sup> or as an ‘inoperative’ or ‘unavowable’ community understood precisely as a ‘community of those who have nothing in common’—to quote some seminal titles by Nancy, Blanchot, and Lingis.<sup>229</sup> This does not mean, however, that those who have nothing in common would then be self-sufficient or sovereign in their solitary existence. On the contrary, as is already made clear by the quote from Heidegger above, it is rather the other way around. It is only *because* I am always already *bound* to others in our *lack* of common ground that I can be solitary in the first place.

According to Nancy, who has taken up and further elaborated Heidegger’s questioning of an originary being-with-others pertaining to singular solitude, the ‘community without community’ is the only community that remains when all poetico-political myths of commonalities have withdrawn—be they myths of gods, goods, labor, or Being.<sup>230</sup> The conception of myth, in this context, designates the construction of everything that gathers or unites so called individuals into a community or a society—be it between human

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a ‘negative community’ writes explicitly of a ‘community of those who have no community’: “Revoir en particulier l’absence de communauté et insister sur l’idée de communauté négative; la communauté de ceux qui n’ont pas de communauté” (Bataille 1973, 483).

<sup>228</sup> Cf. CD, 177/71.

<sup>229</sup> Besides Nancy’s *Communauté désoeuvrée* (1986) the other two titles referred to are Blanchot’s *La communauté inavouable* (1983), and Lingis’ *The Community of Those who have Nothing in Common* (1994), all of which in some way or other carry out a conversation with one another.

<sup>230</sup> However, saying that ‘being-with-others’ or the ‘community without community’ are originary for solitary and singular existence does not amount to positing the human being as a *zoon politikon*, nor being-with-others as the essence of the being we call human, nor sociality as the defining predicate of the human subject. First, because according to Nancy “il n’est pas certain que la communauté des singularités se limite à ‘l’homme’ et exclut, par exemple, ‘l’animal’” (CD, 71/28). Second, because it would be to misconstrue both the ‘being-with-others’ and the ‘community without community,’ neither of which can be conceived as an ‘essence,’ a ‘ground,’ or a ‘substance,’ which all the solitary singularities would have in common. Instead, Nancy emphasizes that being-in-common (*l’être-en-commun*) is not a common being (*n’est pas un être commun*) but rather “le fait constitutif d’une exposition au dehors qui définit la singularité” (CD, 74/29). In this respect, one might say that thinkers like Nancy, Bataille, Blanchot, and Derrida draw the consequences of Heidegger’s thinking of finitude more rigorously than Heidegger himself. For, if the ‘essence’ of the being we call human—and *Dasein* for Heidegger is as we know always and only human—is to exist, and if to exist is to stand out in the groundlessness of being as originally exposed to others, on which grounds then may we still discriminate essentially between the existence of human beings and that of other beings?

beings and nature, human beings and gods, or between human beings amongst themselves—which means that *properly* speaking there can be no community outside of myth and that the “l’interruption du mythe est donc aussi, nécessairement, l’interruption de la communauté.”<sup>231</sup>

I say *properly* speaking, because a certain ‘bastard speech,’<sup>232</sup> so to speak, still appears to resist such proper speaking by allowing one to speak within a certain ‘logic of the without,’ that is, to speak of elusive things such as a ‘community without community,’ which is precisely the community that remains to resist its interruption by becoming, in turn, a community of interruption. It is a community of interruption, not only because it continually interrupts or disrupts the construction of myths, but also because it incessantly interrupts itself from becoming established *as such*. Instead, the community *without* community never closes in upon itself, never finishes itself off or completes itself, but keeps open a space for arriving at the absolutely unforeseeable, signaling a community that remains to come, remains in becoming.

Of course, this is not to say that a reconstruction of gathering, unifying, or even totalitarian, myths could not begin to take place again at any time from within this interrupted space.<sup>233</sup> Indeed, such risk is and must be inherent to

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<sup>231</sup> CD, 145/57.

<sup>232</sup> I am referring here to the *logismo notho* of Plato’s *Timaeus* (52b) and *Phaedrus* (256a). In *Timaeus*, Plato discerns ‘bastard reasoning or reckoning’ (*λογισμῶ τιμι νόθῳ*) as the only way of approaching the *chora* (*χώρα*), which is a third kind (*γένος*) of being distinguished from what can be approach by the intellectual knowledge of the mind (*νοῦς*), that is the ideas, and by the sense perception or persuasion of opinion (*δόξα*). The *chora* is nothing *in itself* or *as such*, and as such it is hardly trustworthy (*μόγις πιστόν*) as a being, but ‘is’ rather that which makes room or provides space for something else in giving way or withdrawing itself. Yet that which the *chora* lets appear in disappearing is that which does not have its substance in itself “but fleets ever as a phantom [*φάντασμα*] of something else” (Tim. 52c). Accordingly, one could, as Sallis has suggested in his brilliant study, call the *chora* “a ghost scene that, enshrouding precisely in letting appear, endows the fleeting specters with whatever trace of being they might enjoy” (Sallis 1999, 122).

<sup>233</sup> Bataille had already called attention to the risk of the absence of myth reproducing itself as a myth and to a certain extent already saw it happening with perhaps the greatest myth of modern day societies, namely the myth of the individual—the individual being precisely the myth of a completed totality, closed off from other individuals yet indivisible in itself. Instead, Bataille in response to Nietzsche speaks of “*une communauté noyant d’objet que l’expérience*,” and by experience Bataille means very specifically a transport to the limit where “*il n’est plus d’existence limitée*” and where a person “*ne s’y distingue en rien des autres: en lui se perd ce qui chez d’autres est torrential*” which at the same time makes of man “*une multitude, un désert*” (Bataille 1973, 40/27). Hence, Bataille’s absent community is indeed very far from constituting a community of individuals.

the community of interruption, inasmuch as the exclusion of such a possibility would mean that its opening space was already in the process of closing itself off, and that the community without community would thereby already be in the business of constructing its own totality. Instead, then, and in the unending attempt to avoid the reconstruction of self-enclosing myths, the community of the interruption of myth must be incessantly exposed to its own limits, which therefore become undelimitable in principle since they are perpetually transgressed and redrawn. In this regard, Nancy, again with reference to Bataille, also speaks of an originary ‘ecstasy’ denoting the impossibility of either “d’une individualité au sens exact aussi bien que d’une pure totalité collective.”<sup>234</sup>

Ecstasy is originary, however, only because it refers to the opening that is existence and that precludes the possibility of determining the origin of existence. As Nancy writes:

Cela signifie que cette ‘origine’—l’origine de la communauté ou la communauté originaire—n’est pas autre chose que la limite: l’origine est le tracé des bords sur lesquels, ou le long desquels s’exposent les êtres singuliers.<sup>235</sup>

The solitude stemming from such structural dependency is a solitude of not being able to exist sovereignly by oneself, precisely because to *exist* means always already being exposed to others, without the preexisting persistence of a substance or a firm ground of being, and as such to be dependent on others for one’s own existence, which is therefore *not* one’s own alone. Furthermore, in this existence of exposure to others we are also exposed to the exposure of each and every other to one another without common grounds of being and, as such, also to an exposedness of the fact that what we, the existing ones, *do* share is what divides us. As Nancy writes in *L’expérience de la liberté*: “Nous partageons ce qui nous partage.”<sup>236</sup> The French verb employed by Nancy in this context, *partager*, has the double meaning of both ‘to share’ and ‘to divide,’ or ‘to part,’ and Nancy is fully engaged in the play of this meaningful duplicity.

How are we to read this sentence that ‘we share that which divides us’? First of all, this apparently paradoxical formulation implies that that which we share is essentially unshareable because it is without referral to a unified essence or identity. That which we share is not some common substance that would be distributed and allotted to us in equal or unequal measures. Instead, we share the empty interval of the parting that opens up existence and relates

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<sup>234</sup> CD, 22/6.

<sup>235</sup> CD, 83/33.

<sup>236</sup> EL, 123/95.

those who exist to one another only by separating them. That which we share is the unshareable and inappropriable strangeness between us.

My singularity is only brought into existence at the limit that sets me apart from others but which I in turn therefore share with a plurality of other singular existences. Thus, singular existences are themselves constituted by sharing; they are distributed, and displaced, or rather spaced, by the sharing that divides them in making them others for one another. Again, then, we encounter the community of those who have ‘*nothing*’ in common. Or rather, nothing but the nothing of the time that spaces and the spacing of time that constitutes our finite existences, that is, the nothing of the interval that shares and divides us. Still, our finitude—the finitude we share as it divides us—does not mean that we are not infinite. On the contrary, finitude means that we are infinitely finite because we are infinitely exposed to our not having an essence in ourselves, which means that each and every existent is exposed to “*l’infinie inessentialité de son être-fini, qui le livre à la singularité où il est ‘soi.’*”<sup>237</sup> Infinitely finite, because our gaping existence exposes us to the infinite alterity of our ‘own’ birth and our ‘own’ death, which makes our ‘own’ being infinitely inappropriable. In this respect, the passage from Artaud with which we began our first chapter, and in which he fears of ever attaining a birth or a death of his own, comes to take on yet another sense, namely, the sense according to which Nancy describes the mortal truth of community:

Elle est la présentation de la finitude et de l’excès sans recours qui font l’être fini: sa mort, mais aussi bien sa naissance, seule la communauté me présente ma naissance, et avec elle l’impossibilité pour moi de retraverser celle-ci, aussi bien que de franchir ma mort.<sup>238</sup>

In more simple words, I cannot give birth to myself any more than I can give myself my own death, even through suicide, and my finite existence ‘in-between’ these two infinitely withdrawing limits that we call ‘birth’ and ‘death’ is only given to me as ‘mine’ in the shared division from others. As Nancy puts it: “Le partage répond à ceci: ce que la communauté me révèle, en me présentant ma naissance et ma mort, c’est mon existence hors de moi.”<sup>239</sup> Yet this sharing has no myth: you cannot tell a continuous narrative about it since the story of sharing neither has a simple origin nor ever reaches

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<sup>237</sup> EL, 18/14.

<sup>238</sup> CD, 43/15.

<sup>239</sup> CD, 68/26.

a completion. Sharing is not myth but rather literature, since literature is precisely what interrupts myth insofar as it ‘never achieves an ending.’<sup>240</sup> Literature designates that which only has its being in being shared, since “jamais on n’opère seul, jamais on n’écrit seul, et l’‘être singulier’ n’est pas représenté, bien au contraire, par l’individu isolé.”<sup>241</sup> There is no literature without the other and literature is what proliferates and exposes itself to this other instead of gathering and closing itself off. Yet what is being shared as literature is not some delimitable thing, feeling, or meaning, but rather the unsharable as such. Literature does not communicate something to someone, it communicates communication as the naked existence of being exposed to one another without refuge. Hence, for Bataille, Nancy, and Blanchot, the ‘community without community’ is not so much a fictional as a fundamentally literary community ceaselessly writing “le mythe de la société sans mythes.”<sup>242</sup> Abandoned to the absence of myth—or to the myth of myth revealing its abyssal origins of fabulous fiction—the ‘community without community’ finds its improper places in literature understood as “l’espace de l’inconvenance absolue.”<sup>243</sup>

As such, the community without community is a community that does not gather around an inside constituted through the exclusion of an outside; it is rather a community of ex-perience, understood as a perpetual exposure to the intimate outside that is already opening it up from the inside and keeping it from completion; a community not of congregation but of separation or spreading—a disseminative community, if not a community of diaspora. Accordingly, the *unavowable* community, as Blanchot has designated this community without community, whose only myth is the absence of myth, is as the adjective makes clear a community that cannot be avowed, declared, or confessed to, inasmuch as it is a community that harbors no altars or other sacramentary places of communion in its midst.

Divested of any common sacraments, the community without community also becomes a community of the secretive and of the cryptic, not in the sense that it treasures a hidden secret to be revealed by the adventurous and the persistent, but rather in the sense that it remains secret to itself, always secreted away, deferred, or displaced from its own space of revelation and always harboring a crypt of alterity that cannot be encrypted. As such, it remains a community of the incomplete or of incompleteness, which for that very reason cannot be composed into an ensemble of indivisible individuals who all have their indivisibility in common, but only of plural singulars who

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<sup>240</sup> Cf. CD, 161/64.

<sup>241</sup> CD, 182–183/73–74.

<sup>242</sup> CD, 157–158/63.

<sup>243</sup> CD, 158/63.

are exposed to one another without any possibility of common measure and who share nothing but this exposure that continually calls their position into question.

Hence, the community without community is also a community of the solitary, who are solitary precisely because they remain incompatible with one another, solitary because they remain without common measure and without common places for communion. To quote from Nancy's "Des lieux divins":

*A la place de la communion, il n'y a pas de place, pas de lieu, pas de temple ou d'autel pour la communauté. L'exposition a lieu partout, en tous lieux, car elle est l'exposition de tous et de chacun, dans sa solitude, à ne pas être seul.*<sup>244</sup>

Such, then, would be the community that remains when all commonalities have withdrawn, a community without community of solitary existences that have nothing in common except having nothing in common. Solitary indeed, but not alone because their very solitude depends upon their exposure to other solitudes. Hence, the originary *being-with-others* of existence is also an originary *being-delivered-over-to-one-another* and one will only ever be solitary because one has never been and never will be alone in being alone.<sup>245</sup> Hence, depriving me of any independent, autonomous, self-sufficient sense of self, *I am the other*, as Rimbaud famously wrote, not because I am identical with the other—which would leave no solitude to remain—but rather because *if* I ever were to become absolutely alone, detached and isolated *without* any relation to the other, *I* would disappear, as it were.<sup>246</sup>

#### II.4 ORIGINARY BEING-WITH-OTHERS AS THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF ABSOLUTE SOLITUDE

As mentioned above, one of Derrida's main preoccupations in his seminars on the *La bête et le souverain* is that even though the expressions 'being alone (*seul*)' and 'being the only one (*le seul*)' does not amount to exactly the same, it is not a mere coincidence that the two expressions still "reçoivent

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<sup>244</sup> LD, 579/143.

<sup>245</sup> For Kafka's take on this being-delivered-over to others in solitude, see Excursus I.

<sup>246</sup> This is one reason why Nancy writes that "pour être absolument seul, il ne suffit pas que je le sois, il faut encore que je sois seul à être seul. Ce qui précisément est contradictoire" (CD, 18/4). As it were, one of the effective horrors of solitary confinement is that the isolated prisoner is not only pacified by his or her removal from others whom he or she might endanger, in the longer run, the prisoner is also pacified because he or she loses all sense of him- or herself and is no longer *there*, but has disappeared and dissolved into no one.



l'hospitalité d'un *seul* et même mot."<sup>247</sup> Rather, there seem to be a significant relation between these two apparently quite different expressions of being solitary.

It follows from this not merely coincidental encounter of two meanings in one word that the French phrase 'je suis seul' can be perceived both as an expression of solitary despair due to a longing for others (I am alone, I am lonely) and as an expression of 'narcissistic presumptuousness' believing itself to be exceptionally, outstandingly, and perhaps even sovereignly independent of others (I am the only one). Moreover, as Derrida reads Heidegger's text, "*Vereinzelung* marque plutôt l'esseulement en ce dernier sens, l'esseulement qui distingue, met à part, l'esseulement qui singularize et excepte, l'esseulement qui fait exception."<sup>248</sup> Accordingly, one of Derrida's supplementary questions to Heidegger's tripartite, or rather quadruple, metaphysical questioning is how the capabilities of having a world, being able to die, and being able to become singularly solitary are bound up not only with the question of the human being in distinction from all other living and nonliving beings but also with the question of sovereignty.

Throughout at least one of the histories of Western philosophy, Derrida detects a desire for sovereignty which to a certain extent corresponds with this second sense of solitude, such that "'Je suis seul(e)' vaut d'ailleurs dire 'je suis' absolu, c'est-à-dire absous, détaché, ou délivré de lien."<sup>249</sup> In order to demonstrate this tendency, Derrida draws upon numerous exemplary examples of philosophical 'Robinsonades' who long for the uninterrupted solitude necessary in order to make their thought as sovereignly independent as the quiet of a deserted island. Descartes would, and here one is tempted to say 'of course,' be one of the pioneers of philosophical solitude, in his intention to subvert the shaky foundations of everything that he had learned from external sources since childhood in order to reconstruct it all again, this time relying solely on his own strength of mind. Therefore, as we have already seen in the preceding section, Descartes tells his readers: "I have withdrawn into seclusion alone [*solus secedo*] and at last I will devote myself sincerely and without reservation to the general demolition of my opinions [*mearum opinionum eversioni vacabo*]."<sup>250</sup>

For Derrida, this aspiration of destroying all opinions gained from the uncertain wellsprings of others in order to reconstruct an architecture on the grounds of an absolutely certain knowledge gained in complete solitude and

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<sup>247</sup> BS II, 108/66.

<sup>248</sup> BS II, 152/99.

<sup>249</sup> BS II, 21/1.

<sup>250</sup> Descartes 1978, 17/12.

independence from others displays how “le *cogito ergo sum* est une robinsonade hyperbolique, en particulier dans le moment du doute hyperbolique qui insularise absolument la rapport à soi.”<sup>251</sup>

As has become known through the readings of readers such as Derrida and Lévinas, however, Descartes will not succeed in his project of constructing an insular knowledge of certainty, since in the third meditation he finds it absolutely necessary to call upon the testimony of an Other, in this case God, in order to legitimate the knowledge he has gained in the cogito, which, by himself all alone, he cannot distinguish with certainty from the madness of the evil demon.<sup>252</sup>

Another example of the philosophical desire for solitude would be Kant and in particular the Kant who in *Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?* from 1786 propounds the wishful intention of being able to orient himself by himself alone, that is, solely with regard to the subjective sense of left and right for which no objective criterion can account.<sup>253</sup> According to Derrida,

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<sup>251</sup> BS II, 64/33.

<sup>252</sup> This is so because, as Derrida writes in “Cogito et Histoire de la Folie” offering a certain counter-reading to Foucault’s reading of the *Meditations*: “Il y a une valeur et un sens du Cogito comme de l’existence qui échappent à l’alternative d’une folie et d’une raison déterminées [...]. La certitude ainsi atteinte n’est pas à l’abri d’une folie enfermée, elle est atteinte et assurée en la folie elle-même. Elle vaut *même si je suis fou*” (ED, 85–86/55). See also Lévinas’ reading of the Descartes’ third meditation in *Totalité et infini* where he demonstrates how the idea of God anachronistically comes to provide the condition of possibility for the self-evidence of the Cogito in an analogous manner to how the subject called into responsibility becomes aware of how the preoriginary infinity of the other always already overflows any idea the subject might hold of the infinite. Cf. Lévinas, 1971, 46ff.

<sup>253</sup> After noting that the word ‘orientation’ is derived from the name of one of the four world corners, namely, the East of the Orient, from which the other three can be determined, Kant nevertheless argues that even if the entire constellation of stars were to be reversed, so that east would become west and vice versa, the subject would still be able to orient itself by paying heed to its own feeling of left and right. Accordingly, Kant concludes: “Also orientiere ich mich *geographisch* bei allen objektiven Datis am Himmel doch nur durch einen *subjektiven* Unterscheidungsgrund” (KW 5, A 380). Similarly, in the famous §13 of his *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik* (1783), Kant argues that even though there are no objective or exterior criteria for distinguishing the right hand from the left, it is nevertheless a fact that the right hand cannot be placed directly on top of the left without a change of position, just as “der Handschuh der einen Hand kann nicht auf der andern gebraucht werden” (KW 5, A 59), wherefore the two seemingly identical hands cannot be circumscribed by the same objective limits of space. Kant’s ‘solution’ (*Auflösung*) to this difficulty of incongruent counterparts is that the difference between left and right cannot be explained in terms of objective categories or concepts of understanding (*Verstand*) but only through our subjective sensibility

the wish to proceed from the absolute zero point of “le sens de l’orientation et l’orientation d’un sens qui ne se détermine qu’à s’orienter”<sup>254</sup> reveals the desire for a sovereign subjectivity that would be able to preserve an Archimedean point of orientation within itself independently of any external situation—a desire resembling, perhaps, also the desire of philosophy ‘*überall zu Hause zu sein*,’ written by Novalis in 1798 and quoted by Heidegger in the 1929/1930 lecture course and elsewhere.<sup>255</sup> For is the desire to be at home everywhere not a desire to be able to orient oneself from out of oneself wherever one is and no matter the situation in which one finds oneself, carrying one’s home on one’s back like a snail always having the world at one’s disposal?

Whether or not this desire in reality is achievable or not is not really the issue here, in fact, it is rather the very phantasmatic force of this desire for solitary sovereignty exceeding or defying any sensible corrections by a reality principle or by a *sensus communis* that is mainly of interest to Derrida and to us here too. A phantasmatic force that nevertheless touches reality in constituting “cette zone où l’impossible est nommé, désiré, appréhendé. Où il nous affecte,”<sup>256</sup> and to which also belongs the mode of the ‘as if’ (*als ob*), which Kant so appreciated and which can be at least as powerful as the phenomenal mode of the ‘as such’ (*als solches*).

Returning to the solitude of not being able *to be* alone, or on one’s own, how may we further come to understand this phantasmatic desire of sovereign solitude? Why is it that this desire for absolute solitude, according to Derrida, remains phantasmatic? As I shall suggest in the following, the phantasmatic character of the desire for sovereign solitude depends precisely on the being-with-others, which, as we have already seen in Heidegger, is equiprimordial with solitary *Dasein*.

Let us take a step back and consider a certain ‘everyday’ expression often employed when one stands before difficult matters in life, when one has to *take* responsibility, as one says, or to make important decisions, reconsider a supposedly ‘wrong’ decision, account for action, or acknowledge something

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(*Sinnlichkeit*) and its relations (*Verhältnisse*) to supposedly objective space (*Raum*), which “*der äußern Anschauung*” of this internal determination (cf. KW 5, A 59).

<sup>254</sup> BS II, 67/35.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Novalis 1946a, 43. To Novalis’ claim that philosophy ultimately consists in a nostalgia (*Heimweh*) driven by the desire for being at home everywhere (*überall zu Hause zu sein*), Heidegger readily adds the precondition that philosophy can only be conceived as such a desire because the philosophers are precisely *not* at home anywhere—a precondition, moreover, that is conditioned from the very unhomeliness (*Unheimlichkeit*) of human existence. We shall return to this ontological unhomeliness in Chapter IV.

<sup>256</sup> BS II, 217/148.

of importance, namely, the expression ‘to look oneself in the eyes.’ Paradoxically, this expression bears witness to the very circumstance it wishes to ignore, which is the circumstance that I am the *only one* who I cannot look in the eyes, and here the only one (*le seul*) is no longer be a sign of some extraordinary uniqueness but rather of an inapproachability in relation to myself and an impossibility of ‘facing myself’—another expression commonly employed in decisive situations—which I share in my dividedness with everyone else. The whole difficulty of decision-making is precisely that I cannot face myself immediately, but only through the surface of a mirror<sup>257</sup> or through the reflection of another gaze, which further means that I cannot look myself directly in the eyes in order to retrieve some sign of authenticity and some uncontaminated zero-point of orientation to lead me in the supposedly ‘right’ direction. I always only encounter myself through the detour of others or something other, which in a certain sense makes the other more intimate to me than I am to myself, to paraphrase a well-known phrase from the *Confessions* of Augustine.<sup>258</sup>

In order to further unfold this structural dependency, according to which the other—whether you name this other *the Other* with a capital and sometimes divine *O* or in its plural form as ‘others,’ and whether you encounter this intimate otherness in the gaze of a cat or in the elusive gaze of your own mirror image—is a necessary condition for the very relation to one to oneself, we will attempt to clarify how this auto-heteronomous condition can be discerned *both* as condition of possibility *and* as a condition impossibility of solitary selfhood.

*On the one hand*, others constitute a condition of *possibility* for my place in the world, for my abode in existence, for my possibility of inhabiting a space that would otherwise be nothing but the growing desert to which

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<sup>257</sup> For Lacan, the very relation to myself as identical to myself emerges in the imaginary relation to my reflection in the mirror, however, as Lacan further points out, I cannot see my own gaze in the mirror even if the mirror helps me to see things I would not be able to perceive otherwise, which points to a certain limitedness of access to myself that can cause anxiety and which turns the gaze, which always falls out of the picture, into one of the desired *objet petit a*. As Lacan writes, “je ne me vois pas forcément moi-même, ou mon oeil dans le miroir, même si le miroir m’aide à apercevoir quelque chose que je ne verrais pas autrement” (Sem X, 89/73). We shall return to Lacan’s rendition both of the mirror stage and of anxiety in Chapters IV and V.

<sup>258</sup> Here Augustine writes of God as the other who is “more inward than the innermost of myself [*interior intimo meo*]” (Conf. III.6.11. My translation). We find a similar structure of the divine Other as being closer and more intimate to me than I myself can ever become in surah 50 verse 16 of the *Quran*, where the extreme and estranged intimacy of the divine to the human is bespoken: “We created man—We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein” (*Quran*, 340).

Zarathustra becomes exposed in his mountain solitude—“*Die Wüste wächst: weh Dem, der Wüsten birgt!*”<sup>259</sup> As Deleuze points out in his essay “Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui,” on Tournier’s 1967 rendition of *Robinson Crusoe*—but this time named after Friday as *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique*—it is ‘the structure-other’ (*la structure Autrui*) that provides me with horizons and possibilities, in short, with a world, and it is precisely this structure-other that Robinson gradually loses in his insular solitude before his dispersive transformation into an ‘elemental’ self.<sup>260</sup> Thus, still mourning the gradual erosion or dissolution of his mundane self, Robinson writes the following entry in his journal:

Autrui, pièce maîtresse de mon univers... Je mesure chaque jour ce que je lui devais en enregistrant de nouvelles fissures dans mon édifice personnel [...]. Je sais maintenant que la terre sur laquelle mes deux pieds appuient aurait besoin pour ne pas vaciller que d’autres que moi la foulent.<sup>261</sup>

*On the other hand*, but for the same reasons, others also constitute a condition of *impossibility* for making my abode, my habitation, my place in the world *absolutely* my own, seeing as the singular being never exists *of, from* or *by* itself. On the contrary, every singular being is conditioned precisely by not being its own condition, or, as Nancy alternatively formulates it, “*l’ipséité de la singularité a pour essence le retrait de l’aséité de l’être.*”<sup>262</sup>

This doubly bound (im)possibility of a place of one’s own as conditioned by the other has the implication that, left to myself in a world without others, I little by little lose all stable relation with myself and with the world. Without others the world as a shared horizon disappears, leaving only a harsh and vast desert without possibilities, desires, or wishes, which is no habitat for a self. I can only occupy a place in the world because others made this place possible in the first place, and even if I wished to retreat from my place in the world by committing suicide, this possibility, as we read it in Artaud, would also only be given to me by others. This condition is also what Derrida at times calls *exappropriation*, designating precisely how a disownment is inscribed in every act of making something into one’s own—whether a

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<sup>259</sup> Cf. KSA 4, 380.

<sup>260</sup> As Deleuze writes, “autrui assure les marges et transitions dans le monde. Il est la douceur des contiguïtés et des ressemblances,” so when the others disappear from the world, so does the world in a certain sense, and the abandoned one is left in a “[m]onde cru et noir, sans potentialités ni virtualités: c’est la catégorie du possible qui s’est écroulée” (Deleuze 1969, 355–356/305–306).

<sup>261</sup> Tournier 1967, 46–47/48–49.

<sup>262</sup> EL, 95/70.

name, a work, a body, a life, a language, a home, or other. I might think of myself as the proprietor of ‘my’ self, but this property has its proper place only in the disappropriation that makes it appropriable in the first place.

Hence, the solitude of not being able to be alone with which we began has come to expose us to an essential dependency on others, which has the strange consequence that left to itself on its own what we call a self dissolves, precisely because its ‘own’ does not belong to it in the first place: *I do not own my own ownness*. Since the other is the possibility of myself, and since the attempt to eliminate this conditional alterity would eliminate myself along with it, my own being is shared from its very beginning and has no simple origin; the origins of my being are multiple and do not belong to me alone.

In a certain sense, then, this exposure to others that is ‘my’ existence is also a pure expenditure of self, in the sense that the meshwork that I call ‘myself’ is made up of nothing but my relations, is nothing but my being shared without reserve, which leaves nothing for me alone. Still, this existential dependency of myself upon others does not amount to a dialectical or an economical relationship in which I ‘invest’ myself in some relation, as if from the outside of this relation, and with the aim of gaining or the risk of lose something by it. Rather, I risk everything in each and every relation since *I am not* before I enter into relation and with the ending of relation cease to be me; the being of ‘my’ self is nothing more nor less than what remains in the interval between me and others and between me and myself where others are interposed. As Nancy puts it in “L’amour en éclats”: “C’est la question *de ce qui reste ‘soi’ lorsque rien ne revient à soi.*”<sup>263</sup>

With Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe in mind, one could speak of a certain ‘*desistance*’ of the self.<sup>264</sup> A *desistance* that consists precisely in the impossibility of consisting by oneself, which is not necessarily the same as a lack of consistency. *Desistance* names the fact that to exist means not to have a proper *stasis*,<sup>265</sup> that is, not to have a proper *stance*, *status*, or *standing place* of one’s own in existence, since to *exist* means already to have exited,

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<sup>263</sup> AE, 26/107.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Derrida’s essay “*Désistance*” on the writing of Lacoue-Labarthe (PSY, 597–638/(II) 196–230).

<sup>265</sup> Both the Greek *στάσις* and the Latin *sistere* derive from the Greek verb *ἵστημι*, which can mean ‘to make stand,’ ‘to set up,’ ‘to place,’ ‘to establish,’ ‘to bring to a standstill,’ ‘to take up a position,’ ‘to take a stand,’ and ‘to stand up.’ As Comay emphasizes in her article “Resistance and Repetition: Freud and Hegel,” an ambiguity pertains to the word ‘stasis,’ which hinges on the tension “between its stative and dynamic usage, between the condition of standing and the act of standing up, between situation and event—steadfastness, constancy, and stability, on the one hand; interruption, instigation, initiation, on the other” (Comay 2015, 239).

to have been exiled or thrown from the anchorage and stability of a *substance*. To exist designates an impossibility of *consisting*, *persisting*, or *subsisting* by oneself once and for all; to exist designates an exposure to instability of each and every instant.

This desistance of existence therefore rearranges the entire landscape surrounding the subjectivity emerging from the traditions of the *ὑποκείμενον*, *substantia*, or *subiectum*, that is, of the subjectivity of the subject understood as what persists or consists ‘underneath’ the many transformations a subject may otherwise undergo. The subject of desistance is no longer the supporting basis of its own imprints, impressions, or experiences; rather, it is prescribed by these, marked in advance by what happens to it and by its relation to others and by what befalls it, because of its constitutive openness to being exposed.

With the word *desistance* we are thus attempting to name something of the self that resists self-possession or appropriation, but that nonetheless remains constitutive of it—something that the self is delivered over to and abandoned by in the same stroke. Something that destabilizes and expropriates the propriety of the self in advance, leaving it to take a stance in *distance* from itself, or to take up position in *disposition*. The desistance of the self means that the self has no proper place ascribed in advance, and that every place it would seek to make its own it only comes to *after the fact* (*après coup*), belatedly; and as such its place would already be marked by some impropriety, like stepping in the foreign footsteps of someone else even if that someone should turn out to have been myself.<sup>266</sup> This is what the *de-* of the desistance remarks; that every possible ‘stance’ of the self will always already be marked by a *distance*, and that every possible autonomy, if autonomy signifies an ability of self-legislation, will always already be marked by a heteronomy—a distance and a heteronomy, however, that makes the relation of self possible in the first place in leaving it to a solitude of not being able to exist on its own.

Yet, despite the fact that I am neither its principal of cause nor its principal of maintenance, I remain responsible for and to this irreplaceable disposition in which I am posed, and from which I must expose myself to others without ever being in possession of it. I am abandoned to this singular instability, this instance of space and time, which is the existence I call mine,

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<sup>266</sup> In Defoe’s story, Robinson Crusoe discovers “the Print of a Man’s naked Foot on the Shore” of the island where he has been isolated for the last fifteen years. This discovery caused ‘many wild ideas’ and ‘strange unaccountable whimsies’ in Robinson’s mind, such as it might be a print of the Devil’s foot, and even makes him lose his belief in God, until one day he considers the possibility that it might be his own foot that had made the print at a previous occasion. Cf. Defoe 2007, 130ff. See also, BS II, 66–67/34–35.

because I am solely responsible for it even though it never belongs to me alone, or belongs to me only in belonging to others. No one can exist for me, no one can substitute for my existing; my existence is wholly non-substitutable despite the fact that I can only exist by way of others.

Here, then, we encounter the peculiar solitude whose interiority resides only and solely in its unremitting exposure to exteriority. This is not the solitude of an absolute and indivisible kernel of self; rather, it is the noisy and restless solitude of a self who is multiplied, divided, and interrupted from its very beginning. It is the solitude of not being able to exist by oneself, precisely because to exist means to be exposed to others and to depend on others for one's very own existence. In a certain sense, then, it is a solitude of deprivation, or of theft as Artaud would say, deprived of 'having' a self of one's own—as though the self amounted to some self-disposable thing—or of having a relation to oneself by oneself alone, without the interference of others. Yet, in regard to the originary being-with-others, which we are attempting to trace out here, such a deprivation or disrobement, or loss, of a being of one's own independent of the other will always already have taken place and the desire to retrieve it will always be a retrospective desire for a time before the origin, or a desire for the 'mythical' as we shall see Lacan call it in Chapters IV and V. Deleuze has succinctly articulated this structural heteronomy in the relation of oneself to oneself as follows: "Il y a toujours un autre souffle dans le mien, une autre pensée dans la mienne, une autre possession dans ce que je possède, mille choses et mille êtres impliqués dans mes complications."<sup>267</sup>

Both Deleuze and Lacan take pains in their work to show how such structural heteronomy also permeates any desires, longings, or wishes that a self might consider to be its own inasmuch as they must always pass through others in order to become so. To quote Deleuze once more: "Je ne désire rien qui ne soit vu, pensé, possédé par un autrui possible. C'est là le fondement de mon désir. C'est toujours autrui qui rabat mon désir sur l'objet."<sup>268</sup> In fact, Deleuze argues that if desire did not somehow pass through others, we would be entering into the realm of perversion, which is a realm of unrestricted desire with no specific object and with no specific center of concentration or

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<sup>267</sup> Deleuze 1969, 346/298.

<sup>268</sup> Deleuze 1969, 355/306. In his tenth seminar on anxiety, which we will engage with in more detail in Chapter V, Lacan also stresses how this dependency on the other in relating me to an object of desire has the implication of a certain inaccessibility to my own desire. As Lacan explains: "C'est pourquoi il n'y a pas pour moi, non seulement d'accès à mon désir, mais même de sustentation possible de mon désir qui ait référence à un objet quel qu'il soit, si ce n'est en le couplant, en le nouant avec ceci, le \$, qui exprime la nécessaire dépendance du sujet par rapport à l'Autre comme tel" (Sem X, 33/23).



intensity, unfolding uninterruptedly in a world without others. According to Deleuze, then, this is precisely what becomes of Tournier's Robinson after twenty-eight years of insular solitude: *a pervers*, for whom the structure-others have vanished along with the world and whose desire, as well as his very self, has become entirely elemental, dispersed in all directions of the deserted environment of his habitat like 'the rays of a star' (*ruisselle en étoile*).<sup>269</sup> Robinson has become nothing but an echo, or indeed as he himself says, an 'excrement' of the island of Speranza.<sup>270</sup>

As Derrida pointedly exhibits the intrigue of solitary sovereignty, even the most coldblooded and powerful torturer imaginable also depends on victims to affirm not only his or her sovereignty but his or her very existence because "[o]n prie toujours l'autre d'être présent à sa propre présence."<sup>271</sup>

Still, even if the solitary self has conceived of its ontological dependency upon others, it does not necessarily follow that this same self will not continue to desire and to fantasize about a solitude all of its own. In this regard, we should note that phantasy, whether sadistic or not, is not to be understood in strict opposition to that which we call reality. Instead, as both Freud and Lacan have shown us in their psychoanalytic works, phantasy *in fact* lends a very forceful hand in the structuring allowing us to refer to reality in the first place. In this way, phantasy is not simply opposed to 'actual reality' nor as something that prevents us from perceiving things as they *really* are. Rather, as is shown in the algorithm of phantasy mentioned earlier, \$ ◇ a, phantasy is both that which links the subject to its object of desire and that which defers its obtainment. Mediation in this context is then understood as a simultaneous movement relating and separating the desiring subject to and from the desired object.<sup>272</sup> Thus, in his essay "La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir," Lacan writes that "le fantasme, dans son usage fondamental, est ce par quoi le sujet se soutient au niveau de son désir

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<sup>269</sup> Tournier 1967, 99/98.

<sup>270</sup> In his journal, Robinson writes the following about his transformed desire and sense of self: "Le sujet est un objet disqualifié. Mon œil est le cadavre de la lumière, de la couleur. Mon nez est tout ce qui reste des odeurs quand leur irréalité a été démontrée- ma main refute la chose tenue [...]. Robinson est l'excrément personnel de Speranza" (Tournier 1967, 84/82).

<sup>271</sup> BS II, 287/203. For a Sadean elaboration of this intrigue, see Excursus II.

<sup>272</sup> This means that, as the support of desire, phantasy is that by way of which the subject sustains itself in relation to what is called reality. See also: "Qu'une chose existe *réellement* ou pas, n'a que peu d'importance. Elle peut parfaitement exister au sens plein du terme, même si elle n'existe pas réellement. Toute existence a par définition quelque chose de tellement improbable qu'on est perpétuellement en effet à s'interroger sur sa réalité" (Sem II, 268/229).

évanouissant.”<sup>273</sup> In this manner, phantasy has a mediating function in the subject’s relation to the reality of desire, which is always mediated by the presumed desire of the other. As Derrida articulates it in *La carte postale*, to which we will return in more detail later, “[l]e plaisir pur et la réalité pure sont des limites idéales, autant dire des fictions”<sup>274</sup> and one is never given without the contagious withdrawal of the other, meaning that ‘reality,’ understood as what is “ordonnée à la valeur de présence”<sup>275</sup> is always already compromised by the phantasy of that which remains absent.

Think, for example, of the powerful force of traumas, phobias, obsessional or paranoid thoughts, and other more quotidian phantasmatic mechanisms of the mind. Then imagine telling someone suffering from repeated flashbacks of a traumatic scenario, or someone haunted by an obsessive-paranoid thought that if she does not wash her hands or switch the light off and on at least thirty nine times before leaving her home, someone (perhaps herself, perhaps her brother, perhaps a stranger) will inevitably be hurt or die: ‘Oh but you need not worry about it since it is not really real.’ Surely, with regard to this imagined example, we must concede that the argumentative powers of ‘actual reality’ as well as the referral to some *sensus communis* appear somewhat impotent and hollow.

The question is then, whether the so-called phantastic, imagined, or virtual realities operating here are not equally as strong, and sometimes even stronger and more powerful than so-called reality proper? Would this not make the phantasmic, whether induced by traumas, desires, dreams, or memories *more real* still than the reality of reality proper? More real still than the actuality or the presence of what we call the real world? And, if this is the case, as is most often the case in psychoanalysis, how then to provide the criteria according to which one may clearly distinguish the real or proper reality—clung onto by common sense as though it were some sort of guarantee against the madness of the phantasmic or the spectral—from the improper realness of phantasy?

Did not Freud himself suspect that *there is* something ‘beyond,’ not only the pleasure principle, since not all powerful phantasms are pleasurable,<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> *Écrits*, 637/532.

<sup>274</sup> CP, 304/284.

<sup>275</sup> CP, 304/284.

<sup>276</sup> In significant modification of his earlier work on the unequivocal hegemony of the pleasure principle in the psychic economy, “dem wir doch bisher die Heerschaft über den Ablauf der Erregungsvorgänge im Seelenleben zugetraut haben“ (GW XIII, 22), Freud in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* from 1920 reaches the conclusion that “es sei eigentlich unrichtig, von einer Herrschaft des Lustprinzips über den Ablauf der seelischen Prozesse zu reden. Wenn eine bestände, müsste die übergroße Mehrheit unserer Seelenvorgänge

but also beyond the reality principle, which is but a modification of the pleasure principle and as such still working within its teleology even if it corrects, defers, and inhibits it?<sup>277</sup> In fact, as Lacan suggests, it was Freud's work, and especially his work on the Wolf Man, that indicated that *there is* something *real*, which is situated elsewhere than what is called reality proper, but that this real of the elsewhere nevertheless 'frames' our 'present reality' seeing as it is "par rapport au réel que fonctionne le plan du fantasme."<sup>278</sup>

Moreover, is the imaginative work of phantasy not also that which often keeps us from perishing from so-called 'hard reality'?—a reality which might not be so hard after all, at least not if by hard one means solid or stable. Yet we must also be careful not to turn the phantasmatic or the spectral into some other reality besides or beyond but of the same modality as 'reality proper,' that is, into another domain of reality or into another world beyond the world, since, as Nietzsche has demonstrated with his history of an error in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, the illusory world has disappeared along with the true one.<sup>279</sup>

Accordingly, as Derrida says in *La bête et le souverain* one cannot respond properly or appropriately to the question if one believes in the impropriety of phantoms, revenants, or specter, since as soon as one answers either 'yes' or 'no' with certainty, one conjures away the very spectrality of that to which one is answering. Therefore, Derrida continues, "[I]e 'je ne sais pas' est donc la modalité même de l'expérience du spectral, de la trace survivante en général d'ailleurs."<sup>280</sup> In an earlier session of the seminar, Derrida in a similar manner plays on the expression *je n'en sais trop rien*, which can literally be translated as 'I don't know too much nothing about it,' and which in 'everyday' French is frequently rendered without the negation as *j'en sais trop rien* of which a literal translation could then be 'I know too much nothing about it.'<sup>281</sup> This non-knowing, which stems from knowing too much nothing, is according to Derrida the only proper response to the impropriety of the spectral or the phantasmatic which *remains* and *survives* in a very real

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von Lust begleitet sein oder zur Lust führen, während doch die allgemeinste Erfahrung dieser Folgerung energisch widerspricht" (GW XIII, 5). We shall return in more detail to this decisive text in Chapter III.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 6.

<sup>278</sup> Sem XI, 41/41.

<sup>279</sup> KSA 6, 81.

<sup>280</sup> BS II, 202/137.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. BS II, 78/44. See also Bennington's note to this question on the same page of his English translation.

manner despite the principles of common sense and in the intervals of actual reality.

In order to come to a further understanding of a certain phantasmatic structure of solitude, let us try to delve a little deeper into the desire for a solitude that would be absolutely independent, and into what will turn out to be the autoimmune mechanisms inherent to such a desire.

## II.5 THE PHANTASTIC DESIRE OF SOVEREIGN SOLITUDE

The ongoing phantasy of and desire for sovereign solitude, despite the reality principle of others, is precisely what the solitude of not being able to alone signals, that is, a solitude that phantasizes about being absolutely alone with itself, and moreover a solitude that desires this solitude as a place where it would be absolutely intimate with itself in a proximity undisturbed by others. However, the double bind of this desire is the circumstance that *if* it were ever to be realized *then* the very reality of the desiring one would have disappeared or dissolved into something else. This ‘if it ever were’ functions therefore not only as a future indicative but also as a conditional; or even better, it’s function is to indicate a point of interference where the difference between the indicative and the conditional becomes obfuscated or even collapses in the phantasmatic.<sup>282</sup>

What does it mean, then, that the desired of absolute solitude must remain phantasmic, and how are we to understand its phantasmatic remainder? To begin responding to these questions, let us return for a moment to Derrida’s double reading of Heidegger and Crusoe, or to ‘Robinson Heidegger’ as Derrida sometimes writes in a conflation of their proper names. In *La bête et le souverain*, Derrida repeatedly remarks that a certain ambiguity or duplicity pertains to the phantasy of absolute solitude revealing itself in the fact that it may precipitate both desire and dread. On the one hand, absolute solitude can be desired as a state of complete independence resting sovereignly in itself without the interruption of others. On the other hand, however, absolute solitude can be dreaded as a state of desolation by others, eventually leading to a dissolution of the solitary one in utter otherness.<sup>283</sup> This duplicity comes to the fore in Derrida’s expression of a desire for solitude despairing in the

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<sup>282</sup> For Derrida’s remarks on the relation between the indicative and the conditional, see BS II, 190/128.

<sup>283</sup> We will return to this aspect of solitude, which one could also call ‘a solitude of dissolution,’ in our later chapters on ‘a solitude of dissolution’ and ‘a solitude of the impersonal.’

awareness of its double-bound entanglement with the other: “tant qu’à être seul, si du moins je pouvais être seul sans toi. Être seul(e) avec moi.”<sup>284</sup>

In both Defoe’s and Tournier’s versions of the Crusoe story, the duplicity of the dreaded desire or the desired dread of absolute solitude also finds expression in Robinson’s phantasies of being ‘swallowed up alive’ or of becoming utterly absorbed in an otherness that leaves no room for differentiation or separation, whether such devouring otherness is represented by wild beasts, cannibals, or the earthen and oceanic elements. Hence, as Deleuze has emphasized, the desire to become absolutely alone with oneself without others risks delivering the solitary one over to an otherness other than that of other human beings: “Voilà la découverte de Robinson: découverte de la surface, de l’au-delà élémentaire, de l’Autre qu’Autrui”<sup>285</sup> Yet, as both Deleuze and Derrida remark, this fearful phantasy of a living death in the belly of some all encompassing otherness is not devoid of excitement; on the contrary, as Derrida writes about Robinson, “il ne pense qu’à être mangé et bu par l’autre, il y pense comme à une menace, mais avec une telle compulsion qu’on se demande si la menace n’est pas aussi caressée comme une promesse, et donc un désir.”<sup>286</sup>

Paradoxically then, the desire for absolute solitude that we are attempting to approach here comes close to resembling a desire to preserve oneself in losing oneself, that is, a desire for being present in the absence of oneself; a desire, perhaps, of experiencing and thus of surviving one’s own death. This would be the silent but insistent desire behind the desire of sovereign solitude, namely, the desire to become absolutely desireless. A desire, then, which may ultimately be given the name of the death drive, understood as the drive or longing for an uninterrupted state of being where no desires, always already mediated by others, would “venir limiter la souveraineté.”<sup>287</sup> Tournier’s Robinson comes fatally close to such a desireless and deathly state of absolute desire when he enters what he calls the ‘pink combe’—an entrance that almost becomes his final exit.

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<sup>284</sup> BS II, 21/1.

<sup>285</sup> Deleuze 1969, 370/319. Robinson himself reports of his gradual deliverance over to an environment of otherness without the horizons provided by the structure-other: “Ma vision de l’île est réduite à elle-même. Ce que je n’en vois pas est un inconnu absolu. Partout où je ne suis pas actuellement règne une nuit insondable. Je constate d’ailleurs en écrivant ces lignes que l’expérience qu’elles tentent de restituer non seulement est sans précédent, mais contrarie dans leur essence même les mots que j’emploie. La langage relève en effet d’une façon fondamentale de cet univers *peuplé*” (Tournier 1987, 47/48).

<sup>286</sup> BS II, 122–123/77.

<sup>287</sup> BS II, 92/55.

The pink combe is a cavity lodged in the deepest crypt of a cave on the island of Speranza, which Robinson finds fits the contours of his body so perfectly that when he pulls up his knees to his chin like an embryo it feels almost as if this cavity had been his original mold. In this island womb, Robinson hangs suspended somewhere in between absolute desire and absolute desirelessness, uniting “miraculeusement la paix des douces ténèbres matricielles et la paix sépulcrale.”<sup>288</sup> In this blissfully uninterrupted eternal moment, however, Robinson is nonetheless interrupted by his own dread of dissolving into nothingness and thus of no longer being able to experience from an ever more infinitesimal distance his desired proximity of non-existence: “Pourquoi faut-il qu’au cœur de la nuit je me laisse de surcroît couler si loin, si profond dans le noir? Il se pourrait bien qu’un jour, je disparaisse sans trace, comme aspiré par le néant que j’aurais fait naître autour de moi.”<sup>289</sup>

At this point, we are as readers reminded and referred back to the very beginning of Tournier’s story where, whilst still on the brig *Virginia*, the captain foretells Robinson’s imminent destiny with a deck of Egyptian tarot cards. Having initially implied that Robinson is somewhat of a demiurge reigning in his own land of illusion, the third card of the deck shows the hermit and impels the captain to warn Robinson of the fatal destiny awaiting one in search of sovereign solitude whom “[s]’il sort jamais de cette retraite, il s’apercevra que son âme monolithique a subi s’intimes fissures.”<sup>290</sup> The captain then explicitly associates not only the demiurgic illusions with the desire for an absolute solitude, he also associates both of these with a third desire, namely, the desire for purity. In this tripartite linkage of demiurgic illusions, solitude, and purity we hear the phantasmatic desire for a sovereign solitude purged of all otherness that led Robinson to the pink combe resonate again, which allows us in a retrospective manner to grasp the meaning of captain’s final warning to Robinson: “gardez-vous de la pureté. C’est le vitriol de l’âme.”<sup>291</sup>

Accordingly, when Robinson questions himself as to why he let himself ‘stray so far,’ this question exposes the autoimmunity inherent to the phantasm of an absolutely independent solitude, due to the dependency of the phantasmizing one upon others. Seeing as desire always comes from the desire of the other, the consequence of a desire to purge oneself of the other is that a dread of dissolution must always accompany the phantasy of absolute solitude. A phantasy that therefore represents both a sovereignty to

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<sup>288</sup> Tournier 1987, 94/93.

<sup>289</sup> Tournier 1987, 72/71.

<sup>290</sup> Tournier 1987, 8/8.

<sup>291</sup> Tournier 1987, 12/13.

be desired and a dissolution to be dreaded. In this respect, Derrida poses the question whether there cannot be found in the same desire “une trouble concurrence et une étrange simultanéité, quant à l’insularité de l’île, entre l’attraction et l’aversion, entre ‘insularophilie et l’insularophobie.”<sup>292</sup>

In a manner that almost appears to be a continuation of our previous discussions on the solitude of not being able to be alone, Derrida goes on to respond to his own question by conjecturing that this double movement of insular attraction and repulsion has something to do with “d’une certaine expérience de la solitude.”<sup>293</sup> Still, the ambiguous relation between insularphilia and insularphobia—or between the desire for sovereignty and the dread of dissolution—does not appear as the only ambiguity pertaining to such an experience of solitude. There also seems to be a dangerous similitude between the sovereign independence of autonomy and the lifeless repetition of an automaton, since, as Derrida points out: “La roue tourne toute seule. La machine. C’est ce qui marche toute seul en tournant sur soi.”<sup>294</sup>

At the apex of autonomy, where the solitary one would have become absolutely independent of any sort of heterogeneity or heteronomy, there also seems to be a risk of slipping inconspicuously over into the empty automatism “d’être sa propre rotation sur soi”<sup>295</sup>—an automatism that, moreover, threatens to hollow out any sense of personal ‘autos’ or ‘self’ until collapsing in utter anonymity. This tipping point between autonomy and automatism brings us into proximity not only with the at times almost indistinguishable similitude between a solitary drive for life and a solitary drive for death. We have already discerned the presence of such a dangerous similitude in Robinson, since, as Derrida remarks: “Il y a là une force automatique qui est plus intime à lui que lui-même et qui agit de façon répétitive (à la mesure d’un destin) et de manière machinale. Seule, toute seule, d’elle-même.”<sup>296</sup>

One can ask, then, whether the transformation of Tournier’s Robinson from a worldly self sustained by the structure-other to an elemental self where there are no longer others nor world but only an entirely unknowable otherness, which does not allow for the gathering of self but only for the dispersal of any such attempt, could not be read as analogous to what in

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<sup>292</sup> BS II, 112/69.

<sup>293</sup> BS II, 112/69.

<sup>294</sup> BS II, 123/78.

<sup>295</sup> BS II, 120/75.

<sup>296</sup> BS II, 132/84.

psychoanalytic terms is called the passage—or rather the slippage—from desire to drive, or from the *I* to the *It*.<sup>297</sup>

In the following chapters, we shall therefore look in more detail at the Freudian notion of ‘*das Es*’ and how, among other things, it manifests itself in relation to *das Ich* via duplicitous repetitions, by focusing on four seminal texts of specific importance with regard to our interest in the function of the impersonal pronoun.<sup>298</sup> In chronological order, these texts are: *Das Unheimliche* from 1919, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* from 1920, *Das Es und das Ich* from 1923, and *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zu Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* from 1933. For now, however, we shall approach the end of this adventure with the solitude of dependency with yet another passage from *La bête et le souverain*, in which Derrida epitomizes how the solitude of not being able to be alone also refers to being solitary in a community without common grounds:

Il faut donc, mais j’abandonne ici ces facilités, savoir que quiconque dit moi est Robinson, savoir que l’*autos*, l’*ipse*, l’autobiographie est robinsonnienne, et que chaque Robinson aménage l’économie de sa solitude en compagnie de ceux, les autres, qui, au plus près de lui, avec lui, voire en lui (*Mitsein*, *alter ego*, travail de deuil), ne l’accompagnent pas.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> In a similar manner, Derrida speaks of a double phantasm to: “être mange vivant par l’autre, mourir vivant, si on peut dire, disparaître, partir, décéder vivant dans l’élément illimité, dans le milieu de l’autre” (BS II, 146/94).

<sup>298</sup> For an analysis of the solitary impersonality of boredom and anxiety in Heidegger, see Excursus III.

<sup>299</sup> BS II, 281/199. The final sentence of this quote is a reference to Blanchot’s text *Celui qui ne m’accompagnait pas* from 1953, to which we shall return in Chapter V.



### III. THE SOLITUDE OF IMPERSONALITY

Was den Aberglauben der Logiker betrifft:  
so will ich nicht müde werden,  
eine kleine kurze Thatsache immer wieder zu unterstreichen,  
welche von diesen Abergläubischen ungern zugestanden wird,  
— nämlich, dass ein Gedanke kommt, wenn ‘er’ will, und nicht wenn ‘ich’ will;  
so dass es eine *Fälschung* des Thatbestandes ist, zu sagen:  
das Subjekt ‘ich’ ist die Bedingung des Prädikats ‘denke.’  
Es denkt: aber dass dies ‘es’ gerade jenes alte berühmte ‘Ich’ sei,  
ist, milde geredet, nur eine Annahme, eine Behauptung,  
vor Allem keine ‘unmittelbare Gewissheit’  
– Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*

#### III.1 FIGURATIONS OF THE *IT* IN FREUD

Freud introduces a substantivization of the impersonal pronoun *Es* in his text *Das Ich und das Es* from 1923 as another denomination of the unconscious, or rather, as a further partitioning of the unconscious. This renaming serves both as a *specification* of the unconscious, which, in Freud’s view, had come to cover too broad a domain, and as a *displacement* of the unconscious within the eco-dynamic topography of the psychic apparatus, which comes to challenge its previous coordinates.

As such, the unconscious (*das Unbewusste*) is no longer distinguished only from the conscious (*das Bewusste*) and the pre-conscious (*das Vorbewusste*), but also to some extent from itself. According to Freud, such a revised differentiation of the unconscious, as of the whole topographical model of the psyche, had become necessary because of the fairly ‘uncomfortable discovery’ (*unbequeme Entdeckung*) that many of the functions and mechanisms pertaining to what he had hitherto designated as belonging to systems of the conscious and the preconscious could in fact be said to proceed unconsciously.<sup>300</sup> Accordingly, from 1923 onwards the eco-

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<sup>300</sup> For an outline of what, in the scholarship on Freud, is usually referred to as the ‘first’ and the ‘second’ topography of the psyche, see Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 449ff. Freud himself warns us not to think too rigidly about the topographical domains of the psyche, since their limits are not delimitable from one another by sharply drawn borders. Rather: “Der Eigenart des Psychischen können wir nicht durch lineare Konturen gerecht werden wie in der Zeichnung oder in der primitive Malerei, eher durch verschwimmende Farbfelder wie bei den modernen Malern” (GW XV, 85–86). Besides the topographical, Freud also considers what he calls the economic and dynamic perspectives of the psyche, dealing both with currents of energy and relations of power and exchange between the topographical ‘domains’ and their object cathexes. Taken together, these

dynamic topography of the psychic apparatus is no longer arranged predominantly on the basis of the unconscious–conscious division, but instead according to a tripartite differentiation between what Freud calls ‘the It’ (*das Es*), ‘the I’ (*das Ich*), and ‘the super-I’ (*das Über-Ich*), which nevertheless still operate across the line dividing the conscious from the unconscious. As instances of such unconscious processes of consciousness, Freud discerns not only the repressive mechanisms of the ego but also an unconscious feeling of guilt pertaining to the super-ego, which is why Freud states: “Nicht nur das Tiefste, auch das Höchste am Ich kann unbewusst sein.”<sup>301</sup>

It therefore became necessary for Freud to further specify instances of the unconscious whose main characteristic was no longer simply that they proceed unconsciously, since we have now seen that many processes of consciousness do too, but more specifically that they remain absolutely alien to the *I* (*Ichfremde*). To emphasize the distance from the first-person singular, Freud therefore proposes the impersonal pronoun *Es* as the least improper denomination of the *I*-foreign parts of the psyche, thereby also suggesting that no proper name is really appropriate when it comes to these outskirts of the psyche.<sup>302</sup>

In *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zu Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Freud describes the *It* as the obscure (*dunkle*) and inaccessible (*unzugängliche*) part of the psyche, which makes us strangers to ourselves insofar as we can only have access to this ‘inner abroad’ (*inneres Ausland*) as we would to an ‘external’ other.<sup>303</sup> That is to say, we can only approach these parts erringly and indirectly through detours following their traces disseminated throughout dreams, symptoms, or the occasional ruptures of

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perspectives what Freud calls ‘a metapsychological representation’ (*Darstellung*) of the psychic apparatus. Cf. GW X, 281.

<sup>301</sup> GW XIII, 255. See also *Neue Folge* in which Freud further explains that seeing as “auch Anteile des Ichs und Überichs im dynamischen Sinne unbewusst sind,” we must acknowledge that “wir haben kein Recht, das Ichfremde Seelengebiet das System Ubw zu nennen, da die Unbewusstheit nicht sein ausschließender Charakter ist” (GW XV, 78).

<sup>302</sup> According to Freud, it was the physician and ‘wild analyst’ Georg Groddeck who first gave him the idea of employing the impersonal pronoun *Es* for the unconscious, and who in his turn was indebted to Nietzsche for it. In *Neue Folge* Freud describes the genealogy as follows: “In Anlehnung an den Sprachgebrauch bei Nietzsche und infolge einer Anregung von G. Groddeck heißen wir es fortan das *Es*. Dies unpersönliche Fürwort scheint besonders geeignet, den Hauptcharakter dieser Seelenprovinz, ihre Ichfremdheit, auszudrücken” (GW XV, 79). See also, GW XIII, 251n2.

<sup>303</sup> Displacing the Husserlian approach to an *alter-ego*, Freud writes: “Wir haben dann zu ihm dieselbe Beziehung wie zu einem psychischen Vorgang bei einem anderen Menschen, nur dass er eben einer unseres eigenen ist” (GW XV, 77).

memory or slips of the tongue as leftovers for an interminable analysis: “Wir nähern uns dem Es mit Vergleichen, nennen es ein Chaos.”<sup>304</sup>

The inaccessibility of this unknown and chaotic *It* is due not only to its resistance to the logical rules pertaining to the principle of non-contradiction as well as to *chronological* succession, but also to its organization into a consistent will or into an audible representation of a coherent voice; the *It* remains strangely and elusively dissonant as a cacophony of impersonal and murmuring voices.<sup>305</sup> Despite its absolute alterity towards the ego, however, the *It* persistently affects the *I*, to such an extent that Freud even claims that: “Das Ich ist doch nur ein Stück vom Es.”<sup>306</sup> Indeed, a piece of the *It*, which has been altered into an *I* only because of its exposure to certain stimuli—whether these stimuli come from the ‘internal’ territories of the drives or from the ‘external’ world of so-called reality.<sup>307</sup> That is, the *I* emerges *as* and *in* the organization of the chaotic disorganization of the *It*, wherefore the *I* is both different from and identical to *It*. Or, as Freud notes in his *Hemmung, Symptom, Angst* from 1926: “Das Ich ist eben der organisierte Anteil des Es.”<sup>308</sup>

In reading this wondrous sentence ‘*das Ich ist doch nur ein Stück vom Es,*’ we come to ponder what it might mean for our overall questioning of the remains of a self. Where would we begin to trace such remains of a self in a relation of identity, in the difference between the *I* and the *It*? A certain ambiguity seems to emerge here (Freud speaks of a ‘tension’ (*Spannung*) or a ‘conflict’ (*Konflikt*)), since, on the one hand, the *I* is said to be nothing but a piece of the *It*, a sort of residue from the exposure of the *It* to the stimuli of others. On the other hand, however, the *It* appears to be an irreducible remainder that can never be appropriated by or assimilated into the organization of the *I*. In my view, this ambiguity in Freud’s text remains irresolvable and I believe it is important to insist on this irresolvability in order to try to avoid making any determinate decisions about what ultimately remains an indecisive relation between the *I* and the *It*, which does not allow for the reduction or subordination of one to the other. In the following

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<sup>304</sup> GW XV, 80.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 289.

<sup>306</sup> GW XV, 83.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. GW XV, 83. In Freud’s view, this goes anatomically as well since it is not the conscious *I* but the *It* that is lodged in the ‘*innersten Innern*’ of the psychic brain, whereas the *I* has its seat in the outer cortical layers. Cf. GW XIII, 23.

<sup>308</sup> GW XIV, 124. Freud explains the identity in difference as follows: “Die Scheidung des Ichs vom Es scheint gerechtfertigt, sie wird uns durch bestimmte Verhältnisse aufgedrängt. Aber andererseits ist das Ich mit dem Es identisch, nur ein besonders differenzierter Anteil desselben” (ibid. 124).

chapters, we shall return more than once to this psyche in pieces and to some further questions that it entails for the remains of a self. For now, however, we shall stay close to Freud's text.

The exposure to this unruly and inaccessible exteriority at the inmost interiority of the supposedly autonomous human being is one reason why Freud counts psychoanalysis as the third narcissistic wound inflicted on the megalomaniac tendencies of humankind throughout its scientific history: not only has humankind been evacuated from the center of the universe by the discoveries of astrophysics, and dethroned from its distinguished birth into the common descent of animals by biology, now psychoanalysis comes along to inform the egocentric human being that it is not even master of its own house.<sup>309</sup> Moreover, not only is the ego not master, it must also rely on the 'sparse reports' (*kärgliche Nachrichten*) it receives from an unknown and inaccessible occupant lodging in the midst of its household in order to try to accommodate itself to this economy of alterity.<sup>310</sup> This topographical displacement of the psychic apparatus goes hand in hand with Freud's reconstruction of his theory of drives.

Already in 1916–17, Freud had encountered repetitive patterns of behavior and thought in his analysands, most prominently in those suffering from melancholia and obsessional neurosis, that appeared to generate such (self)destructive and unpleasurable effects that he could not align them with his previous theory of drives. The problem was that these symptoms of unpleasure did not cohere with Freud's earlier theory according to which the drives were unilaterally, though not non-conflictually, oriented by the continual work of the pleasure principle (*Lustprinzip*), the aim of which was either an increase of pleasure or a decrease of unpleasure—or, more precisely, a decrease of an 'unpleasurable tension' (*unlustvolle Spannung*) in the psychic organism.<sup>311</sup> Such inconsistency is what encouraged Freud in

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<sup>309</sup> On the three traumatic blows to humanity, see Freud's *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* from 1917 (GW XI, 294–295).

<sup>310</sup> In a similar manner, Groddeck in *Das Buch vom Es*, also published in 1923, designates the *It* as the insistence and res(is)tance of an impersonal force that 'lives the human beings' thus signaling towards a heteronomous dethroning and decentering of the consciously autonomous subject. Groddeck further explains his view as follows: "Ich bin der Ansicht, dass der Mensch vom Unbekannten belebt wird. In ihm ist ein Es, irgend ein Wunderbares, das Alles, was er tut und was mit ihm geschieht, regelt. Der Satz 'ich lebe' ist nur bedingt richtig, er drückt ein kleines Teilphänomen von der Grundwahrheit aus: Der Mensch wird von Es gelebt" (Groddeck 1923, 10; 281).

<sup>311</sup> These symptoms led Freud to the hypothesis of a 'primary masochism' inherent to the psychic apparatus. Freud calls it *primary* masochism in a revision of his previous explanation according to which masochism is derived from a 'primary sadism' (*Ursadismus*) by turning an aggression directed towards an external object inward. For

1920 to take up the question of a possible ‘beyond’ of the pleasure principle, which caused him to transform his fundamentally dualistic theory of drives from a clear distinction between the sexual drives (*Sexualtriebe*) and the self-preservatory ego drives (*Selbsterhaltungstriebe/Ich-triebe*)—both governed by the pleasure principle—to a less rigid distinction between the assimilatory, constructive (*aufbauend*), and procreative (*Fortpflanzung*) life drive (*Lebenstriebe*) and the dissimilatory, de(con)structive (*abbauend*), and regressive death drive (*Todestriebe*), the latter of which Freud suspected to operate independently of the pleasure principle.

Accordingly, it is no mere coincidence that Freud’s introduction of the *It* into the topography of the psyche in *Das Ich und das Es* takes place in the wake of two earlier, but just as seminal, texts, namely, *Das Unheimliche* from 1919 and *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* from 1920. For it is in these two texts that the economy of the psyche as governed by the pleasure principle markedly begins to tremble and vacillate. In order to learn more about how the *It* interferes with the authority of the *I*, we shall therefore take a closer look at these two texts and in doing so shall focus our reading chiefly on two notions significant to the disruption of the pleasure principle. One is the death drive, which Freud introduces as a perpetual force of disturbance in the psychic economy whose main currency is said to be pleasure, and the other, whose importance to psychoanalysis can hardly be underestimated, is repetition. We will begin with the latter text.

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an early account of the counter-pleasurable symptoms related to masochism, see the essay “Trauer und Melancholie” from 1917, in which Freud taries with the problem of explaining the apparently self-destructive drive of certain depressive conditions: “Wir haben als den Urzustand, von dem das Triebleben ausgeht, eine so großartige Selbstliebe des Ichs erkannt, wir sehen in der Angst, die bei Lebensbedrohung auftritt, einen so riesigen Betrag der narzißtischen Libido frei werden, daß wir es nicht erfassen, wie dies Ich seiner Selbsterstörung zustimmen könne” (GW X, 438). See also *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* from 1916–17, where Freud raises the question of the apparent uselessness (*Unzweckmäßigkeit*), from the perspective of the pleasure principle, of an anxiety that paralyses the anxious person rather than making him or her capable of flight. Cf. GW XI, 445f. With the introduction of the revised psychic topography in 1923, Freud finally made the melancholic link between a primary masochism of the unconscious *It* and its manifestation in the punishing *super-I* explicit when he writes: “Was nun im Über-Ich herrscht, ist wie eine Reinkultur des Todestriebes, und wirklich gelingt es diesem oft genug, das Ich in den Tod zu treiben [...] das Über-Ich kann hypermoralisch und dann so grausam werden wie nur das Es” (GW XIII, 283–284). See also, “Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus” (GW XIII, 369–383).

### III.2 TO GO BEYOND OR NOT REPEATEDLY: READING THE *JENSEITS*.

First, a preliminary note on this notorious Freudian text. In attempting to read *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, one encounters an exceedingly complicated textual network, which even to a reader as experienced as Lacan is “incroyablement ambigu, voire confus.”<sup>312</sup> The text is excessive, not only in terms of genre—Freud himself calls it ‘speculation’ and often even ‘far-fetched speculation’ (*weitausholende Spekulation*) because it cannot unambiguously be said to belong either to scientific or philosophical discourse, but neither can it be discarded as ungrounded mysticism or fake profundity<sup>313</sup>—but also in terms of any consistent thesis or coherent theory. As Derrida has shown in his incomparable study “Spéculer—Sur ‘Freud’” from 1980, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* is a text that proceeds a-thetically, that is, by repeatedly posing, disposing, and reposing different speculative *hypotheses*, almost to the point of paralysis.

Derrida recapitulates the cadenced movements of the *Jenseits* as follows: “Il se construit-déconstruit selon un interminable détour (*Umweg*),”<sup>314</sup> and as such ends up *ex hypothesi* positing a ‘beyond’ only accessible through these ‘(un)steps of writing’ (*pas d’écriture*). Accordingly, the text ends up abandoning not only its readers but even its author in a state of bewilderment, which can be discerned in Freud’s final hesitant declaration regarding the hypotheses wagered by the text: “Meine Antwort würde lauten, daß ich weder selbst überzeugt bin, noch bei anderen um Glauben für sie werbe. Richtiger: ich weiß nicht, wie weit ich an sie glaube.”<sup>315</sup> Nevertheless, in what follows we shall try to make these little steps-not-beyond (*pas au-delà*)<sup>316</sup> in the attempt to retrace the exceedingly intricate and repetitive movements of Freud’s text—if this is indeed possible, for how can we *begin*

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<sup>312</sup> Sem II, 51/37.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 39.

<sup>314</sup> CP, 287/269.

<sup>315</sup> GW XIII, 64.

<sup>316</sup> As the English translator of Blanchot’s *La pas au-delà* remarks in her introduction, the French phrase *pas au-delà* is impossible to translate in at least a quadruple sense: “since both *pas* and *au-delà* can be taken either as nouns or adverbs (*pas* is both a step and part of the negative adverb *ne-pas*; *au-delà* means ‘beyond,’ but also occurs as ‘*l’au-delà*,’ the beyond) [...]. However one chooses to translate *pas*, it is impossible to preserve to two meanings at once, although the simultaneity of meanings in the same word is important in preserving the sense of prohibition and transgression occurring at the same time” (PAD (1992), xvi). This simultaneity of prohibition and transgression, as of the possibility and impossibility both of going beyond and of not going beyond, is significant both regarding the textual movements of the *Jenseits* as its thematic thrust, wherefore we find the *pas au-delà* to be a fitting ‘(non-)procedure’ of reading the text.

reading a text so thoroughly driven by repetitions? Will a leap be necessary? Will it even be possible? We will give it a try.

As mentioned, the problem that occupies the *Jenseits* from start to finish is that there are manifestations of the psyche that do not appear in accordance with Freud's previous understanding of the psychic economy as governed by the principle of pleasure, and these seemingly aneconomic and unruly manifestations all seem to share a certain compulsive repetitiveness. Despite the fact that Freud begins the text by declaring that he has no hesitations or reservations in reassuming (*nehmen wir unbedenklich an*) his previous position, according to which, "daß der Ablauf der seelischen Vorgänge *automatisch* durch das Lustprinzip reguliert wird,"<sup>317</sup> no sooner than page three of the first chapter he already corrects himself on this point. For, as Freud now argues, *if* pleasure is indeed the principal principle and sole aim of the psyche how, then, do experiences of unpleasure occur in the first place? Furthermore, even if unpleasure could arise in such an psychic archeo-teleology of pleasure, for example due to external factors beyond the control of the psyche, should we not still expect to find at least the majority of psychic processes to be advanced or assisted by the experience of pleasure?

According to Freud, however, even the slightest experience with matters of the psyche—analytic or not—will leave such expectation disappointed, seeing as unpleasure is at least as common a psychic experience as that of pleasure. Therefore Freud finds it unavoidable to adjust his initial assumption by conceding that it is properly (*eigentlich*) incorrect to speak of an actual 'dominion' or a 'lordship' (*Herrschaft*) of the pleasure principle in the economy of the psyche. Instead, the initial declaration of dominance is modified into the articulation of a 'strong tendency'<sup>318</sup> in the psyche, either toward an achievement of pleasure (*Lustgewinn*) or toward a reduction of unpleasure. Notwithstanding this initial modification, however, Freud will make repeated attempts to reappoint the pleasure principle to the dominant position in the psychic economy throughout the *Jenseits*. As such, the movement of the text shifts back and forth between a dethroning and a reenthroning of the principality of pleasure, which gives it the appearance of a prosecution unfolding against its own initial hypothesis. A prosecution, moreover, in which Freud plays the self-proclaimed part of the *advocatus diaboli* acting as his own double and against himself.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> GW XIII, 3. My italics.

<sup>318</sup> GW XIII, 5.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 64.

Accordingly, in Chapters One and Two Freud presents his jury of readers with a first piece of evidence against the psychic authority of the pleasure principle by recounting three prevalent sources of unpleasure (*Quellen der Unlust*) drawn from his great range of analytic experience. The first cause of unpleasure concerns the inhibition of pleasure which occurs in the substitution (*Ablösung*) of the pleasure principle with that of the reality principle (*Realitätsprinzip*). However, as Freud points out, from the perspective of self-preservation, which is pleasurable to sustain, the reality principle is ‘a necessary evil’ in order to mitigate the worst blows from the surrounding world. The unleashing of an uninhibited and unrestricted pleasure principle in the world would be straight out dangerous and possibly fatal to the psychic organism, wherefore it must protect itself against itself by means of self-inhibitory regulations of adaptation to its surrounding world.<sup>320</sup>

In reality, then, the reality principle is nothing but an auto-modification of the pleasure principle, which does not cancel out the original tendency towards pleasure but actually serves to prolong it by deferring (*Aufschub*) the satisfaction of a possibly instantaneously fatal pleasure through lengthy detours (*langen Umwege*) in order to achieve a less violent, and perhaps less intense, but more economically tenable pleasure over time.<sup>321</sup> Even if the postponement of pleasure necessitates a provisional endurance in the journey to its attainment, Freud ends up concluding that the reality principle by no means threatens the authority of the pleasure principle insofar as its inhibitions are enacted out of concern for the self-perseverance of the psychic organism and therefore serves the psychic economy of pleasure in the long run. As Derrida renders the argument, the pleasure principle must make war on itself and according to such self-hostility, “[l]e principe même du plaisir se manifesterait comme une sorte de contre-plaisir, bande contre

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<sup>320</sup> Again, for Freud, this self-inhibition arising from a demand for self-preservation has its anatomic analogue in the development of the brain, insofar as the outermost cortical layers must ‘sacrifice’ themselves (*Absterben*) by becoming a shield of almost inorganic matter (*gewissermaßen anorganisch*) capable of resisting the possibly lethal stimuli from the external world and thus protecting the more inward layers of the still living organic brain. Therefore, Freud writes: “Für den lebenden Organismus ist der Reizschutz eine beinahe wichtigere Aufgabe als die Reizaufnahme” (GW XIII, 27).

<sup>321</sup> This point is also emphasized by Lacan when, in his seminar from 1954–1955 concerning the *Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, he insists that the reality principle is not at all in opposition to the pleasure principle, but rather consists in “ce que le jeu dure, c’est-à-dire que le plaisir se renouvelle, que le combat ne finisse pas faute de combattants. Le principe de réalité consiste à nous ménager nos plaisirs, ces plaisirs don’t la tendance est précisément d’arriver à la cessation” (Sem II, 107/84).



bande qui vient limiter le plaisir pour le rendre possible.”<sup>322</sup> Thus, the principle of pleasure operates in a double-bound logic of auto-immunity according to which its protective measures for surviving potentially run the risk of turning into a form of self-mutilation, such that its survival might end up having been nothing but a suicide.

The second source of unpleasure that Freud presents as evidence against the authority of pleasure is related to the first inasmuch as the supplementary substitution of the pleasure principle with the reality principle may lead to a repression of initial pleasures, which, on account of an economic deliberation, can transform even the mere possibility of certain pleasures (in one psychic system) into experiences of unpleasure (in another psychic system). Accordingly, these repressed pleasures are pleasures that can no longer be experienced *as such* and are, in Freud’s opinion, the mainspring of all neurotic experiences of unpleasure. Even so, Freud maintains that a certain amount of neurotic unpleasure can still be explained from an economic perspective insofar as it wards off the possibility of even greater unpleasures, such as a premature death caused by unrestricted desire, and therefore yields pleasure in the longer run. However, as Derrida remarks, there is no certainty that these postponements will ever reach their pleasurable ends since no one can guarantee that the long detours of inhibition, repression, and restriction will finally lead to an outlet of pleasure. The risk inherent to these detours is therefore that the psyche might lose track of its orientation and be led astray, since, as Derrida writes, “si la longueur du détour n’est plus maîtrisable, et plutôt que la longueur sa structure, alors le retour à soi n’est jamais assuré.”<sup>323</sup>

The final source of unpleasure that Freud mentions here comes with exposure to a traumatic experience whose surprising and terrifying suddenness can prompt the traumatized psyche to repeat it over and over again in dreams, flashbacks, or compulsive motoric behavior that “immer wieder in die Situation seines Unfalles zurückführt.”<sup>324</sup> Even though Freud

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<sup>322</sup> CP, 426/399.

<sup>323</sup> CP, 302/282.

<sup>324</sup> GW XIII, 10. In his discussion of traumatic neurosis, Freud distinguishes between three modes of agitation: ‘anxiety’ (*Angst*), which is a state in which the psyche is expecting and as such is prepared for a still unknown but possibly dangerous or violent occurrence; ‘fear’ (*Furcht*), which is a state determined by its being related to a specific fearful object; and ‘fright’ (*Schreck*), which is the state of a psyche taken by complete surprise by a frightening occurrence. In Freud’s view, traumatic neurosis develops precisely when the psyche is completely overwhelmed by some unforeseen incident because not in a state of anxious alertness. According to Freud, the condition of trauma is therefore “das Fehlen der Angstbereitschaft” (GW XIII, 31). Six years after the *Jenseits*, however, Freud comes to revise this sharp distinction between traumatizing

does concede in Chapter Two that the unpleasurable repetitions pertaining to traumatic neurosis seem to challenge not only the authority of the pleasure principle but also his theory of dreams as essentially wish fulfilling,<sup>325</sup> he cuts off any further elaboration at this point and instead leaves his readers with the following choice of explanation: *either* the unpleasurable repetitions in the wake of traumatization manifests the aftereffect of a *disturbance* of the ‘proper’ economy of drives, which causes a *diversion* from its original aim as regulated by the pleasure principle, *or* the unpleasurable repetitions bear testimony to “*rätselhaften masochistischen Tendenzen*”<sup>326</sup> in the human psyche still in need of elucidation.

Following the first explicative alternative, the repetitions of trauma do not contradict, or even seriously challenge, the authority of the pleasure principle inasmuch as their unpleasurable effects are merely evidence of a diverting disturbance and as such actually *confirm* the original rule of pleasure by way of their unpleasurable exception. Following the second alternative, however, the difficulties following trauma proliferate and the possibility of providing an explanation for them within the already established theoretical framework of the psychic economy becomes ever more difficult.

Despite this first retreat, the traumatic repetitions continue to haunt Freud so that in Chapter Four he returns to them once again in order to modify his initial statements. This time around Freud concedes that *if* the compulsive repetitiveness pertaining to trauma is in fact a trace of a ‘beyond’ or perhaps

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fright, determined fear, and prepared anxiety by further complicating his notion of anxiety. The revised, and in some respects contradictory notion of anxiety outlined in *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst* is now related to trauma insofar as it becomes a response to the belated (*nachträgliche*) temporality of trauma according to which a trauma can be said to come from the future as the return of a past that has never been present as such. Cf. GW XIV, 115; 157. I have engaged with this topic elsewhere, see Michaelsen 2016, 48–77.

<sup>325</sup> In his work on *Traumdeutung* from 1900, Freud had already come across dreams whose contents and effects were experienced as so unpleasant that they appeared, if not to contradict, then at least to problematize his overall theory of dreams as wish fulfilling. However, no matter how anxiety-ridden, horrific, unpleasurable or even painful the dreams may be, Freud always manages to locate in them a ‘hidden’ wish, which the dreams are more or less secretly trying to fulfill, for example by interpreting them as ‘counter wish dreams’ (*Gegenwuschträume*). In one instance, Freud even interprets the hidden wish of an unpleasant dream of one of his analysands to be to prove Freud wrong precisely by dreaming the most uninterpretable dream possible according to the theory of wish fulfillment (cf. GW II/III, 157). Ultimately, then, Freud ends up maintaining his initial thesis of wish fulfillment, modifying it only parenthetically, such that: “*Der Traum ist die (verkleidete) Erfüllung eines (unterdrückten, verdrängten) Wunsches*” (GW II/III, 166).

<sup>326</sup> GW XIII, 11.

even a ‘before’ the pleasure principle, “so ist es folgerichtig, auch für die wunscherfüllende Tendenz des Traumes eine Vorzeit zuzulassen.”<sup>327</sup> Whether this past of a ‘time before’ which the function of wish fulfillment in dreams became operative might turn out to be somehow related to the immemorial past of the *It* in the place of which the *I* must come to be only belatedly we shall have to investigate in the following sections.<sup>328</sup> For now, however, in the third chapter of the *Jenseits*, Freud leaves undecided which of the two alternative interpretations of traumatic repetition he prefers. Instead, he decides to interrupt the investigation into the “dunkle und düstere Thema der traumatischen Neurose”<sup>329</sup> and its multiple affects of unpleasure in order to change direction and proceed along a seemingly very different path of more ‘normal activities’ (*normalen Betätigungen*) for the human psyche, namely, the path of children’s play.

### III.3 PLAYFUL REPETITIONS

Freud’s analysis of the *fort:da* game performed by his one-and-a-half-year-old grandson Ernst, is one of the most widely commented *topoi* in the Freudian oeuvre. In what follows, we will therefore not be so conceited as to think that we can do justice, let alone contribute something entirely ‘new’ or ‘unthought,’ to its long itinerary of commentary of diverging quality. Instead, we will confine ourselves to providing a brief overview of Freud’s analysis, the crux of which is his observation of a tendency to repeat unpleasurable and even painful experiences in play, in order to bring it into conversation with our present discussion of a certain solitude of impersonality.

In the aftermath of being abandoned by both of his parents—first by his mother leaving him in order to run an errand and later by his father going off to war<sup>330</sup>—Ernst develops a habit of throwing his toys away and out of sight whilst making an emphatic sound, which Freud and his mother unanimously

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<sup>327</sup> GW XIII, 33.

<sup>328</sup> Another instance of the belatedness (*Nachträglichkeit*) following an immemorial past can be discerned in Freud’s neurological etiology of consciousness in Chapter Four of the *Jenseits*, according to which “*das Bewußtsein entstehe an Stelle der Erinnerungsspur*” (GW XIII, 25). In other words, consciousness arises as the substitute, not for a memory, but for the *trace* of a memory, which means that consciousness develops as the memory of something immemorial. For a discussion of the possible relation between a discourse of the immemorial and a discourse of the unconscious, see Chapter One in Lyotard 1988.

<sup>329</sup> GW XIII, 11.

<sup>330</sup> In a footnote, Freud laconically adds that later on in his life, when Ernst is five years of age, the mother (Freud’s daughter) will tragically die and thus abandon little Ernst permanently, “[j]etzt, da sie wirklich ‘fort’ (o—o—o) war” (GW XIII, 14n1).

interpret as meaning ‘gone’ or ‘away’ (*fort*). Initially, Freud takes this repeated act of making things disappear to be a game in itself, but at a later time when the child comes into possession of a wooden reel with a piece of string attached to it (*Holzspule*), the second act of the game reveals itself to Freud. Seeing that the child is now capable of making the disappeared toy return to sight by a pull of the string and accompanying its return with an enthusiastic ‘*there!*’ (*da*), Freud understands that the complete *fort:da* game has been invented.

Freud interprets the two acts of the game as a *mise-en-scène* of the mother’s departure and return—since the father’s later departure had the benefit of leaving the child undisturbed in his sole possession (*Alleinbesitz*) of the mother (Oedipus is always lurking in the wings). However, Freud is puzzled at why the child would unrelentingly replay such an unpleasurable and painful separation over and over again. Briefly, he speculates upon the possibility that this earnest game, like the childish incentive to repeat in general,<sup>331</sup> might in fact be an indication of something independent from and more original (*ursprünglicher*) than the pleasure principle—that is to say, something irreducible and heteronomous to the archeo-teleology of pleasure entailing its own energy, its own drive, and its own aneconomic agenda. More specifically, Freud entertains the notion of a compulsion to repeat working regardless of the concern for pleasure and even regardless of the care for one’s own being (*Sorge*). Yet, this first time around Freud once again retreats from his speculations and instead finishes his analysis in favor of another interpretation, which reinscribes the repetitive play of absencing and presencing, disappearance and reappearance (*Verschwinden und Wiederkommen*) back into the economy of pleasure.

According to this alternative, and presumably less speculative, interpretation, the playful repetitions of the unpleasant departure and return of the mother represented by the wooden reel bound with string (*Bindfaden*) may actually be regarded as pleasurable from another perspective insofar as it manifests a drive to master (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) the anxious, painful, sorrowful, and possibly even traumatic separation from the mother. Even though Freud expresses some doubt as to whether this drive for empowerment in the face of something overpowering may originally operate independently from the pleasure principle, he is nevertheless quite clear that through the repetitions resulting from this drive the child is capable of

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<sup>331</sup> In Chapter Five, Freud will return to the role of repetition in children’s play, noting that whereas children seem to take pleasure in repetition the adult demands renewal for his pleasure to be achieved or else he will get bored. According to Freud, the analysand who in adulthood repeats past experiences compulsively therefore behaves like a child (*wie infantile*) giving of the impression of being either boring or possessed.

transforming a passive situation of abandonment and desolation into an active staging of the same. This reenacting of the experience undergone allows the child to internalize and thus reappropriate the loss of the mother, thereby making an initial unpleasurable event seem almost pleasurable because of the gained mastery over it. As we shall come to see, this narrative of the *fort:da* game, is in Lacan's view the very (hi)story of the subject's traumatic inscription into the symbolic order—an inscription which is moreover prescribed precisely by the incision of a loss.<sup>332</sup>

In an often overlooked footnote, Freud adds a subsequent observation of a further development of the *fort:da* game that, in his own view, confirms this interpretation of the game as one of mastery through which the return of the object yields greater pleasure than the unpleasure of its initial disappearance. Freud's observation was made following a long period of solitude (*langen Alleinseins*) in which the child, in the absence of his mother, had found a way of making *himself* rather than an object disappear by crouching under the mirror so that his reflected image was *gone*.<sup>333</sup> Since Freud does not explain why this observation entirely secures (*völlig gesichert*) his interpretation of a pleasurable drive for mastery, nor comments on what one would otherwise think was a quite significant substitution of the wooden reel representing his mother with Ernst himself, we are left guessing.<sup>334</sup>

In light of what we saw in the previous chapter regarding the 'solitude of dependency,' however, what strikes us as remarkable in this supplementary footnote is the fact that Freud fails to tell his readers about the supposedly decisive second act of the *fort:da* game—that is, the act when, standing erect again, Ernst would have been able to see his image reappear *there* in the mirror. The default of this second act, entailing the re-presentation of the child to himself, may of course be nothing but a merely accidental omission or oversight on Freud's part. Yet, is it not Freud himself who trained us to

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<sup>332</sup> In this regard, Lacan writes: "L'ensemble de l'activité symbolise la répétition, mais non pas du tout celle d'un besoin qui en appellerait au retour de la mère, et qui se manifesterait tout simplement dans le cri. C'est la répétition du départ de la mère comme cause d'une *Spaltung* dans le sujet—surmontée par le jeu alternatif, *fort-da*, qui est un *ici ou là*, et qui ne vise, en son alternance, que d'être *fort* d'un *da*, et *da* d'un *fort*" (Sem XI, 61/62–63). We shall return to this Lacanian drive of alternating repetition in a later section of this chapter.

<sup>333</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 13n.

<sup>334</sup> One tempting guess would be to discern a somewhat malfunctioning instance, or even a cancellation, of what Lacan designates as the mirror stage reenacted in this short footnote on an extension of the *fort:da* game. However, we will not give into this temptation at present but instead postpone our engagement with Lacan's mirror stage to Chapter V.

be suspicious of merely ‘accidental’ omissions or oversights and to question whether they may signal something other than themselves? Hence, we might feel justified in speculating whether or not this default of little Ernst reappearing to himself in the mirror, might have something to do with his presentiment of his own disappearance or dissolution in the absence of the (m)other. In this regard, it is therefore tempting to read Ernst’s letting himself disappear (*sich selbst verschwinden zu lassen*) as the child’s solitary response to his exposure to the harsh conditions of the solitude of dependency. That is, as his childish soliloquy in confrontation with the fact that the very sense of himself does not come from himself alone, but from the (m)other, and when the (m)other is no longer *there* to induce his being with presence and his existence with personality he begins to sense himself disappearing into an anonymous absence.<sup>335</sup>

We will leave this temptation aside for the moment in order to proceed with Freud, who brings his initial prosecution of the pleasure principle to an end by concluding that none of the hitherto exhibited evidence of unpleasure—that is, neither the restricting adjustments of the reality principle, the repetitions of traumatization, nor the repetitive play of *fort:da*—have testified to a need to go *beyond* the psychic economy regulated by the pleasure principle in order to retrieve an explanation (*zeugen nicht für die Wirksamkeit von Tendenzen jenseits des Lustprinzips*).<sup>336</sup>

Consequently, none of the repetitive phenomena exhibited in the first and second chapter have presented a serious threat to the dominion of the pleasure principle, insofar as the unpleasure that these phenomena have undoubtedly caused in one system of the psyche at the same time yield pleasure in another system, thus leaving the authority and legitimacy of the pleasure principle intact. However, in Chapter Three, Freud turns towards more troublesome repetitions that will push the economy of pleasure to its limits and lead him into the ‘far-fetched’ speculations of Chapters Four to Seven regarding the manifestation of a certain death drive in the psyche.

#### III.4 REPETITIONS BEYOND PLEASURE

Freud begins the third chapter of the *Jenseits* by recounting an analytically significant experience, which he had elaborated as early as in his 1914 essay

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<sup>335</sup> Laing appears to be indicating something similar when he writes the following about Freud’s footnote on Ernst: “[I]n overcoming or attempting to overcome the loss or absence of the real other person in whose eyes he lived and moved and had his being, he becomes another person to himself who could look at him in the mirror” (Laing 1969, 117).

<sup>336</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 15.

on “Erinnern, Wiederholung und Durcharbeiten,” that is, the experience of a certain ‘repetition compulsion’ (*Wiederholungszwang*) manifested by many analysands during their analysis. However, it is not until 1920 that this compulsion manifestly points Freud in the direction of a possible ‘beyond’ of the pleasure principle. In the 1914 essay, the repetition compulsion mainly serves as a substitute for remembering with respect to the repressed (*Verdrängte*) that cannot be re-membered because of the resistance (*Widerstand*) of the *I* who “am Lustprinzip festhalten.”<sup>337</sup> As such, the repetition compulsion appears useful to the analytic work insofar as it helps forward the working-through (*Durcharbeiten*) of transference (*Übertragung*) when memory fails to do so.<sup>338</sup>

Yet, already in 1914 the compulsion to repeat had in some cases also shown itself to have an impeding effect on analysis, insofar as it could break free from the analytic process of working-through and, instead, proceed according to its own obscure and unbounded agenda.<sup>339</sup> In such cases, the task of the analyst would be to try to redomesticate the repetition compulsion by binding it once again to the purposefulness of transference in analysis (*den Wiederholungszwang des Patienten zu bändigen*). According to Freud, in order for this analytic task to be successful the ‘common,’ ‘ordinary,’ or even ‘vulgar’ neurosis (*gemeine Neurose*) of the analysand has to be replaced by a ‘transference neurosis.’ If this replacement is followed through, the analyst will have succeeded in making the compulsion to repeat harmless (*unschädlich*), and even useful (*nutzbar*), to the analytic work insofar as its activity will have been restricted to a specific domain (*einem bestimmten Gebiete*). Freud writes: “Wir eröffnen ihm [*den Wiederholungszwang*] die Übertragung als den Tummelplatz.”<sup>340</sup>

In other words, the analytic work consists in substituting a harmful and unhealthy form of repetition with a harmless and healing form of repetition.<sup>341</sup> However, in the *Jenseits* Freud appears to have stumbled upon

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<sup>337</sup> GW XIII, 22.

<sup>338</sup> Freud can therefore write that “die Übertragung ist selbst nur ein Stück Wiederholung und die Wiederholung ist die Übertragung der vergessenen Vergangenheit [...] der Analysierte wiederholt anstatt zu erinnern, er wiederholt unter den Bedingungen des Widerstandes” (GW X, 130–131).

<sup>339</sup> Cf. GW X, 134.

<sup>340</sup> GW X, 134.

<sup>341</sup> In *Différence et répétition*, Deleuze also marks the duplicitous nature of repetition as follows: “Si la répétition nous rend malades, c’est elle aussi qui nous guérit; si elle nous enchaîne et nous détruit, c’est elle encore qui nous libère, témoignant dans les deux cas de sa puissance ‘démoniaque’” (Deleuze 1968, 30/19). This irreducible ambiguity undoubtedly gives the notion of repetition in psychoanalysis a structural similarity to that which Derrida with Plato calls a *pharmakon*, which can signify both a remedy and a

a repetition compulsion that will not let itself be restricted to the useful repetitions pertaining to the working through of transference, and in 1920 such an unrestricted repetition therefore comes to entail a compulsion proceeding without and beyond a concern for pleasure.

Returning to the third chapter of the *Jenseits*, then, Freud initially maintains that a great deal of the unpleasure resulting from compulsive repetitions can still be explained from an economic perspective under the governance of the pleasure principle. However, the truly incriminating evidence against such economic calibration is still to come, in the guise of a compulsion to repeat that does not seem to allow even the slightest possibility of pleasure (*die keine Lustmöglichkeit enthalten*).<sup>342</sup> Regarding these latter unpleasurable repetitions, Freud mentions at least three kinds.

First, there is the inclination of certain analysands towards (self)destructive and (self-)abasing patterns of behavior and thought manifested symptomatically by their compulsive repetitions of previous experiences that never did nor will entail any prospect of pleasure whatsoever, thus giving the repetitions an impression of “eines dämonischen Zuges in ihrem Erleben.”<sup>343</sup> Second, there are people who apparently have a tendency to repeat the same unpleasurable patterns in their relationships with others, of which Freud mentions the friend who is always betrayed or the lover whose love is always abused. Finally, there is the third and, in Freud’s view, the most enigmatic compulsive to repeat manifested by people who repeatedly, but by the look of it entirely coincidentally and unwittingly, keep crossing paths with the same chain of events thus giving their lives an uncanny appearance of being haunted by ‘destinal’ or ‘fated’ repetitions (*Wiederholung desselben Schicksals*). With respect to this last form of repetition, Freud gives the example of a woman who three times in a row married men who died from illness shortly after the wedding.

According to Freud, these unpleasurable and somewhat uncanny “eternal recurrences of the same”<sup>344</sup> can only leave us to wonder in astonishment (*verwundern*). Yet, confronted with numerous observations of ‘neurotic,’ ‘daemonic,’ and ‘fated’ repetitions in analysis and beyond, Freud

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poison. Cf. “La pharmacie de Platon” (D, 108–132/61–171). We shall return in more detail to the duplicity of repetition and its demonic power in the following sections and next chapter.

<sup>342</sup> GW XIII, 18.

<sup>343</sup> GW XIII, 20.

<sup>344</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 21. Freud employs the expression “ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen” in inverted commas but does not bother to insert a reference to Nietzsche—perhaps because he finds this reference too obvious, even for his time; perhaps because he does not want it to be too obvious.



nevertheless finds the courage to ponder whether, deep in the psychic apparatus, there might be something like a compulsion to repeat that does not obey the principal commandment for pleasure, and, moreover, whether such compulsion could even be considered more originary (*ursprünglicher*) and more forcefully driven (*triebhafter*) than the pleasure principle itself. Hence, it is not until the end of the third chapter that an actual hypothesis of a ‘beyond the pleasure principle’ finally comes to inscribe itself. Here Freud writes:

Angesichts solcher Beobachtungen aus dem Verhalten in der Übertragung und aus dem Schicksal der Menschen werden wir den Mut zur Annahme finden, daß es im Seelenleben *wirklich einen Wiederholungszwang gibt, der sich über das Lustprinzip hinaussetzt.*<sup>345</sup>

It is only in retrospect that Freud will reconsider whether the motif of repetition, as it had already expressed itself in the context of traumatic neurosis and in the game of *fort:da*, might not after all be a sign of a compulsion to repeat beyond pleasure. Hence, in Chapter Four Freud returns once again to the problem of traumatic neurosis, but in contrast to Chapter Two, this time he reaches the decision that repetitive dreams in the wake of a trauma are decisively in contradiction with, and as such operating beyond, the command of the pleasure principle since—as he explains:

Wenn die Träume der Unfallsneurotiker die Kranken so regelmäßig in die Situation des Unfalles zurückführen, so dienen sie damit allerdings nicht der Wunscherfüllung, deren halluzinatorische Herbeiführung ihnen unter der Herrschaft des Lustprinzips zur Funktion geworden ist.<sup>346</sup>

Furthermore, what also shows itself in this traumatic return is that the pleasure principle is in effect a tendency that can operate only with the precondition of a certain function of ‘binding’ (*Bindung*). This precondition becomes evident because the traumatic events, which Freud defines as “solche Erregungen von außen, die stark genug sind, den Reizschutz zu durchbrechen,”<sup>347</sup> momentarily put the pleasure principle out of action (*außer Kraft gesetzt*) because a more urgent task than the achievement of pleasure has been assigned to the psychic apparatus, namely the task of “den Reiz zu bewältigen, die hereingebrochenen Reizmengen psychisch zu binden, um sie dann der Erledigung zuzuführen.”<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> GW XIII, 21. My emphasis.

<sup>346</sup> GW XIII, 32.

<sup>347</sup> GW XIII, 29.

<sup>348</sup> GW XIII, 29.

Accordingly, the function of binding has shown itself to be more originary than, and therefore independent from, the goal of achieving pleasure and avoiding unpleasure without, however, being in direct opposition to the pleasure principle since it functions precisely as its precondition; “erst nach erfolgter Bindung könnte sich die Herrschaft des Lustprinzips (und seiner Modifikation zum Realitätsprinzip) ungehemmt durchsetzen.”<sup>349</sup>

As Derrida concisely renders the relation of the function of binding following an exceptional trauma to the rule of the pleasure, “l’exception ne parle pas contre elle: elle la précède. Il y a plus vieux que la loi dans la loi.”<sup>350</sup> Furthermore, this ‘older than’ the principle of pleasure—principle here designating both a commandment and a commencement<sup>351</sup>—becomes traceable only in the erasure of its own trace, thereby indicating that the *archē* is only constituted in the forgetting of its own archival history and vice versa.<sup>352</sup> Staying with Freud, however, suffice it to say here that the repetitions of traumas in dreams—whether these traumas are from war, accidents, or infantile experiences—exceeds the demands of the pleasure principle in that it pertains rather to the compulsion to repeat (*sie gehorchen vielmehr dem Wiederholungszwang*).<sup>353</sup>

As we are now approaching the end of Chapter Four in the *Jenseits*, I believe it is time to pause for a moment in the attempt to catch up with ourselves. Retracing our steps, we have come across three places in Freud where the hypothesis of a beyond of the pleasure principle is explicitly put forward.

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<sup>349</sup> GW XIII, 36. On the relation between the function of binding and the tendency of pleasure see Deleuze 1968, 128ff.; 96ff. See also Derrida’s text on the “Parergon” where, in commenting on the peculiar pleasure of reading Kant’s third *Critique*, he writes of a “plaisir un peu strict mais on y apprend encore une fois qu’il n’est pas de plaisir sans stricture” (VEP 51/43).

<sup>350</sup> CP, 371/350.

<sup>351</sup> Like the Greek *ἀρχή*, the Latin *principium* can designate not only a beginning, a commencement, or an origin, but also a mastery, a commandment, or a dominion. Thus, a principle may be conceived as a first place of power or sovereignty. Cf. LSJ.

<sup>352</sup> Derrida therefore discerns a *Mal d’archive* encrypted in the name of the death drive since, as he writes, “[l]a pulsion de mort n’est pas un principe. Elle menace même toute principauté, toute primauté archontique, toute désir d’archive” (MA, 27/12). In other words, Freud may deem the repetition compulsion, also known as the death-drive, more originary than the pleasure principle, not in the sense that it would constitute a more original principle, but only in the sense that it undoes the very constitution of a principle in advance. This threat of principality of the death drive is perhaps one reason why, as Fletcher notes, there is a “conceptual instability that haunts the pleasure principle” (Fletcher 2013, 293).

<sup>353</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 33.

The first instance occurred in the second chapter, where Freud in his analysis of the child's game called *fort:da* made reference to a certain 'drive for mastery' (*Bemächtigungstrieb*), which may or may not operate independently from the concern for pleasure. The second took place in the third chapter with Freud's first mention of the 'compulsion to repeat' in the context of which the repetitions of traumatization seemingly exceed any possibility or purpose of pleasure. The third and final instance, which will not become entirely explicit until the fifth chapter of the *Jenseits*, concerns the 'binding' (*Bindung*), which is said to be the precondition that facilitates the very tendency of the pleasure principle in the first place.

This retracing urges us to question whether these three instances of a possible beyond of the pleasure principle—*Bemächtigungstrieb*, *Wiederholungszwang*, and *Bindung*—stand in some relation to one another. The first thing to be noticed in this regard is that Freud at times appears to employ the notions of 'binding' and 'mastering' more or less synonymously, as for example when he writes that it is a task of the psychic apparatus to 'master or bind excitation' (*die Erregung zu bewältigen oder zu binden*).<sup>354</sup>

At other times, however, it appears as though the very possibility of mastery is conditioned by a successful process of binding, whereas an unsuccessful process of binding (*Mißglücken dieser Bindung*) has the potential of developing into a traumatic neurosis. With these few indications we can begin to discern a relation, since it appears that the binding of excitations, depending on the extent of their success or its failure, precipitates either a repetitive drive for pleasurable mastery or an unpleasant and overpowering compulsion to repeat.

On this view, then, we might pose a series of questions: first, might not the common denominator of the three instances of a hypothetical beyond the pleasure principle be that they all share a certain repetitiveness? When we then distinguish between a drive for mastery, a compulsion to repeat, and a function of binding are we not in effect distinguishing between different modes, tempi, or rhythms of repetition? Some of these modes of repetition would strengthen the economy of pleasure and some would exceed or even overrule it, but all of them would repeat themselves independently of, but not necessarily in contradiction to, the pleasure principle. In other words, can that which is said to be 'beyond' and more originary than the pleasure principle in fact be designated by the notion of repetition? Not an unequivocal notion of repetition, however, insofar as it would not lead us back to an 'original' or 'prototypical' repetition but rather towards an originary 'difference without concept' which would expose us to the

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<sup>354</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 36.

vertiginously proliferating movement of “formant une ‘autre’ répétition au coeur de la première.”<sup>355</sup> Finally, what implications would the designation of such an originary, yet anarchic, repetition entail for the constitution of a principle and for the institution of an archeology?

We will come back to these questions shortly, but first we will proceed with our reading of Chapters Five and Six of the *Jenseits*, in which Freud comes to consider the relation between the driven and the repetitive more explicitly and more vigorously when posing the question: “Auf welche Art hängt aber das Triebhafte mit dem Zwang zur Wiederholung zusammen?”<sup>356</sup> In trying to respond to this question, Freud makes recourse to his dualistic theory of drives, which, as mentioned in the above, undergoes some revision in the *Jenseits*, and to which we will therefore turn our attention in what follows.

### III.5 A DUALITY OF DRIVES

Before embarking on a further exploration of Freud’s revision of his theory of drives in the *Jenseits*, let us first attempt a preliminary definition. Contrary to what one might usually associate with a drive (efficiency, progress, evolution, resourcefulness), and based on fairly elaborate cytological speculations, which we shall not go into detail about here, Freud ends up defining a drive as “dem belebten Organischen innewohnender Drang zur Wiederherstellung eines früheren Zustandes.”<sup>357</sup>

Initially, then, all drives are conservatively inclined towards the restoration of an earlier state in order to maintain the highest degree of homeostasis in a living organism. In this regard, all organic development is to be considered merely a reaction to the unavoidable disturbance of external stimuli, diverting the drives from their original trajectory. If such disturbing influences had not continually interrupted the life of an organism and thereby forced it to react, the organism would never have undergone any transformation or development in the first place. Instead, the organism would have preserved its homeostasis by repeating the same course of life over and over again following only an ancient goal (*altes Ziel*) of organic life, namely, the aim of returning to the inorganic. It is against this speculative background

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<sup>355</sup> Deleuze 1968, 38/25.

<sup>356</sup> GW XIII, 38.

<sup>357</sup> GW XIII, 38. See also “‘Psychoanalyse’ und ‘Libidotheorie’” from 1923, where Freud repeats this view of the conservatism of drives: “für die Triebe die Charakteristik geben, sie seien der lebenden Substanz innewohnende Tendenzen zur Wiederherstellung eines früheren Zustandes, also historisch bedingt, konservativer Natur, und gleichsam der Ausdruck einer Trägheit oder Elastizität des Organischen” (GW XIII, 233).

that Freud propounds his notorious conclusion: “*Das Ziel alles Lebens ist der Tod, und zurückgreifend: Das Leblose war früher da als das Lebende.*”<sup>358</sup>

Accordingly, we seem to be provided with a Freudian variation on the story of genesis: in the beginning, or rather before the beginning, there was inanimate, inorganic, and unstimulated matter; then came some sort of disturbance, which divided and diverted this pre-originary matter into the different detours of life pertaining to different animate organisms. Ever since this original disturbance, it has become increasingly difficult for the organisms to die insofar as life throughout its organic history has been forced into taking ever more complicated detours (*Umwegen*) on its way to its deathly end goal (*Todeszieles*);<sup>359</sup> whereas death would have been in closer proximity to itself in the olden days.<sup>360</sup> In other words, it would seem that organic life is nothing but an ‘original trauma,’ which repeatedly forces its traumatized organisms to travel along ever longer and more circuitous paths until finally they can regain their rest.<sup>361</sup>

To begin with, Freud acknowledges that there are also drives—such as the drives for self-preservation, empowerment, and validation

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<sup>358</sup> GW XIII, 40. To his regret, Freud admits that he has unwittingly led himself into what looks like a Schopenhauerian philosophy of life according to which death would be the sole principal and purpose of life (cf. GW XIII, 53). Yet, one could broaden the scope of this admittance and say that Freud inscribes himself into an ancient Western tradition in which death is considered to be the most essential object of thought. Ever since Socrates defined the true philosophers as those who ‘practice and prepare themselves for dying’ (Phae. 67e), the threads of mortality and humanity have been so intimately interwoven that an *ars moriendi* appears to be the prerequisite of any *ars vivendi*. Accordingly, it would seem that death is not only the end-goal but also the proper beginning of philosophical thought. Hegel appears to be suggesting something similar when, in the second part of his *Enzyklopädie* (1830), he recounts the life of spirit as arising from the death cry of nature: “Über diesem Tode der Natur, aus dieser todten Hülle geht eine schönere Natur, geht der Geist hervor” (HW 9, §376, 537). Novalis thus hits the mark when in his *Philosophische Studien* from 1797 he declares that: “Der echte philosophische Akt ist Selbsttötung; dies ist der reale Anfang aller Philosophie” (Novalis 1946b, 337).

<sup>359</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 40–41.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 40. In this regard, we might also recall Nietzsche’s warning in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*: “Hüten wir uns, zu sagen, dass Tod dem Leben entgegengesetzt sei. Das Lebende ist nur eine Art des Todten, und eine sehr seltene Art” (KSA 3, 468).

<sup>361</sup> Influenced by the ‘Hamletlehre,’ Lacan resumes this Freudian genesis as follows: “La vie ne songe qu’à se reposer le plus possible en attendant la mort. C’est ce qui mange le temps du nourrisson au début de son existence, par secteurs horaires qui ne lui laissent ouvrir qu’un petit oeil de temps en temps [...]. La vie ne songe qu’à mourir—*Mourir, dormir, rêver peut-être*—comme a dit un certain monsieur, au moment précisément où il s’agissait de ça—to be or not to be” (Sem II, 272/233).

(*Selbsterhaltungs-, Macht- und Geltungstriebe*)—that seemingly contradict this verdict of an overall conservatism of the drives striving towards the restoration of a previous inorganic state in the guise of death. Yet, upon closer inspection, Freud comes to the conclusion that such contradiction is deceptive insofar as the actual aim of these supposedly progressive drives consists in warding off any improper, premature, and merely external causes of death with the purpose of leading each and every life along the *proper* path to a death of its own (*den eigenen Todesweg*).<sup>362</sup>

Therefore, Freud's final judgment is that these apparent guardians of life turn out to have been the original satellites of death (*diese Lebenswächter sind ursprünglich Trabanten des Todes gewesen*) orbiting around the organisms only in order to divert them from improper, inauthentic, and artificial ways of dying; that is to say, ways of dying that Freud calls short-circuits, or literally short-cuts (*Kurzschluß*), because they avoid the detours of life, which have become necessary in order for the organisms to reach their proper and, if not imminent, then at least immanent deaths.

It appears, then, that organic life is caught in a somewhat paradoxical situation, insofar as it must perpetually obstruct itself from reaching its aim of returning to an inorganic state—a return that, after the traumatic accident of life, can only be obtained through death—only in order to get there at what would be its appropriate time of arrival. In other words, in order not to reach its proper destination in an untimely manner—neither too hastily nor too belatedly—the organism must drive itself off the straight and shortest path and instead undertake a journey of ever more prolonged detours. As Derrida points out, however, the risk inherent to such “*théorie du suicide en différé*”<sup>363</sup> is that the detour unto death might turn out to have been nothing but an impasse or a dead-end ceaselessly missing the proper exit of dying and thus turning the final destiny of life into an infinite *destinerrance*.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> One cannot help but think here of Heidegger's *Sein-zum-tode*, which is indeed an extremely complex thought, to which Heidegger gives the following structural definition: “*Der Tod als Ende des Daseins ist die eigenste, unbezügliche, gewisse und als solche unbestimmte, unüberholbare Möglichkeit des Daseins*” (GA 2, 258–259).

<sup>363</sup> CP, 379/356.

<sup>364</sup> This inherent risk of missing out on one's proper death on the way to dying is concisely rendered by Blanchot in *L'espace littéraire* by his notion of a ‘double death.’ According to this notion, there are, at least, two deaths, “dont l'une circule dans les mots de possibilité, de liberté, qui a comme extrême horizon la liberté de mourir et le pouvoir de se risquer mortellement—et dont l'autre est l'insaisissable, ce que je ne puis saisir, qui n'est liée à *moi* par aucune relation d'aucune sorte, qui ne vient jamais, vers laquelle je ne me dirige pas” (EL, 104/103).

However, Freud implores us to join him in coming to our senses for, as he exclaims, “*dem kann nicht so sein!*”<sup>365</sup> What about the sexual drives, for example—do they also follow the oldest end-goal of life? The aim of these seemingly procreative drives does not appear to be the proper death of each and every organism but, on the contrary, a sort of organic ‘immortality’ obtained through the coalescence (*Verschmelzung*) of individual organisms.

To a certain extent, then, such coalescence allows an organism to survive its own death by exceeding itself in another organism, and thereby it prolongs organic life indefinitely through reproduction. Still, Freud reveals to us that the sexual drives are in fact also conservative or regressive by nature and that their ‘apparent immortality’ (*Schein der Unsterblichkeit*) is only an illusion obtained through the constant restoration of an earlier state of organic life.<sup>366</sup> Hence, even if Freud inaugurates Chapter Six by granting that it is indeed beginning to look as though *all* drives are a striving for death—even those that appear to be the most life-affirming ones—nevertheless it is also in this chapter that Freud articulates his altered duality of drives.

Instead of the previous distinction between ego- and sexual drives, Freud now distinguishes between the so-called death- and life drives, which he also labels with the Greek autonoms of Eros and Thanatos. Initially, Freud tries to carry out a one-to-one translation of what was formerly known as the ego drives (*Ichtrieben*) into the death drives and the sexual drives into the life drives. However, seeing as it was precisely the discovery that some of the (conscious) ego drives could also be libidinal that brought him to revise his theory of drives in the first place, Freud forgoes such straightforward translation and instead tends towards subsuming both the ego- and the sexual drives under the rubric of life drives, since the apparent aim of both is to sustain life—whether the life of the individual, of the species, or organic life in general. As for the elusive death drive—which essentially works inconspicuously in silence<sup>367</sup> but nonetheless betrays itself in the repetition compulsion—it comes to name everything that remains inexplicable through the purposefulness of either self-preservation or of the reproduction of the species, thus lending it a somewhat excessive yet irreducible quality. Yet, as we have already glimpsed, the opposition between Eros and Thanatos is not as simple as it may appear, since, as Hurst notes: “These drives not only oppose each other, but each is internally aporetic.”<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> GW XIII, 41.

<sup>366</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 46.

<sup>367</sup> In “Das Ich und das Es,” Freud remarks “daß die Todestriebe im wesentlichen stumm sind und der Lärm des Lebens meist vom Eros ausgeht” (GW XIII, 275).

<sup>368</sup> Hurst 2008, 48.

This internal aporia pertaining to each of the two drives stems from the fact that Eros seems to be driven both in the direction of narcissistic self-preservation aiming at maintaining the equilibrium of the individual organism and in the direction of procreative proliferation constantly upsetting this individual equilibrium with the purpose of prolonging the species. Whereas Thanatos, as Hurst further points out, seems to involve “both an inertial resistance to a change of state, which serves self-preservation, but also an entropic moment of destructiveness or dissolution, which lies at the basis of aggressivity.”<sup>369</sup> Despite its regressive striving against any progressive transformation, then, Thanatos also appears to have the potential to interrupt or disrupt a continuous evolution, thereby creating the space for possibly discontinuous ‘revolutions’ that may in turn generate even more far-reaching or radical transformation.

This duality of internally aporetic drives inscribes the living organism in a ‘hesitating rhythm’ (*ein Zauderrhythmus*) that constantly interrupts, defers, and diverts itself from achieving its aim. As Freud explains, one group of drives ‘forges ahead’ (*stürmt nach vorwärts*) in order to reach the fatal end-goal of life as quickly as possible, while another group of drives strives to prolong the way of life by repeatedly returning the organism to an earlier stage wherefrom it must reenact its course all over again, but with the aim of making this life reach a proper death of its own.

Freud then interrupts himself in order to once again consider the possibility of whether there might be drives that are not conservatively inclined but rather strive for a new condition that might be better than the previous one, that is to say, drives that are inclined towards the unprecedented. Yet Freud’s response to such hopeful consideration is discouraging: “Ein allgemeiner Trieb zur Höherentwicklung in der Tier- und Pflanzenwelt läßt sich gewiß nicht feststellen.”<sup>370</sup> And we recall that this world of flora and fauna does not exclude the human being who, as we saw above, has been divested of its exceptional birthright. Therefore, Freud finds it advisable to relinquish any belief that a drive towards perfection (*Trieb zur Vervollkommnung*) might be at work in the human being, even if this belief may serve as a benevolent illusion (*wohlthuende Illusion*).<sup>371</sup>

In this regard, Freud even goes so far as to raise doubts about his own argument concerning a naturally authentic death immanent to the living organism, suggesting instead that such a conception of death is a late cultural acquisition that may be nothing but a benevolent illusion helping us to carry

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<sup>369</sup> Hurst 2008, 49.

<sup>370</sup> GW XIII, 43.

<sup>371</sup> GW XIII, 44.



the gravity of contingent existence less heavily (*um die Schwere des Daseins zu ertragen*)<sup>372</sup>—the gravity, that is, of a life that we have now come to know as nothing but an accident of death, which, in turn, no longer adheres to the inherent lawfulness of necessity (*Ἀνάγκη*) but has been delivered over to the necessity of contingency, divesting it of its possibilities of self-authentication or self-appropriation.<sup>373</sup>

In these pages of the *Jenseits*, an instance of what Žižek has termed the “anti-Darwinian lesson of psychoanalysis” comes to the fore, which displays “man’s radical and fundamental *dis*-adaption, *mal*-adaption, to his environs.”<sup>374</sup> Žižek continues by saying that this anti-Darwinian tendency is fundamentally human because, “[a]t its most radical, ‘being-human’ consists in an ‘uncoupling’ from immersion in one’s environs, in following a certain automatism which ignores the demands of adaptation—this is what the ‘death drive’ ultimately amounts to.”<sup>375</sup> Nevertheless, as Žižek further emphasizes, this automatism of the death drive following its own agenda irrespective of biological or rational predispositions of purposefulness is also what affords human existence (but only human existence?) with a certain irruptive space of autonomy. Žižek explains: “The ‘death drive’ means that the organism is no longer fully determined by its environs, that is ‘explodes/implodes’ into a cycle of autonomous behavior.”<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> As Freud writes: “Ursprünglich ist er sicherlich nicht, den primitiven Völkern ist die Idee eines ‘natürlichen Todes’ fremd; sie führen jedes Sterben unter ihnen auf den Einfluß eines Feindes oder eines bösen Geistes zurück” (GW XIII, 47). Nietzsche would probably agree that such benevolent beliefs are ‘beautiful illusions’ (*schönen Scheines/herrliche Illusion*) but would probably not, like Freud, advise us to get rid of them insofar as they are the very artifacts that keep us “an der Wahrheit zu Grunde gehn” (KSA 13, 500).

<sup>373</sup> To a certain extent, this growing doubt concerning a death proper to the living organism approximates the fundamental disbelief of the unconscious in its own death, which Freud refers to in several other places. One such place is in *Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod* from 1915, where Freud writes that “unser Unbewußtes glaubt nicht an den eigenen Tod, es gebärdet sich wie unsterblich” (GW X, 350). However, even if the unconscious does not believe in its own death, it certainly believes in the death of the other, and, as Freud further writes: “unser Unbewußtes mordet selbst für Kleinigkeiten” (GW X, 351).

<sup>374</sup> Žižek 2006, 231.

<sup>375</sup> Žižek 2006, 231. Lacan takes up this anti-evolutionary tendency in Freud in his second seminar, remarking that “la notion de la tendance à la répétition en tant que *drive* est très explicitement opposée à l’idée qu’il y ait quoi que ce soit dans la vie qui tende au progrès, contrairement à la perspective de l’optimisme traditionnel, de l’évolutionnisme, ce qui laisse la problématique de l’adaption—et j’irai même jusqu’à dire celle de la réalité—entièrement ouverte” (Sem II, 35/24).

<sup>376</sup> Žižek 2006, 231.

In other words, in all of its deferring detours, displacing diversions, and disruptions of organic life, the death drive—or perhaps rather the originary conflict of the drives<sup>377</sup>—is in fact that which opens up existence to its abyssal freedom in that it creates a possible space for the irruption of the unforeseeable, for the surprising, for the other. One might call this a psychoanalytic notion of freedom, which distinguishes itself from any sort of decisionism or voluntarism, just as its notion of autonomy is irreducible to the conceptions of willful intentions or deliberate choices. Rather, psychoanalytic autonomy and freedom designate holes or gaps in the texture of being, which disrupts its supposed continuity and causality and prevents us from ever achieving complete certainty regarding our own wants, will, or wishes or total transparency regarding the inclinations, intentions, or motivations for that which we presumably want, will, or wish for. In this respect, one could almost be tempted to read the death drive as another name for a certain epigenetics of genetics designating an opening to ruptures and alterations inherent to the genetic code or, as Lacan formulates it: “Il y a déjà chez lui [i.e. l’homme] une fêlure, une perturbation profonde de la régulation vitale.”<sup>378</sup>

Accordingly, psychoanalysis insists that there is something other to human existence that remains irreducible to the *conatus*<sup>379</sup>—understood both as a disposition for self-preservation and a teleological inclination towards reproduction—not least because such explanatory reduction is insufficient when it comes to understanding many of the symptoms with which psychoanalysis is confronted in clinical experience. The psychoanalytic subject is not restlessly reducible to her instincts, needs, or desires, and psychoanalysis is therefore obligated to look elsewhere in the attempt to understand, or at least to take its subject matter into account. Hence, it just so happens that the death drive, as well as the *It*, can be read as an indication of such irreducible remainders of the existence of the psychoanalytic subject.

In Žižek’s view, the paradox of the Freudian death drive is therefore “that it is Freud’s name for its very opposite, for the way immortality appears

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<sup>377</sup> In a footnote of the *Jenseits*, Freud, in what almost sounds like an echo of the Heraclitian *polemos*, bespeaks such originary conflict as the “von Uranfang an miteinander ringenden Triebe” (GW XIII, 66). I am here referring to fragment 53 by Heraclitus, which begins by stating that “Strife is the father of all [*Πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι*].” For a reading of Heraclitus’ fragment, see Heidegger’s lectures on *Hölderlin’s Hymnen* (GA 39, 125ff.)

<sup>378</sup> Sem II, 50/37.

<sup>379</sup> I borrow the concept of *conatus* from Spinoza’s *Ethics*, who gives it an important role in his psychology. As Spinoza explains in proposition 7: “The conatus with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself” (Eth. 283).

within psychoanalysis, for an uncanny excess of life, for an ‘undead’ urge which persists beyond the (biological) cycle of life and death.”<sup>380</sup> This excessive urge can be said to be neither good nor evil *per se*; if anything it would rather designate an abyssal freedom for both good *and* evil, which itself would be beyond good *or* evil as it would be beyond the economy of pleasure and unpleasure.<sup>381</sup> Žižek’s reading of the death drive as an immortal drive naming its own opposite is indebted to Lacan’s invigorating return to Freud and especially to his conceptual distinction between ‘desire’ (*désir*) and ‘drive’ (*pulsion*).<sup>382</sup>

In my view, the Lacanian distinction by no means resolves the conflict of drives in Freud, but it does clarify this aporetic conflict in its irresolution—or in its insolvency, as Derrida puts it. We shall therefore make a small digression here, in order to see whether and how Lacan’s displacement of this conflictual discussion—from a context of life and death drives striving within a dialectical economy of pleasure to one of what we might term aneconomic drives and economic desires—might help us to further unravel this knotted complex of internally aporetic drives which Freud appears to have left to his readers.<sup>383</sup>

### III.6 A LACANIAN DIGRESSION ON DESIRES AND DRIVES

To put it as succinctly as possible, we can say that Lacan’s conceptual distinction between drives and desires concerns at least two interrelated differences: on the one hand, a difference regarding the object relation and,

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<sup>380</sup> Žižek 2006, 62.

<sup>381</sup> Had this thesis been otherwise, it would have been compelling and, I think, proliferent to engage more thoroughly with a reading together/apart of both a Schellingian and a Nietzschean notion of freedom with this indication of a psychoanalytic notion of freedom, that is to say, a freedom that is neither strictly autonomous, in the usual sense of this term, nor strictly heteronomous, but which rather call their very oppositionality into question.

<sup>382</sup> In *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* from 1964 for instance, Lacan asserts that “C’est la libido, en tant que pur instinct de vie c’est-à-dire de vie immortelle, de vie irrépressible, de vie qui n’a besoin, elle, d’aucun organe, de vie simplifiée et indestructible” (Sem XI, 180/198). However, as Lacan further emphasizes, such pure life instinct is a myth akin to the myth of the cosmic ‘body without organs’ of the *Timaeus*. In turn, Lacan invents his own myth more fitting to his psychoanalytic context, which he calls ‘Le mythe de la lamelle,’ and which he offers as a sort of counter-myth to Aristophanes’ myth of the complete human being prior to sexual differentiation. Cf. Sem XI, 197–199/179–181.

<sup>383</sup> According to Laplanche and Pontalis, the concept of the repetition compulsion “reflects all the hesitations, the dead ends and even the contradictions of Freud’s speculative hypotheses. This is one of the reasons why the discussion of the repetition compulsion is so confused” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 78).

on the other hand, a difference of repetition. Whereas desire operates within a dialectical economy that reproduces lack and loss only in order to perpetually return to itself, drives operate in an economical movements of excess and expenditure without return that cannot be reintegrated into the economy of symbolic (un)pleasure but rather throw spanners into its works.

According to Lacan, desire is constituted by a fundamental loss of object emerging as the inaccessible residue of an originary cut (*coupure*) that instigates the subject as always already divided in itself. We shall return to this originary cut in more detail in the next chapter, but for now our focus will be the status of this lost object—which Lacan names *objet a* and which “n’est en fait que la présence d’un creux, d’un vide, occupable, nous dit Freud, par n’importe quel objet”<sup>384</sup>—and its opaque function with respect to both desires and drives.

Desire sustains itself by continually trying to cover over the wound left behind by the originally lost object, which opens the subject to its ‘own’ desire, which, as we have seen, is always the desire *of* the other in the double genitive. As such desire continually ‘transport’ its imaginary objects into the symbolic order by metaphorically substituting one signifier with another in the place of the void left behind by this originary loss, which they will never succeed in filling, and metonymously displacing them in a signifying chain that never reaches closure.<sup>385</sup> In Lacan’s view, then, “un fantasme qui est en réalité le *soutien* du désir, ou un leurre.”<sup>386</sup> Consequently, desire always

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<sup>384</sup> Sem XI, 164/180.

<sup>385</sup> It would be too demanding in terms of space and time to go into detail about Lacan’s psychoanalytic employment of the linguistic terms ‘metaphor’ and ‘metonymy.’ Suffice it to say here that Lacan transposes, while at the same time displacing, Freud’s laws of the primary processes of the unconscious, condensation (*Verdichtung*), and displacement (*Verschiebung*), to the unconscious laws of language fuelled by metaphor and metonymy. Hence, in *L’éthique de la psychanalyse* from 1959–60 Lacan writes: “L’inconscient, nous ne le saisissons en fin de compte que dans son explication, dans ce qui en est articulé de ce qui se passe en paroles. C’est de là que nous avons le droit—et ce, d’autant plus que la suite de la découverte freudienne nous le montre—de nous apercevoir que cet inconscient n’a lui-même pas d’autre structure au dernier terme qu’une structure de langage” (Sem VII, 42/32). See also, “L’instance de la lettre dans l’inconscient” from 1957, where Lacan explains that “le mot à mot de cette connexion que s’appuie la métonymie” whereas “la métaphore se place au point précis où le sens se produit dans le non-sens” (Écrits, 423; 508/421; 506).

<sup>386</sup> Sem XI, 169/186. This symbolic production of meaning to a certain extent resembles Derrida’s notion of the *supplement*, which, as he explains in *De la grammatologie*, has a double signification: On the one hand, the supplement signifies merely an addendum or a *surplus*, which in principle should be dispensable and superfluous to the essence of whatever it serves as a supplement. On the other hand, however, the supplement also functions as a compensation or a replacement that marks a lack or an emptiness in

returns to the same empty place, which it tries to fill in with different surrogate objects that will never appear satisfying because they will never be able to undo the original lack for which they are always too late to compensate. As Lacan puts it, “les objets ne sont jamais *ça*”<sup>387</sup>—and here we should recall here that *ça* is Lacan’s translation of the Freudian *Es*.

Passing over to the drives, then, no object will ever be satisfying for them either. Yet, the peculiar non-satisfaction of the drives does not arise because their object is fundamentally lacking, but rather because the drives actually *attain* their satisfaction in *not attaining* their object.<sup>388</sup> Hence, whereas desire gets fixated on its different imaginary objects, unsatisfyingly substituting for a fundamental lack of object, for the drive it is the objects of fixation that are of significance but rather the fixation itself. Lacan therefore underlines that the aim and the goal of the drive do not coincide since the aim of drives is the unending metonymic displacement of objects *as such* and not its replaceable objects: “*Pour ce qui est de l’objet dans la pulsion, qu’on sache bien qu’il n’a, à proprement parler, aucune importance. Il est totalement indifférent.*”<sup>389</sup>

Whereas desire experiences the metonymy of objects as perpetual failures, failures which nonetheless keep the engine of desire going, the drive can be successful for exactly the same reason that desire fails; the drive is the enjoyment (*jouissance*) of the failure of desire, which is why the Lacanian notion of enjoyment cannot be construed within the economy of the pleasure principle. Rather, *jouissance* exceeds not only the pleasure principle but also the very opposition between pleasure and unpleasure; it is an unpleasurable pleasure, or a pleasure of unpleasure.<sup>390</sup> Lacan’s formula for the joyous

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whatever it serves to supplement, whereby it “intervient ou s’insinue *à-la-place-de*; s’il comble, c’est comme on comble un vide. S’il représente et fait image, c’est par le défaut antérieur d’une présence” (G, 208/145). In this sense, one could say that every imaginary object of desire, supposedly desired in, as, and for itself, also serves as a supplement marking that something is lacking in the symbolic order of desire.

<sup>387</sup> Sem II, 261/223.

<sup>388</sup> In the French text, Lacan writes that “la pulsion, d’atteindre sa satisfaction sans atteindre son but” (Sem XI, 163/179), and then remarks that the French *but* can be translated by both the English terms ‘goal’ and ‘aim’ (cf. Sem XI, 163/179). Lacan’s distinction between the goal and the aim, implied in the ambiguity of the *but* of the drive, to a certain extent reduplicates the Freudian distinction between the object (*Objekt*), which is partial, and the aim (*Ziel*), which is more general. Thus, In *Triebe und Triebchicksale* from 1925, Freud writes that: “Das *Objekt* des Triebes ist dasjenige, an welchem oder durch welches der Trieb sein *Ziel* erreichen kann. Es ist das variabelste am Triebenicht ursprünglich mit ihm verknüpft, sondern ihm nur infolge seiner Eignung zur Ermöglichung der Befriedigung zugeordnet” (GW X, 215).

<sup>389</sup> Sem XI, 153/168.

<sup>390</sup> On this point, see Buckner 2015, 1-16.

movement of the drive therefore becomes ‘*la pulsion en fait le tour,*’ which is tricky to translate since, as Miller explicates in a footnote to the English translation, it plays on the double meaning both of ‘the drive turns around the object’ and ‘the drive tricks the object’<sup>391</sup>—or, adding a third possibility, one might say that ‘the drive turns tricks on the object.’ In other words, for the drive the object-goal is nothing but a stalking-horse facilitating its aim, which is why the real reason for the apparent inhibition of the drives with regard to their aim (*zielgehemmt*) in Freud, according to Lacan, is that its actual aim consists precisely in the continual deferral of its object in order to repeat its perpetual detour around it indefinitely.<sup>392</sup>

What drives the drives is therefore neither the goal of attaining some specific object nor the saturation of some specific need, but rather, as Lagache has suggested, a *need of repetition*.<sup>393</sup> The Lacanian twist on the Freudian insight that the drive remains “ohne Aussicht, den Prozeß abschließen und das Ziel erreichen zu können”<sup>394</sup> therefore appears to be that the unattainability of its goal is the very aim of the drive causing it to repeat itself compulsively.

Hence, we can say that within the order of desire the object is experienced as originally lacking, wherefore satisfaction will never be attained but only

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<sup>391</sup> Cf. Sem XI, 153/168.

<sup>392</sup> Cf. GW X, 215.

<sup>393</sup> In more than one place, Lagache suggests that a distinction between a *repetition of needs* (*répétition des besoins*) and a *need of repetition* (*besoin de répétition*) is implicitly at work in Freud’s writings. See, for instance, Lagache 1982, 266. Even if Lacan takes up Lagache’s ‘*géniale*’ distinction of repetitions (cf. Sem X, 110/93), which to a certain extent echoes his own distinction between desire and drive, he still insists on maintaining a distinction between need (*besoin*), which is related both to what Freud calls need (*Not*) and instinct (*Instinkt*), on the one hand, and drive (*pulsion*), which is related to Freud’s *Trieb* on the other. Most importantly, drive is associated with the death drive, which as we saw above, liberates psychoanalysis from a biologicistic discourse of instinctual needs such as “la finalité de la reproduction” (Sem XI, 138/150), which is exactly why “c’est justement parce qu’aucun objet d’aucun *Not*, *besoin*, ne peut satisfaire la pulsion” (Sem XI, 153/167). Furthermore, for Lacan both desire and drive differ from need because of their structuration by an essential unsatisfaction through objects. A need such as thirst, for example, may be satisfied by a drink of water, whereas both desires and drives remain either perpetually unsatisfied by their object or utterly indifferent to it with respect to its satisfaction. Lacan is therefore critical of the English translation in the *Standard Edition* of *Trieb* as ‘instinct’ and *Triebhafte* as ‘instinctual’ (cf. Sem XI, 49/49). Nevertheless, as we have seen, Lacan at times employs the term ‘instinct’ himself, for instance in his *L’ethique de la psychanalyse*, where both *l’instinct de mort* and *la pulsion de mort* appear in reference to Freud’s *Todestrieb*, but I will not speculate upon Lacan’s criteria for employing one or the other term in different contexts here.

<sup>394</sup> GW XIII, 45.

postponed indefinitely, whereas within the order of the drive the object is nothing but the void around which it can turn and enjoy itself in its perpetual turning tricks.<sup>395</sup> Contrary to desire, then, which is fuel by bereavement and loss, the drives have no concern for death, but rather testify to a certain excessive infinity of the finite, lending it, as Freud has it, a ‘*Schein der Unsterblichkeit*.’ Furthermore, the drives concern themselves neither with origins nor results; their only concern is the constancy or the ‘*konstante Kraft*’ of their repetition,<sup>396</sup> which remains without beginning or end. Or, as Lacan explains it: “L’objet petit *a* n’est pas l’origine de la pulsion orale. Il n’est pas introduit au titre de la primitive nourriture, il est introduit de ce fait qu’aucune nourriture ne satisfera jamais la pulsion orale, si ce n’est à contourner l’objet éternellement manquant.”<sup>397</sup>

Hence, whereas the originally lost object remains both the cause and the support of desire and its insatiable repetitions, the repetitive circuiting of the eternally lacking object remains the very enjoyment of the drives. We shall return to the question of such differential repetition shortly, but in view of the distinction between desires and drives with which we are presently engaged, allow me to end this Lacanian digression with a further digression concerning the critical and often conflictual relationship between followers of Deleuze and Guattari and ‘disciples’ of Lacan.

### III.7 DOES ONE EXCLUDE THE OTHER?

Despite the fact that a prevalent tendency in the scholarly world of reading the Deleuzian-Guattarian experimentations of thinking against, in contrast, or even in opposition to Lacan’s psychoanalytic teachings, one must still wonder about the validity of such tendency even when reading the supposedly most ‘anti-psychoanalytic’ book of them all; *L’anti-Œdipe* from 1972/1973. Referrals to Lacan and Lacanian subject matter in *L’anti-Œdipe* are abundant; however, we perhaps somewhat surprisingly find that the great majority of these referrals are explicitly affirmative towards Lacanian revisions of psychoanalysis. Moreover, when the comments are critical, or indeed repudiating, they appear to be directed at those whom the authors repeatedly refer to as ‘disciples’ of Lacan rather than at Lacan himself.<sup>398</sup> In other words, even if there can be no priest without a band of disciples, and

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<sup>395</sup> Cf. Žižek 1997, 84.

<sup>396</sup> Cf. GW X, 212.

<sup>397</sup> Sem XI, 164/180.

<sup>398</sup> Cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1972/1973, 62/53; 99/83; 110/92.

even if Lacan's texts undoubtedly have a certain clerical style,<sup>399</sup> when reading Deleuze and Guattari it would still appear that it is Lacan's disciples that have made him into a psychoanalytic 'priest of lack' by re-oedipalizing the discourse of his texts, despite the fact that Lacan's graphs rarely have a triangulate structure.<sup>400</sup>

In view of what we have seen so far regarding the conceptual difference between desire and drive, however, it might be that, when read solely from the viewpoint of symbolic desire, Lacan may be regarded as an irredeemable priest who raises lack to the high place of sacrifice.<sup>401</sup> Yet, once one makes an effort to hear what is being said when Lacan speaks about the real of the drives, such a reading begins to appear problematic, and one is urged to ask whether a lack is really all there is to say on the matter of the Lacanian discourse. This question becomes particularly acute when one considers the development of Lacan's teachings from the late 1950s onwards, in the course of which the real of the drives in their repetitive resistance to desire appears to take on an ever more dominating role behind the scenes of the symbolic stage of psychoanalysis. If lack really does constitute the transcendental signifier directing the totality of Lacanian discourse from an irreplaceable position of presence elsewhere,<sup>402</sup> what, then, are we to make of Lacan's

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<sup>399</sup> In "Le facteur de la vérité," Derrida takes aim at this priestly tone of Lacan's discourse by installing a pointedly ironic passage from Baudelaire as his motto for reading Lacan's text on Poe's *The Purloined Letter*, thus insinuating that Lacan presents himself as the truthsayer *par excellence* of the last truth that there is no truth. The passage reads: "Ils le remercient pour les grandes vérités qu'il vient de proclamer,—car ils ont découvert (ô vérificateurs de ce qui ne peut être vérifié!) que tout ce qu'il a énoncé est absolument vrai;—bien que d'abord, avouent ces braves gens, ils aient eu le soupçon que ce pouvait bien être une simple fiction. Poe répond que pour son compte, il n'en a jamais douté" (CP, 441/413).

<sup>400</sup> Deleuze and Guattari explain their understanding of the figure of the priest, of which the psychoanalyst is the most recent appearance: "Chaque fois que le désir est trahi, maudit, arraché à son champ d'immanence, il y a un prêtre là-dessous" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 191/154). In this regard, one could undoubtedly argue that Deleuze and Guattari's approach to Lacan is more critical of Lacan in 1980 than in 1972.

<sup>401</sup> Despite the fact that he recognizes the differing registers of desire and drive, Hägglund, for example, appears to be reading Lacan in this—in my view too one-sided—manner when in *Radical Atheism* he writes that in the Lacanian schema "the lack of fullness is not called into question but is located at the root of both desire and drive" (Hägglund 2008, 193).

<sup>402</sup> On my reading, one of Derrida's most crucial points in "Le Facteur de la vérité" is precisely that Lacan raises the Phallus, which is the lacking object *par excellence*, to a privileged 'transcendental position' from where it makes possible and organizes the entire series of Lacanian terms, of which it itself is a part, while also accounting for them. Derrida's charge is therefore that Lacan hypostasizes lack as the truth of being, and absence as the truth of presence, and, as such, does not challenge the fundamental



statements concerning the ‘lack of lack’ in the real? If lack were really the final word on and in the corpus of Lacan, how then are we to read and try to understand the repeated “*ça ne manque pas*,”<sup>403</sup> which clearly stands in some kind of relation with the ‘ne sont jamais *ça*’ of desire, and which, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter V, gives rise to anxiety in the desiring subject?

Yet, stating that there is no lack in the real does not automatically turn it into a statement of pure presence. Instead, Lacan insists that the real is that which remains irreducible to the oppositional play of presence and absence according to which a presence can only arise as a supplement to an original lack. These games of *fort:da* are precisely what constitutes the order of the symbolic, which is where desire thrives in a “succession d’absences et de présences, ou plutôt de la présence sur fond d’absence, de l’absence constituée par le fait qu’une présence peut exister.” By contrast, however, Lacan continues, “[i]l n’y a pas d’absence dans le réel. Il n’y a pas d’absence que si vous suggérez qu’il peut y avoir une présence là où il n’y en a pas [...]]. C’est la contradiction originelle du 0 et du 1.”<sup>404</sup>

The question therefore remains whether or not Lacan’s discourse, which is indeed full of gaps, lacks, and holes, might also provide space for an opening toward a thinking of a pure excess and expenditure, which is neither present nor absent but which lacks nothing. A purity of expenditure, which, from the viewpoint of desire sustaining itself by lack and obsessed with its own bereavement, might look like nothing but suicide. From the non-fixed yet blindly fascinated gaze of the drives, however, which has regard for neither death nor lack because it has no regard for identity, the movement of excessive expenditure is nothing but an enjoyment that remains indifferent to its object as well as its subject.

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oppositional schema of metaphysics to which he claims to be in opposition. Cf. CP, 505ff./477ff.

<sup>403</sup> Sem X, 67/54.

<sup>404</sup> Sem II, 359/313. Lacan’s discussion of this originary contradiction between 0 and 1 is strongly influenced by Frege’s number theory as developed in *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* from 1884. Here Frege employs zero to designate the concept, or rather the non- or limit-concept, of that which is not identical with itself (*0 ist die Anzahl, welche dem Begriffe ‘sich selbst ungleich’ zukommt*). Zero designates both the class under which *nothing* falls, that is, no elements, but also the concept under which *nothing* falls, and this non-identical nothing of the zero conditions the emergence of the units in the sequence of natural numbers. Yet, if the zero is the *first* class characterized by no elements, then the *one* actually comes to be *second* in the place of the zero, which therefore makes place for number *two* in the place of the *third*, etc. In other words, the meaningful unities of the natural numbers would not make sense without their implicit referral to the prior withdrawal of the non-identical and meaningless zero that they originally come to replace. Cf. Frege 1884, 86–91.

In the first line of the closing passage of his eleventh seminar, Lacan writes: “Le désir de l’analyse n’est pas un désir pur. C’est un désir d’obtenir la différence absolue.”<sup>405</sup> This statement indicates that the psychoanalyst Lacan—notwithstanding the many differences setting them apart—might after all share at least one impure desire with the schizoanalysts Deleuze and Guattari. Namely, the desire to liberate desire from its fixation on imaginary objects, to free it towards the deterritorializing ‘lines of flight’ perpetually drawn by what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as desiring machines but which in Lacan would be more in line with the drives. In other words, Lacan, in some places at least, appears to share the desire of Deleuze and Guattari to liberate desire to a joy “qui n’implique aucun manque, aucune impossibilité, qui ne se mesure pas davantage au plaisir, puisque c’est cette joie qui distribuera les intensités de plaisir et les empêchera d’être pénétrées d’angoisse, de honte, de culpabilité.”<sup>406</sup>

That Deleuze and Guattari are not blind to such a shared impure desire with Lacan can be seen from a significant footnote in *L’anti-Œdipe* inserted at the end of a critical passage contesting the tendency of psychoanalysis to reduce desire to lack. In spite of the possible confusion that might arise from the fact that Deleuze and Guattari maintain the notion of desire or desiring-machine where Lacan would have probably employed the term drive, let us still read the passage in full:

Le désir ne manque de rien, il ne manque pas de son objet. C’est plutôt le sujet qui manque au désir, ou le désir qui manque de sujet fixe; il n’y a de sujet fixe que par la répression. Le désir et son objet ne font qu’un, c’est la machine, en tant que machine de machine. Le désir est machine, l’objet du désir est encore machine connectée, si bien que le produit est prélevé sur du produire, et que quelque chose se détache du produire au produit, qui va donner un reste au sujet nomade et vagabond.<sup>407</sup>

Following this corrective of what they take to be a prevalent tendency in psychoanalysis towards fixation on an object in avoidance of a fundamental lack, which has the consequence of reducing and restricting desire, Deleuze and Guattari insert a footnote indicating that Lacanian psychoanalysis might not succumb to such fixation—or at least not unequivocally so. Rather it

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<sup>405</sup> Sem XI, 248/276.

<sup>406</sup> Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 192/155. As Deleuze and Guattari are keenly aware, this freeing of desire is never guaranteed a ‘happy ending.’ There is both creativity and destruction in freeing, and each line of flight implies possibilities of both joyous surprises as well as terrible risks, which can turn “qui fait de la ligne de fuite une ligne de mort.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 280/229)

<sup>407</sup> Deleuze and Guattari 1972/1973, 34/26.

would seem that the authors see Lacan as a possible proponent of the free distribution of desiring machines when they note that:

L'admirable théorie du désir chez Lacan nous semble avoir deux pôles: l'un par rapport à 'l'objet petit-a' comme machine désirante, qui définit le désir par une production réelle, dépassant toute idée de besoin et aussi de fantasme; l'autre par rapport au 'grand Autre' comme signifiant, qui réintroduit une certaine idée de manque.<sup>408</sup>

To this remark by Deleuze and Guattari that Lacan's text appears to oscillate between these two poles, which aligns well with the analysis proposed here, we would only add that this oscillation could be read as corresponding to another oscillation in Lacan's text, which we have outlined above, that is, the oscillation between desire and drives.

Viewed from the perspective of the *Zauderrhythmus* of the Freudian antagonism between life- and death drives, we might now say that for Lacan every drive is a death drive insofar as it designates the excessive expenditure of desire from which the subject of desire does not return to itself. Hence, whereas the satisfaction of desire would also mean its death, such satisfied death would leave the drive unsatisfied insofar as its enjoyment is the infinite repetition of difference. Paradoxically, then, one could say that desire faces its mortality in the immortality of the drive's surviving all the many 'little deaths' of desire. Lacan explains: "Si la pulsion peut être satisfaite sans avoir atteint ce qui, au regard d'une totalisation biologique de la fonction, serait la satisfaction à sa fin de reproduction, c'est qu'elle est pulsion partielle, et que son but n'est point autre chose que ce retour en circuit."<sup>409</sup>

### III.8 A Trembling of the Duality of Drives

Returning to Freud after these Lacanian digressions, we begin to discern a certain ambiguity of automatism and autonomy pertaining to the notion of drive. On the one hand, we have seen that this ambiguity appears to threaten the autonomy of the *I* with collapsing into the automatism of the *It*. On the other hand, however, it was also indicated that the automatism might rather be on the side of the desiring *I* in its fixation on objects and obedience to the commandments of the pleasure principle, whereas the disruptive death drive seems to take on an autonomous force. We must therefore inquire further into the relation between the autonomous and the automatic not least in respect to the *autos* figuring in both.

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<sup>408</sup>Deleuze and Guattari 1972/1973, 34/27.

<sup>409</sup>Sem XI, 163/179.

In retrospect, then, the very first paragraph of the *Jenseits*, which unhesitatingly asserts the *automatic* regulation of all psychic processes by the pleasure principle,<sup>410</sup> lets us suspect that Freud himself might already have suspected a more intimate—but for that reason also more estranged—relation between the life drives and the death drives. On this view, it could therefore appear as though Freud was weaving together the life and the death drives from the very outset into an interlacing resembling the one Derrida in his reading of Freud and elsewhere calls “*la vie la mort*.”<sup>411</sup> Nevertheless, Freud is determined to distinguish himself from Jung and other psychoanalyst working in accordance with a monistic conception of the psyche determined solely by libidinal or sexual drives by repeatedly emphasizing that his understanding of the psychic economy has been dualistic from the very beginning. Furthermore, the introduction of the life and death drives has only fortified this dualism, which is now “*schärfer denn zuvor*.”<sup>412</sup>

Yet, one cannot help but wonder why Freud finds this emphatic insistence upon the rigid duality of drives necessary at a point where it seems to have become exceedingly difficult to disentangle Eros from Thanatos. Could it be that Freud’s writing is driven by the wishful dream that one of these dualistic drives is derivable from the other, or, perhaps even more wishful, the dream of an original duality pertaining to one and the same principle in their very opposition?<sup>413</sup> Moreover, could this wishful dream perhaps be nurtured by the scientific desire of Freud the analyst, who wants to take everything apart in order to be able to identify its most simple components since, as Derrida

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<sup>410</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 3.

<sup>411</sup> Cf. CP, 278/259; 280/262; 291/273.

<sup>412</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 57.

<sup>413</sup> We might note here that, in order to save Eros from total overshadowing by Thanatos, thereby also saving his duality of drives, Freud seeks refuge in a myth which, despite its phantastic and unscientific nature, may help him in his effort to solve his “*Gleichung mit zwei Unbekannten*” (GW XIII, 62). The myth recounted by the poet–philosopher Aristophanes in Plato’s *Symposium* traces the drive of Eros back, not to an inorganic death-like state, but to a far more romantic unity before humankind were split in two, which it ceaselessly tries to restore. As it turns out, however, even in this original unity “*Alles an diesen Menschen war aber doppelt*” (GW XIII, 62). In view of Aristophanes myth of Eros, Freud therefore asks whether we dare assume that all life is animated only in and by division (GW XIII, 63). Yet, once again Freud recoils from pursuing this venture with no explanation other than: “*Ich glaube, es ist hier die Stelle, abzubrechen*” (GW XIII, 63). We, however, shall return to the question of originary division more than once in the following chapters.

reminds us in *Mal d'archive*, “[t]out serait simple s’il y avait un principe ou deux principes.”<sup>414</sup>

It would certainly appear that such a dream is at play when Freud wishfully exclaims: “Wenn es uns gelänge, diese beiden Polaritäten in Beziehung zu einander zu bringen, die eine auf die andere zurückzuführen!”<sup>415</sup> Because being able to transfer both driving forces back to one original principle would actually mean that *principally* one drive would no longer be different from the other (*prinzipiell nichts anderes*),<sup>416</sup> and Freud could thereby have identified this unified origin with the pleasure principle. Yet, as the *Jenseits* testifies to, such an endeavor proves more difficult than Freud might have hoped, and no matter how far back Freud attempts to trace the purity of the pleasure principle (all the way back to unicellular organisms) as the supposedly primary and original principle (*ἀρχων*), it still seems to have been duplicitous from its very beginnings.

Hence, whereas it was the compulsion to repeat that initially led Freud to the hypothesis of a beyond of the pleasure principle in Chapter Three, and thereafter to the tracing (*Aufspürung*) of a death drive impervious to the interdiction of pleasure in Chapters Five and Six, things begin to change towards the end of Chapter Six. For now, the death drive no longer appears to be simply impervious to the pleasure principle but rather begins to look like its precondition. This chance comes about because, as we saw, the pleasure principle is oriented either towards an increase of pleasure or a decrease of unpleasure, both attained by a lowering of tension in the organism; whereas the death drive is the urging forward towards a proper death with the purpose of restoring an earlier state of the organism. We also saw, however, that the pleasure principle in fact turned out to be a tendency operating in the service of an originary function of binding, the purpose of which is precisely to keep the level of excitation in the psychic apparatus as stable and as a low as possible—or even to entirely extinguish excitation (*überhaupt erregungslos zu machen*).<sup>417</sup>

Furthermore, Freud acknowledges that the binding function served by the pleasure principle testifies to the most general striving of all living beings, namely, to return to the peace and quiet of an immemorial past ‘before’ the noisiness of life which, after its originary accident, can only be restored in death.<sup>418</sup> Therefore, Freud is compelled to question, whether the absolute

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<sup>414</sup> MA, 12/1.

<sup>415</sup> GW XIII, 57–58.

<sup>416</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 59.

<sup>417</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 68.

<sup>418</sup> Hence, Freud writes about “dem allgemeinsten Streben alles Lebenden, zur Ruhe der anorganischen Welt zurückzukehren” (GW XIII, 68).

lack of excitation and thus the ultimate decrease of tension in the living organism is not equal to death. Yet, if such were the case, would that not make death the greatest pleasure of life? It certainly does begin to look as if a pure and unrestricted pleasure may be experienced only when nobody is left to experience it.<sup>419</sup>

In the very last chapter, then, the tables appear to have been overturned and the place of power to have been displaced seeing as, in strict contrast to his initial hypothesis of the authority of the pleasure principle in psychic life, Freud now writes: “Das Lustprinzip scheint geradezu im Dienste der Todestriebe zu stehen.”<sup>420</sup> However, this overturning does not mean that the death drive has simply replaced the pleasure principle since, as indicated above, the death drive is a calling into question of the very place of principality. This means that the pleasure principle, which at the beginning of the text was said to automatically regulate all psychic processes, now appears to be preconditioned by that which exceeds all principles from the very outset, that is to say, by the *anarchic*.<sup>421</sup> Hence, as Derrida suggests, we seem to have ended up “dans un domaine sans domaine où la recherche du propre, loi des lois et loi sans loi, excède toutes les oppositions et par excellence celle de la vie et de la mort.”<sup>422</sup> In other words, one thing is to say that the death drive is that which is beyond the regulation of law, but another thing is to say that the law regulates in service of that which exceeds it.

At this point, it is difficult to avoid a certain sense of vertigo and perhaps a certain desire to set the tables straight as we are approaching the end of the

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<sup>419</sup> Freud himself remarks on the affinity between the achievement of sexual pleasure and the extinction of excitation: “Wir haben alle erfahren, daß die größte uns erreichbare Lust, die des Sexualaktes, mit dem momentanen Erlöschen einer hochgesteigerten Erregung verbunden ist” (GW XIII, 68). Three years later, in “Das Ich und das Es,” Freud renders the affinity between sexual satisfaction and death even more explicitly when he writes: “Daher die Ähnlichkeit des Zustandes nach der vollen Sexualbefriedigung mit dem Sterben, bei niederen Tieren das Zusammenfallen des Todes mit dem Zeugungsakt” (GW XIII, 276). It is probably not haphazardly, then, that Bataille in *Les larmes d’Éros* employs the notion of ‘*la petite mort*’ to emphasize the resemblance of the orgasm of a living organism to its death. Cf. Bataille 1987, 590–598.

<sup>420</sup> GW XIII, 69.

<sup>421</sup> Regarding the ‘anarchic,’ I am more or less following Schürmann’s understanding of this term when, in *Des hégémonies brisées*, he writes: “L’arché n’est pas tout à elle-même. Elle est anarchique, par un acte d’altérité qui la trouble. L’anarchisme phénoménologique résulte toujours d’un différend originaire entre conditions” (Schürmann 1996, 210/164).

<sup>422</sup> CP, 419/393. In *L’éthique de la psychanalyse*, Lacan points to a similar anarchy of the death drive when he poses the question: “Qu’est que l’instinct de mort? Qu’est-ce que cette sorte de loi au-delà de toute loi, qui ne peut se poser que comme d’une structure dernière, d’un point de fuite de toute réalité possible à atteindre?” (Sem VII, 29/21)

text. Unfortunately, however, Freud provides us no such relief, and the end of the *Jenseits* will not bring closure to itself—as Freud himself remarks, it will bring only an “im Grunde nicht einfachen Ergebnis.”<sup>423</sup> Finally, then, this not uncomplicated outcome will leave the problem of determining the relation between the pleasure principle and the repetition compulsion unresolved (*noch ungelöst*).<sup>424</sup>

### III.9 A (COUNTER-)RHYTHMICAL *NACHSPIEL*

Four years after the publication of the *Jenseits*, in “Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus,” Freud once again returns to the unresolved economic problem of pleasure and unpleasure in relation to the erotic and thanatic drives. In 1924, Freud discerns that the economic problem cannot be resolved with reference to mere quantity, that is, by referring pleasure and unpleasure respectively to a decrease and an increase of tension, insofar as both pleasurable excitations of tension and unpleasurable relaxations of tension occur in the psychic apparatus. Accordingly, the key to understanding the economic relation between pleasure and unpleasure in relation to the life and death drives must be sought elsewhere than in their quantitative features, wherefore Freud reasons that there must also be some qualitative distinction involved in these movements of decrease and increase that decide whether the tensions are experienced as pleasurable or unpleasurable.

Even though Freud still claims that his view on the psychic drives is fundamentally dualistic, this dualism has now become even more indistinguishable than it already was in 1920 and the drives only seem to come about in a more or less confused mixture (*Triebvermischung*). Since the solution to the problematic economy of drives can no longer be found through mere quantitative measurements of their level of tension, Freud goes on to ponder whether the missing distinction might have something to do with their temporality: “Vielleicht ist es der Rhythmus, der zeitliche Ablauf in den Veränderungen, Steigerungen und Senkungen der Reizquantität wir wissen es nicht.”<sup>425</sup>

This reference to rhythm refers us back to the *Zauderrhythmus* of the *Jenseits*, and to what Derrida with great clarity demonstrates in his reading of this text. That is, it brings us back to how repetition operates in the *Jenseits*, not only as an explicit topic of various forms—playful, traumatic,

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<sup>423</sup> GW XIII, 68.

<sup>424</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 67.

<sup>425</sup> GW XIII, 372.

compulsive, dreamy, daemonic, fated, empowering repetitions—but also, almost as if behind its back, as the very movement of the text. In this way, it is repetition that infinitely complicates and upsets not only the opposition between ‘content’ and ‘form’ but also the movement between the beginning of a pleasure principle (*archē*) and the end of a death drive (*télos*) thereby deferring the closure of the text indefinitely. Derrida clarifies:

La valeur de répétition ‘en abyme’ de l’écriture de Freud a un rapport de *mimesis* structurelle avec le rapport entre le PP [the pleasure principle] et ‘sa’ pulsion de mort. Celle-ci, une fois de plus, ne s’oppose pas à celui-là mais le creuse d’écriture testamentaire ‘en abyme,’ originairement, à l’origine de l’origine.<sup>426</sup>

To a certain extent, the repetitive moving back and forth of the *Jenseits* therefore demonstrates its hypotheses, and the impossibility of their postulation as theses, before (dis)posing them, advancing only in a stammering manner and repeatedly interrupting itself, sometimes to the point of paralysis, starting off again, staggering along somewhat uncannily, but also comically, like a ‘limping devil.’<sup>427</sup>

Approaching the end of this chapter, we can say that Freud ends his prosecutorial investigations into the authority of the pleasure principle by concluding that nothing can be concluded with certainty as to a possible ‘beyond,’ but that the pleasure principle certainly *seems* (*scheint*) to serve such a ‘beyond’ in the guise of the death drive. What Derrida then comes to show in “Spéculer—sur ‘Freud’” is how the authority of the pleasure principle is dependent upon the repetition of itself as authoritative and hence upon how the repetitive structure serves as a condition of its identification. In such service, then, the compulsion to repeat becomes more ‘originary’ than any principal origin, which, in turn, becomes the result of an originary repetition—or, as Derrida would have it; the principle becomes “*l’a priori* d’un après-coup.”<sup>428</sup> Perhaps, then, the difficulties of finally resolving the relation between the repetition compulsion and the pleasure principle have to do with the fact that it cannot be resolved by an original duality of drives (psychic Manichaeism) nor by a single principle of origins (psychic monotheism). Rather, Freud appears to repeatedly get caught up in an originary rhythm of drives differing in themselves, and this leads him into

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<sup>426</sup> CP, 325/304.

<sup>427</sup> Cf. CP, 287/269. Freud’s last words in the *Jenseits* take the form of a quote from the poet Rückert who tells us that according to scripture “es ist keine Sünde zu hinken” (GW XIII, 69). In turn, Derrida sketches a link from this apology for limping both to the club-footed Oedipus and to the limping devil who can grant pleasure at the incurring of a debt.

<sup>428</sup> CP, 342/321.



those hesitatingly cadenced movements of the *Jenseits* allowing no closure to the text since, as Derrida reminds us in “Désistance”: “Il n’y a pas de rythme sans césure.”<sup>429</sup>

One could ask then, if the death drive in Freud is a designation of that which remains counter-rhythmic to the rhythm of ‘life’ as automatically regulated by the pleasure principle—without which, however, there would be no life in the first place. Because to state that repetition or rhythm is ‘originary’ is in a certain way to undermine the very statement in its pronunciation, inasmuch as what this statement performs, all the while stating something as originary, is an auto-deconstruction of the very logic of the original. In Derrida’s words, stating that rhythm is originary is also a way “de marquer qu’il n’y a pas de commencement simple”<sup>430</sup> insofar as it remarks that the ‘origin’ is always already doubled, always already the product of a repetition that turns the origin into the aftereffect of what originates from it.<sup>431</sup> Yet, this rhythmic movement of remarking is not equivalent to a simple refutation of originality; rather, as Derrida writes in “Violence et Métaphysique,” it traces the sense of an origin “qui n’a aucun sens avant le de, qui ne peut être séparée de la génitivité et de l’espace qu’elle engendre et oriente: *origine inscrite*.”<sup>432</sup>

As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy have rendered it in their reading of Lacan, this aporetic logic, or this aporetology, of an inscribed origin only traceable by and in its after-effects, necessarily entails that repetition “se produit dès le début ou même, si l’on peut le concevoir, avant que le texte ne commence,—comme sa prescription la plus rigoureuse.”<sup>433</sup> Such prescriptive repetition rendering the origin as always already inscribed, is what Derrida designates with the quasi-transcendental notion of *archi-writing* already at work at the very origin of sense, which entails that the

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<sup>429</sup> PSY, 637/(II) 229–230. According to Hölderlin’s *Anmerkungen zum Ödipus*, a caesura allows no closure since it is the empty (*leer*) interval of the ‘counter-rhythmic interruption’ (*gegenrhythmische Unterbrechung*) of rhythmical, successively alternating, or chronological time entailing a discordant spacing of time whereby before and after, beginning and end have been displaced and thus deferred. Cf. HSW 10, 155ff. See also Lacoue-Labarthes’ essay “La césure du spéculatif” (Lacoue-Labarthe 1986, 39–69/208–235).

<sup>430</sup> PSY, 626/(II) 222.

<sup>431</sup> In *L’écriture du désastre*, Blanchot therefore writes that the origin is always already marked by its own inoriginality: “Il n’y a pas d’origine, si origine suppose une présence originelle. Toujours passé, d’ores et déjà passé, quelque chose qui s’est passé sans être présent, voilà l’immémorial que nous donne l’oubli, disant: tout commencement est recommencement” (EdD, 180/117).

<sup>432</sup> ED, 169/115.

<sup>433</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1973, 96/94.

origin can only present itself *as* originary by relating to whatever it supposedly originates. As such, the very presentation of something as originary already marks a synthesis of traces and, as Derrida writes in “Différance,” it is therefore “irréductiblement non-simple, donc, *stricto sensu*, non-originaire.”<sup>434</sup> This is also why, as Derrida’s notorious dictum has it, “*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*”<sup>435</sup> since, as always already prescribed by repetition and inscribed as a trace of something other than itself, the origin no longer functions as a transcendental signifier orienting the meaning of the text from the outside. Instead, it has become a written origin, “tracée et dès lors *inscrite dans un système, dans une figure qu’elle ne commande plus.*”<sup>436</sup>

Returning to the *Jenseits*, then, and to the pleasure principle inscribed within this text, we see that Freud struggles to retain a distinction between different kinds of repetition in his questioning of the relationship between the repetitive and the driven. On the one hand, we have the repetitions propelled by the life drives in service of the pleasure principle, and, on the other hand, we have the repetitions compelled by the death drive working beyond and without regard for the pleasure principle. However, as becomes clear during the hesitating rhythm beyond and behind the *Jenseits*, such a distinction between what we could call the erotic and the thanatic kind of repetition becomes ever more intricate, and Freud must concede that the effects of the repetition compulsion are seldom, if ever, encountered in their purity.<sup>437</sup>

Consequently, we seem to become increasingly entangled in what Derrida calls a “*stricture différentielle du la répétition,*”<sup>438</sup> causing the duality of the drives to oscillate indeterminably in a duplicity of repetition.<sup>439</sup> This is why it must be emphasized that the death drive is always the death drive *of* the pleasure principle, transgressing it without going anywhere else, beyond within it, proceeding with all these steps-not-beyond that make up the *Jenseits*. As such, there is not really a pure beyond of the pleasure principle but rather an ‘interior exteriority’ or an ‘extimacy’ of the death drive, which causes the pleasure principle to react to itself as though it were another. Once again, then, we return to the psychoanalytic leitmotif of the “*wo Es war soll Ich werden,*” according to which, Freud tells us, the psyche will always have

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<sup>434</sup> M, 14/13.

<sup>435</sup> G, 227/158.

<sup>436</sup> ED, 169/115.

<sup>437</sup> Already at the end of the third chapter, Freud acknowledges “*daß wir die Wirkungen des Wiederholungszwanges nur in seltenen Fällen rein, ohne Mithilfe anderer Motive, erfassen können*” (GW XIII, 21).

<sup>438</sup> CP, 373/353.

<sup>439</sup> We will return to this ‘duplicity of repetition’ in more detail in the next chapter.

the inclination (*Neigung*) to treat what comes from itself “als ob sie nicht von innen, sondern von außen her einwirkten.”<sup>440</sup>

So the compulsive repetition stemming from the drivenness of the *It* and causing unpleasure for the *I* is treated *as if* it comes from ‘beyond,’ when in fact it comes from the innermost inward (*innersten Innern*), which, as we recall from the above, is nevertheless nothing but an *inneres Ausland*. That is why the text cannot reach a pure ‘beyond,’ because there is no pure ‘within’ to go beyond, just as there is no pure ‘there’ from which to be ‘gone.’ There is only the rhythmical *fort:da* of the *life:death* limping *beyond:within*—compulsively, discontinuously, inconclusively.

Again, we enter the home of the psyche, whose economy seems to have become interminably differentiated and whose regulating master no longer seems identifiable as the pleasure principle, which, as it turns out, was working in the service of a compulsion to repeat all along. As mentioned, the compulsion to repeat not only has something transgressive or excessive about it but also a certain diabolical draw, which Freud indicates with his evocation of Mephisto, thereby also signaling back towards another text from the previous year, that is, towards *Das Unheimliche* from 1919. What is significant not only in the *Jenseits* but also in *Das Unheimliche* is the uncanny link between the compulsion to repeat and those impersonal parts of the unconscious that Freud calls ‘the *It*.’

Hence, we must trace this indication one year backward and attend to Freud’s text on the uncanny, where we will continue to unfold the duplicity of repetition and its haunting effects on the home of the psyche, a home in which, as Derrida writes, “tout change de signe à chaque instant.”<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> GW XIII, 29.

<sup>441</sup> CP, 384/361.



## IV. THE SOLITUDE OF UNHOMELINESS

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain [...]  
I will show you fear in a handful of dust  
– T.S. Eliot, “The Burial of the Dead,” *The Wasteland*

### IV.1 THE DUPLICITY OF REPETITION REVISITED

Before turning to what Cixous in her “Fiction and its Phantoms” aptly calls Freud’s “strange theoretical novel”<sup>442</sup> on *Das Unheimliche*, and following up on our reading of the *Jenseits*, the time has come for a further questioning into the duplicity of repetition. This questioning seems to be a prerequisite, not only because of the significance that the notion of repetition has with respect to the psychoanalytic understanding of the ‘unhomely’ or the ‘uncanny,’ but also because it is Derrida’s suggestion that the only chance we have of reading Freud’s illegible text is if one ‘takes into account’ “cette incalculable double bande de la répétition”<sup>443</sup>—which we shall attempt to do in what follows.

To recapitulate some of the findings from the previous chapter, we seem to have come across at least two series of repetition in Freud’s text. 1) The first series—which became manifest in the analytic working-through of transference, in the binding of unbounded excitations, and in the *Bemächtigung* of children’s play—appears to be masterfully empowering and has to do with the pleasurable appropriation, habituation, identification, and preservation of the psychic apparatus in relation to its surrounding reality. 2) The other series—which became manifest in the compulsive repetition of trauma in dreams, in the non-transferable resistance to analysis, and in neurotic obsessions—appears hauntingly daemonic and has to do with the unpleasurable disempowerment, disappropriation, and estrangement of the very same psychic apparatus in relation to its surrounding reality. The first series of repetitions seems to proceed in the service of the pleasure principle, whereas the latter series seems to work compulsively beyond it, and it is precisely this strange ‘beyond’ which, in Freud’s view, gives it its daemonic allure:

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<sup>442</sup> Cixous 1976, 525.

<sup>443</sup> CP, 374/352.

Die Äußerungen eines Wiederholungszwanges, die wir an den frühen Tätigkeiten des kindlichen Seelenlebens wie an den Erlebnissen der psychoanalytischen Kur beschrieben haben, zeigen im hohen Grade den triebhaften, und wo sie sich im Gegensatz zum Lustprinzip befinden, den dämonischen Charakter.<sup>444</sup>

Nevertheless, we also saw that Freud begins to have doubts as to whether the distinction between a life drive that would repeat itself within the constraints of the pleasure principle and a death drive that would repeat itself beyond these constraints can indeed be sustained. For how does one distinguish between what is repeated *automatically* by the regulation of the pleasure principle and what is repeated *compulsively*, yet with a strange sense of autonomy, by what is beyond such regulation? Put differently, how does one distinguish between a *repetitive need for pleasure* and an *unpleasurable compulsion to repeat*?

The duplicity of repetition in question here is, as Derrida has pointed out, not restricted to the Freudian (con)text.<sup>445</sup> On the contrary, it would appear that two logics of repetition—pertaining to the economic and aneconomic aspects of repetition, respectively—tend to be at work in most of the thinkers who have given persistent thought to the notion of repetition.<sup>446</sup> According to Derrida, the first of these two logics of repetition is the classical one operating with a stable relation between the repeated and the repetition, according to which a repetition always follows what it repeats, which is more original and which the repetition repeats in a fashion that clearly distinguishes it from what is repeated. In contrast and as already indicated in the previous chapter, the second logic designates “une logique autre et non classique de la répétition, celle-ci est ‘originaire.’”<sup>447</sup> In the concise words of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, this is to say that the ‘other’ logic of repetition is one according to which “la répétition n’est pas la reduplication

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<sup>444</sup> GW XIII, 37.

<sup>445</sup> Cf. CP, 374/352.

<sup>446</sup> In Zupančič’s view, it is even so that “[o]ne of the conceptual events that distinguish the contemporary, post-Hegelian philosophy is the emergence of the concept of repetition as an independent and crucial concept” (Zupančič 2007, 27). Besides Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, and later Deleuze, Lacan, and Derrida, Zupančič also places Marx on the list of prominent thinkers to have considered repetition a critical and significant subject for thought. Despite crucial differences in their respective projects, Zupančič argues that one of the key features shared by all these thinkers of repetition is that “repetition is viewed, posited, and elaborated as fundamentally different from the logic of representation” (ibid. 28) and sometimes even, as in Deleuze, in strict opposition to it.

<sup>447</sup> CP, 373/351.

de l'identitique."<sup>448</sup> Let us now attend to these two logics in a little more detail.

In the first logic, the derivative notion of repetition remains confirmative of the narratives of originals and principles, as of archeological beginnings, which always already inscribe teleological endings. In the second logic, by contrast, the notion of 'original repetition' effects an auto-deconstruction of such archeo-teleological narratives reminiscent of the *Abbau* pertaining to the death drive, which, as we saw in the *Jenseits*, leaves the origin of the pleasure principle in abeyance. Yet the *duplicity* of repetition becomes conspicuous only once it is noticed how the two logics of repetition with an incalculable effect "ne s'opposent pas plus qu'elles ne se reproduisent identiquement."<sup>449</sup> This is because the very duplicity of repetition, as the genitive construction suggests, pertains to the notion of repetition itself in such a way that "il n'y a jamais *la* répétition."<sup>450</sup> If only in terms of its temporalization and spacing, every singular repetition produces a minimum of excess that makes it different from what it repeats as well as from any previous or succeeding repetitions and hence irreducible to the mechanism of identification. For this reason, the only thing that strictly speaking repeats itself in repetition is difference, or, as Zupančič puts it with reference to Deleuze, "*what is repeated is the very impossibility of repetition.*"<sup>451</sup>

According to this differential stricture of repetition, it is therefore necessary to think the notion of repetition doubly as both "la forme typique ou récurrente et la singularisation inépuisable,"<sup>452</sup> without, however, thinking along the necessity that these features should be clearly distinguishable or separable from one another—for, indeed, what makes repetition 'essentially' duplicitous is that it "installe la hantise de l'une dans l'autre."<sup>453</sup> As such, the differential stricture of repetition entailing that repetition is never simply itself but always also other than itself, is intimately related to another quasi-concept found in Derrida's writing, namely that of 'iterability,' which indissolubly links repetition to alterity—seeing as "*itara*, dont vient le mot, dit à la fois la répétition du même et l'altération."<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1973, 96/93.

<sup>449</sup> CP, 374/352.

<sup>450</sup> CP, 373/351.

<sup>451</sup> Zupančič 2007, 32. See also, Dolar 2013, 228.

<sup>452</sup> AC, 78/80.

<sup>453</sup> AP, 44/20.

<sup>454</sup> RES, 46/31. In "Signature Evenement Contexte," Derrida explains that the *itara* of iterability means 'other' in Sanskrit and that "tout ce qui suit peut être lu comme l'exploitation de cette logique qui lie la répétition à l'altérité" (M, 375/315).

With the quasi-concept of iterability, Derrida articulates the duplicity of repetition insofar as it exposes how repetition serves both as the condition of possibility and as the condition of impossibility for the constitution of identical unities, conceptual or otherwise. Serving as a condition of possibility, iterability is identificatory inasmuch as it allows something to be constituted *as* something by the possibility of its being repeated in different and potentially unlimited contexts. Serving as a condition of impossibility, however, but for the very same reason, iterability also effects the perpetual alienation of identity insofar as it “*répète le même en le déplaçant ou en l’altérant.*”<sup>455</sup> Hence, seeing that iterability is conditional for something to be constituted as identical to itself in its possibility of being repeated otherwise and elsewhere, this also means that in its very constitution identity is already contaminated by its becoming different to itself.

To be sure, that which is not repeatable *is* not, and that which is repeated was not *there* before its repetition, which means that any singular being or event is “*en elle-même divisée, ou multipliée d’avance par sa structure de répétabilité.*”<sup>456</sup> An absolute unrepeatable ‘only once’ of singularity can never be recognized *as such* since as soon as it is recognized it is already repeatable. The identity, the ‘whatness,’ or the recognizability of anything whatsoever depends on its possibility of archivization, that is, of its becoming inscribed, traceable, memorable, representable, reproducible—in short, it depends on its becoming repeatable even in the absence of itself when it is no longer there ‘in person.’ This means that the very possibility of identity depends on its structural separability from itself, that is, on its possibility of becoming displaced from its ‘own’ presence and disseminated from its ‘original’ context inscribed in its very constitution. Paradoxically, then, the archivization that saves identity for future repetition and thus for the possibility of remembrance also implies an originary forgetting of the very thing it seeks to save, namely, a forgetting of the ‘first impression’ or of the singularity of whatever is being archived.<sup>457</sup> As such, the two series of repetitions mentioned above have become constrained in a double bind, insofar as what makes repetition possible, that is, its difference from what it repeats, is also what makes it impossible as a repetition of the identical.

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<sup>455</sup> BS II, 120/75.

<sup>456</sup> LI, 97/48.

<sup>457</sup> This is precisely the sickness of the archive (*mal d’archive*), which Derrida circumscribes in his reading of ‘the Freudian impression’ and which he associates both with the traumatic structure of experience in general and with the death drive. Derrida explains: “A inscrire ainsi la répétition au cœur de l’à-venir, il faut bien y importer *du même coup* la pulsion de mort, la violence de l’oubli” (MA, 126/79).



Drawing this revisiting to a close, let us resume the duplicity of repetition. On the one hand, repetition is a mechanism of identification and recognition enabling us to make a home in the world insofar as it allows us to form and maintain codes, customs, habits, and patterns that help make ourselves, others, things, and situations familiar and habitual. In this way, repetition endows existence with a certain sense of predictability and stability that makes us feel more or less safe in our homes. On the other hand, however, but for the same reasons, repetition can also come to threaten everything that makes us feel homely by letting us suspect that the predictability and stability of our homes is supported by nothing but these fundamentally ungrounded repetitions, underneath which there is only ever *another* repetition. In other words, repetition may endow our existence with a certain sense of stability and things with a certain sense of identity but, at the same time, it also indicates the unstable foundations of such stability and exposes the (un)conditional iterability at the heart of identity. And, in yet other words, it is precisely because repetition plays such a decisive role in the formation and safeguarding of the homely that it can also betray this role and make the well-known and familiar appear to us in a strangely distorted way; in short, it indicates to us “unter welchen Bedingungen das Vertraute unheimlich, schreckhaft werden kann.”<sup>458</sup>

Accordingly, the duplicity of repetition may conjure up the uncanny insofar it throws a shadow of doubt upon the mechanisms that would allow us to sustain clear distinctions between the original and its reduplications or between the one and its doubles. Instead, the duplicity of repetition lets the original appear as neither more nor less than it has become in its potentially infinite regress of repetitions, and, in the concise word of Derrida:

Une telle apparition dérange sans doute l'ordre apaisant de la représentation. Mais elle ne le fait pas en réduisant les effets de double, elle les multiplie au contraire, et la duplicité sans original en quoi consiste peut-être la diabolité, son inconsistance même.<sup>459</sup>

In what follows, our aim will not therefore be to investigate the uncanny as a determinable concept or phenomenon with a unified meaning because, as Royle emphasizes in his study on *The Uncanny*: “The uncanny is (the) unsettling (of itself).”<sup>460</sup> Instead, we will suggest that the uncanny, in Freud and beyond, may only appear in a sort of unstable interchange between the two faces of duplicitous repetition always already dividing it from within.

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<sup>458</sup> GW XII, 231.

<sup>459</sup> CP, 288/270.

<sup>460</sup> Royle 2003, 5.

Before engaging in a closer reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche*, however, we will begin our venture into the uncanny by inquiring about the title of this text.

#### IV.2 READING THE UNHOMELY

The German *Unheimlich* is a word that in all its semantic ambiguity has fascinated not only Freud but also an entire tradition from Schelling to Heidegger, Lacan, and Derrida. In this section, however, we will look mainly at how Freud reads this word.

In his comment on the Sander's dictionary entry on the word *heimlich*, Freud notes that it appears to be ascribed two meanings that are, if not in opposition, then at least 'alien' (*fremd*) to one another.<sup>461</sup> These are, on the one hand, the meaning of the familiar or the well-known (*Vertrauten*), and of the comfortable (*Behaglichen*), which pertain to the economy of the home or to what is homely, and, on the other hand, the meaning of the concealed, the hidden, or the secretive (*Versteckten; Verborgengehaltenen*), which introduces a strangeness to the otherwise homely. In light of such ambiguity, Freud further notices that the negation of the 'Unheimliche' actually only negates one of these meanings, namely that of the familiar and comfortable, but not, so it would seem, that of the concealed or the secretive. This asymmetrical negatory function brings Freud to draw a connection between the *Unheimliche* and the 'other' meaning of the homely, namely, the 'hidden' (*geheime*) or the 'secret' (*Geheimnis*). Inspired by a passage from Schelling's *Philosophie der Mythologie*, Freud therefore offers the following definition of the uncanny: "Unheimlich sei alles, was ein Geheimnis, im Verborgenen bleiben sollte und hervorgetreten ist."<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Cf. GW XII, 235. As Comay has remarked, one might think that such inherent ambiguity would qualify the *heimlich* for Freud's list of so-called 'primordial words' (*Urworte*). Dating back as far as the Ancient Egyptian language, the primordial words contain two apparently opposite meanings within them without contradiction, which renders them impervious to the law of non-contradiction and this imperviousness makes them relevant for the study of the unconscious. Cf. Comay 2015, 237–266. See also, GW VIII, 213–221.

<sup>462</sup> GW XII, 236. This slightly altered quote from *Philosophie der Mythologie* is given by Schelling in a parenthesis that reads as follows: "Unheimlich nennt man alles, was im Geheimniß, im Verborgenen, in der Latenz bleiben sollte und hervorgetreten ist" (SW XII, 649). A few pages later, Schelling describes how, in the facial features of certain sculptures from the Greek island of Aegina, one can see the ideals (*Vorbilder*) of a more ancient art form, which did not seek to portray the divine openly (*nicht es offen zu zeigen*) but only through distorted and misconstrued human features (*entstellte undverdrehte menschliche Züge*). Thereby, Schelling continues, this ancient art sought to let the over-

Accordingly, the prefix of the *Un-heimliche* is not simply a negation of the *Heimliche* but also strangely redundant, insofar the *Heimliche* already contains within it the *Geheime*, just as the homely economy of the psyche already harbors the *I*-foreign territories of the *It* and other uncanny guests. As such, the word of the *Heim* itself becomes somewhat uncanny insofar as it can revert itself into its opposite and hence transform the homely and the familiar into the unhomely and the unfamiliar. Following the historical linguistic development of the homely as rendered by the Grimm dictionary, Freud therefore concludes that “heimlich ist ein Wort, das seine Bedeutung nach einer Ambivalenz hin entwickelt, bis es endlich mit seinem Gegensatz unheimlich zusammenfällt.”<sup>463</sup>

In view of this ambiguity of the word *Heimlich*, we begin to discern why Heidegger ascribe such significance to its negation. Because if *das Heimliche* can signify both the homely, the habitual, and the familiar, as well as the concealed, the secretive, and the strange, then *das Un-heimliche* may in turn signify both the *unhomely* or *unfamiliar*, but also the *unconcealment* of the concealed or hidden pertaining to the homely. In other words, the ‘unhomely’ indicates a *disclosure* of that which remains closeted or secreted away in the homely, or in more Heideggerian terms, it indicates the unconcealment of concealment (*Unverborgenheit der Verborgenheit*) as such.<sup>464</sup> When Heidegger therefore affirms the Sophoclean designation of the human being as ‘the most unhomely of all beings,’ which is Heidegger’s idiosyncratic but nonetheless excellent translation of Sophocles’ *δεινότερον*,<sup>465</sup> he also emphasizes this being’s privileged relation to the truth of being, understood in the Greek sense precisely as ‘unconcealedness’

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human or non-human of the divine show itself in the human only “durch etwas Fremdes—noch zu verhüllen, mit einer gewissen Unheimlichkeit zu umgeben” (ibid. 658).

<sup>463</sup> GW XII, 237.

<sup>464</sup> Cf. GA 9, 416.

<sup>465</sup> Cf. ANT, 340-341. This designation figures in a choral song from the first stasimon (vv. 332–375) of the tragedy, which reads: “πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει.” Storr translates it as “Many wonders there be, but naught more wondrous than man.” Heidegger, in turn, translates it as: “Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt” (GA 40, 155; GA 53, 73). According to Heidegger, τὸ δεινόν involves a tripartite signification each of which in turn implies a double signification: 1) the terrible (*das Fürchterliche*), signifying both the horrifying or terrifying and the glorious or the venerable (*das Ehrwürdige*); 2) the powerful (*das Gewaltige*), signifying both the violent (*das Gewalttätige*) and the overpowering (*das Überragende/Über-wältigende*); 3) the unusual or extraordinary (*das Un/Außergewöhnliche*), signifying both the monstrous or the tremendous (*das Ungeheure*) and the ‘in-all-skillful’ (*das in allem Geschickte*). To some extent, then, Hölderlin’s translation of τὸ δεινόν with *das Ungeheure* is preserved and reaffirmed in Heidegger’s translation of the same with *das Unheimliche*.

(*Ἀλήθεια*).<sup>466</sup> Hence, in its unhomeliness the human being already responds to the truth of being as the internal counterturning (*inwendigen Gegenwendigkeit*)<sup>467</sup> of itself, that is, as the ‘event’ (*Ereignis*) of being in its originary yet conflictual belonging together of concealing and unconcealing, forgetting and unforgetting, closure and disclosure, absencing and presencing, giving and withdrawing, and so on. As some of Heidegger’s most elaborate inquiries into the essential unhomeliness of human existence are found precisely in his 1930s readings of Sophocles’ tragedy *Antigone* carried out in his *Einführung in die Metaphysik* from 1935, and later in his *Hölderlins Hymne “Der Ister”* from 1942 to which we shall therefore attend briefly in what follows.

According to Heidegger, the unhomeliness of human existence is brought to the fore in *Antigone* with the oxymoronic concatenation *παντοπόρος-ἄπορος*, which Heidegger translates as a being ‘everywhere underway-without way,’ by which the truth of the human being shines forth as a ‘catastrophe’ (*καταστροφή*) in the literal sense of the word, namely, as “eine Umkehrung, die ihn vom eigenen Wesen abkehrt.”<sup>468</sup> Accordingly, human beings only ever become homely through an unhomeliness, which *drives* (*trieb*) them away from their homes and out on perpetual detours or restless straying. Therefore, the unhomeliness of human existence is not to be considered a negative deviation from some original being at home, which would only turn the becoming homely in unhomeliness into a nostalgic odyssey of return. Instead, as McNeill underlines, “this extreme possibility of unhomeliness does *not* simply belong to Dasein’s ownmost being: it is rather the opening up of the very possibility of ownness, of selfhood, of mineness.”<sup>469</sup>

In this light, it is tempting to regard Heidegger’s prescript that the human being must become poetically homely in unhomeliness as a sort of existential variation of the Freudian dictum according to which the *I* should come to be

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<sup>466</sup> *Ἀ-λήθεια* is derived from the Greek verb *λανθάνω*, which can be translated as ‘to escape notice,’ ‘to be unknown, unseen, unnoticed,’ ‘to let a thing escape one,’ ‘to forget’ (cf. LSJ). Accordingly, the alpha-privativum *Ἀ-λήθεια* can designate the becoming noticeable of the unnoticed, the unseen, the forgotten etc.

<sup>467</sup> Cf. GA 53, 96. Regarding the uncanny response of the unhomely being to the truth of being, Heidegger writes: “Das Gegenspiel spielt zwischen dem Unheimischsein im Sinne des ausweglosen Umtriebes im Seienden und dem Unheimischsein als dem Heimischwerden aus Zugehörigkeit zum Sein” (GA 53, 147).

<sup>468</sup> GA 53, 94

<sup>469</sup> McNeill 1999b, 321.

where *It* was.<sup>470</sup> Giving in to this temptation, and taking a step back in chronological time, another Heideggerian variation of Freud's psychoanalytic dictum of human unhomeliness might be extracted from the renowned analysis of the 'call of conscience' (*Ruf des Gewissens*) in §§56–58 of *Sein und Zeit*. Here Heidegger writes:

Unheimlichkeit ist die obzwar alltäglich verdeckte Grundart des In-der-Welt-seins. Das Dasein selbst ruft als Gewissen aus dem Grunde dieses Seins. Das 'es ruft mich' ist eine ausgezeichnete Rede des Daseins. Der durch die Angst gestimmte Ruf ermöglicht dem Dasein allererst den Entwurf seiner selbst auf sein eigenstes Seinkönnen.<sup>471</sup>

Curiously, the most intimate of calls, namely, the call that is supposed to call Dasein to its ownmost self (*auf das eigene Selbst*) comes from an impersonal *it* residing in the most foreign (*unvertraut*) outskirts of the familiar far-off nowhere (*Nirgends*)—"so etwas wie eine *fremde* Stimme."<sup>472</sup> Moreover, not only does the call come from no one (*Niemand*) who is nowhere, it also comes in order to say nothing (*nichts*). Finally, this call from *nowhere* about *nothing* from *no one* calls Dasein to gather itself together *not* in some original authenticity of a home but instead in the originary unhomeliness of existence: "In der Unheimlichkeit steht das Dasein ursprünglich mit sich selbst zusammen."<sup>473</sup> In other words, the human Dasein is only ever 'at home' in its originary not-being-at-home (*Unzuhausesein*), and is only ever 'itself' in the exteriority of its intimacy and in proximity to the remoteness of its being there.

However, in the attempt to avoid 'opportunistic assimilations,'<sup>474</sup> we should of course be attentive towards the differences setting Freud and Heidegger apart both with respect to the impersonal *Es* and to the experiences of unhomeliness. An obvious yet significant difference between the two understandings of unhomeliness—in themselves not unequivocal—is that for Freud the notion of *das Unheimliche* constitutes a psychodynamic and an aesthetic designation of a particular series of experiences bound up with the return of the repressed. Whereas, for Heidegger, the notion of *Unheimlichkeit* is an existential or ontological designation of the human way

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<sup>470</sup> Regarding the poetic becoming homely, Heidegger writes: "Das griechisch erfahrene Wesen des δεινόν steht im dichterischen Blick dieser Dichtung, aber so, daß das Heimischwerden im Unheimischsein gedichtet ist" (GA 53, 147).

<sup>471</sup> GA 2, 277. My italics.

<sup>472</sup> GA 2, 277.

<sup>473</sup> GA 2, 287.

<sup>474</sup> Cf. CP, 380/357.

of being-in-the-world, which is characterized by an originary not-being-at-home and therefore by a perpetual ‘becoming homely in unhomeliness’ (*Heimischwerden im Unheimischsein*).<sup>475</sup>

Despite their differences, however, one thing that Freud and Heidegger do seem to share in their respective takes on the uncanniness of the unhomely is that it is not, as the psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch thought, the indicator of some unknown novelty, which awakens fright and anguish because of the ‘intellectual incertitude’ (*intellektuelle Unsicherheit*) induced by its unprecedented appearance.<sup>476</sup> On the contrary, the uncanny unhomeliness pertains to that which is most ancient, familiar, and intimate to human existence, but which also remains the most concealed, elusive, and secretive to it. The uncanniness of the unhomely is that it remains secretly familiar, or, as Freud formulates it: “das Unheimliche sei jene Art des Schreckhaften, welche auf das Altbekannte, Längstvertraute zurückgeht.”<sup>477</sup>

Hence, seeing how *Heimliche* is a word that exposes how the unfamiliar and estranging is inherent or belongs to the familiar and intimate—in such a way that it calls the supposed opposition between these notions into question—one could suggest that the word *Unheimlich* therefore comes to perform a negation not only of the familiar and intimate, as Freud argues, but also of the unfamiliar and estranging. Furthermore, we might suggest that such a double negation, or de-negation, points toward that which, according to Heidegger, Sophocles already knew. Namely, that what is most intimately close and familiar to the being we call human is also what is most strange and inaccessibly distant to it, wherefore the human being can come to be at home only in the most uncanny of ways.

In line with these suggestions, we begin to see why Dolar has proposed Lacan’s neologism of *extimité*<sup>478</sup> as a translation of Freud’s *Unheimliche* insofar as it undoes any strict opposition between the interior and the exterior. Lacan performs this deconstruction of interiority and exteriority by demonstrating that the subject, even in the most intimate corners of its most hidden desires, is predisposed by something that remains outside of its

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<sup>475</sup> Cf. GA 53, §20, 143–152. Freud initiates his text on *Das Unheimliche* with some reflections about the uncanny as a somewhat neglected aesthetic category. Usually, Freud notes, aesthetics are not of much interest to psychoanalysis, but the case of the uncanny constitutes an exception to this norm. Cf. GW XII, 229.

<sup>476</sup> Cf. GW XII, 231; 242.

<sup>477</sup> GW XII, 231.

<sup>478</sup> Cf. Dolar 1991, 6. According to my findings, Lacan introduces the neologism of *extimité* in his seventh seminar on *L'éthique de la psychanalyse* from 1959–1960. Even if the notion of *extimité* approaches a *hapax legomenon* in Lacan’s seminars, Miller argues it is nonetheless an important rarity. Cf. Miller 1994, 74–87.

authority. Hence, almost in a dislocated echo of Augustine's *interior intimo meo*, Lacan's notion of *extimité* exposes how the other is "quelque chose qui est *entfremdet*, étranger à moi tout en étant au coeur de ce moi."<sup>479</sup> We shall return to this estranging intrigue more elaborately in the next chapter, but for now, we shall proceed with a closer reading of Freud's 1919 text on *Das Unheimliche*.

#### IV.3 DISTURBANCES OF THE HOME: READING *DAS UNHEIMLICHE*

Returning now to *Das Unheimliche*, Cixous has demonstrated how a 'hesitating shadow' lingers over Freud's text causing it to mimic the essential instability of the concept with which it is engaged and thus to continually destabilize its procession as it goes along—or, as Cixous describes it: "Just as the reader thinks he is following some demonstration, he senses that the surface is cracking: the text slides a few roots under the ground while it allows others to be lofted in the air."<sup>480</sup>

We may now read this hesitating shadow as being cast over the supposedly closed and familiar economy of a household, disclosing or unveiling that which remains undisclosed or veiled as the 'outside' within it. Accordingly, such disclosed undisclosedness belongs to the veiled or disguised character of the unhomely (*den verhüllten Charakter des Unheimlichen*),<sup>481</sup> insofar as it exposes the secrets (*Geheimnisse*) of the homely *as such*. That is to say, the unhomely does not excavate the 'content' of some particular secret of the home but rather exposes the secret that there is no secret to be exposed—and yet that the secretive remains.<sup>482</sup> Freud then proceeds to explicate the ambiguity of the homely by further exhibiting its secret relationship with the unhomely since, as it turns out, the unhomely itself emerges from something that was once homely and familiar, which has been long repressed (*altvertrautes Verdrängtes*) in a time before time (*Vorzeit*) only to return home as untimely estranged and uncannily foreign. So Freud writes: "dies Unheimliche ist wirklich nichts Neues oder Fremdes, sondern etwas dem Seelenleben von alters her Vertrautes, das ihm nur durch den Prozeß der Verdrängung entfremdet worden ist."<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Sem VII, 87/71.

<sup>480</sup> Cixous 1976, 525–526.

<sup>481</sup> Cf. GW XII, 231.

<sup>482</sup> Cixous aptly underlines this 'secret without secret' of the uncanny when she remarks that "the *Unheimliche* refers to no more profound secret than itself: every pursuit produces its own cancellation and every text dealing is a text which returns" (Cixous 1976, 547).

<sup>483</sup> GW XII, 254.

Thus, even while the Grimm Dictionary lists one meaning of the ‘homely’ as “der von gespensterhaften freie ort,”<sup>484</sup> Freud would probably add to this that such definition would only hold true on the condition that repression works without remainder. Yet, given that repression only rarely, if ever, works without a remainder, one of the significant discoveries of psychoanalysis is that the home of the human psyche is “ein Haus, in dem es spukt.”<sup>485</sup> Freud therefore concludes his etymological investigations into the unhomely by stating that the negative prefix of the *Un-heimliche* in effect functions as “die Marke der Verdrängung,”<sup>486</sup> and that the home of the psyche continues to be haunted by the “disquieting return of the long-ago repressed.”<sup>487</sup>

However, since not *every* repression necessarily returns in an uncanny manner, Freud goes on to emphasize that the mere material (*stofflichen*) condition of the unhomely, which is the return of the once familiar and long repressed as strange and foreign, does not suffice to explain the peculiar and remarkable uncanniness pertaining to *some* but not *all* returning repressions.<sup>488</sup> Moreover, Freud notes that almost every example, fictive or not, of uncanny unhomeliness that he provides in the text can be countered by another example where a similar experience or incidence would not appear uncanny in the slightest.<sup>489</sup>

Hence, Freud proceeds to inquire about the particular circumstances wherein some repressed returns appear in an accentuated uncanny way, or in other words, he inquires about “der Momente, die das Ängstliche zum Unheimlichen machen.”<sup>490</sup> Based on his psychoanalytic experience, Freud suggests that the uncanniness pertaining solely to certain returns of the repressed stems from the fact they are returns of ancient anxieties and old beliefs, which civilization may have succeeded in repressing, but which it still cannot rid itself of entirely. This is so, Freud explains, because the

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<sup>484</sup> Cf. GW XII, 236.

<sup>485</sup> Cf. GW XII, 255.

<sup>486</sup> GW XII, 259.

<sup>487</sup> Rand and Torok 1994, 187.

<sup>488</sup> Cf. GW XII, 259.

<sup>489</sup> Freud gives the examples of animated furniture or toys, speaking animals or trees, dismembered limbs acting on their own, or the coming back to life of the dead in various fairytales and myths where such fantastic occurrences are not necessarily experienced as uncanny but rather as wondrous or even comical. Whether the comical might not also expose us to a sort of uncanniness is a question we will leave open. In this regard, see Zupančič 2008, 111ff.

<sup>490</sup> GW XII, 256.



civilized psyche is still not completely convinced by its newfound beliefs and convictions and therefore “die alten leben noch in uns fort.”<sup>491</sup>

In this regard, Freud focuses on two different kinds of ‘returning repressions.’ One kind is *ontogenetic* and pertains to infantile castration anxieties of emasculation, loss of power or virility, of being insignificant to the (m)other, of separation, and so forth, in the history of the individual psyche. The other kind is *phylogenetic* and pertains to supposedly outmoded and superseded beliefs belonging to the primitive stages of development of the human psyche, such as various figures of afterlife or of a ‘beyond’ life and death (ghosts, demons, phantoms, specters), magical powers of thought, animistic representations, the evil eye, etc. One reason why doubles, reduplications, and repetitions can appear so uncannily haunting is due to the fact, Freud argues, that our unconscious still does not believe in or is not convinced either that birth marks an absolute beginning or that death marks a final end. Rather, something *other* seems to precipitate our birth and something *other* remains to return after our death, thus giving rise to the phantasies of phantoms, vampires, zombies, and other figures of the undead. Still, as Freud notes with reference to Otto Rank, the figure of the *Doppelgänger* may once have been a sign of the belief in a life after death, but to us ‘moderns’ it has become a token of our inexorable mortality of which we are certain even if unconsciously we cannot bring ourselves to believe it wholeheartedly.<sup>492</sup>

As Rand and Torok suggest in their reading of *Das Unheimliche*, what these two kinds of returning repressions have in common is precisely their exposure of “the unexpected return of something that should have been overcome, by repression or civilization, but has not been.”<sup>493</sup> Freud therefore raises doubt whether we can ever reach certainty about the questions to which these repressed anxieties and beliefs give rise. For example, can we ever be certain that there is not some sort of survival after death? Can we ever be certain where we should draw the line between the living and the non-living, between the dead and the non-dead, or between factual reality and fictional phantasy, for that matter? The uncanniness pertaining to certain returning repressions concerns precisely the borders of reality and the limits of the existence that I call my own as they begin to quiver and vacillate—since, as Freud writes, it is often an uncanny experience “wenn die Grenze

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<sup>491</sup> GW XII, 262.

<sup>492</sup>In 1914 Freud published Rank’s study on *Der Doppelgänger* in the third volume of the journal for applied psychoanalysis *Imago*, which was later to be published in an expanded edition. Cf. Rank 1925; GW XII, 47.

<sup>493</sup> Rand and Torok 1994, 187.

zwischen Phantasie und Wirklichkeit verwischt wird.”<sup>494</sup> Again, Freud’s text seems to mimic this ‘blurring’ or ‘effacing’ of boundaries of which it speaks insofar as it oscillates indeterminably between literary fascination, psychoanalytic theorizing, and autobiographical experience. With Royle, we can therefore say that “the uncanny has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality.”<sup>495</sup>

Fables and fairytales may present us with images that are scary, strange, or mysterious, but as long as they are clearly distinguishable from our so-called daily life they are not uncanny because they do not seriously challenge the borders of our ‘reality,’ but rather confirm them by their marked difference. Such fables and fairytales therefore allow us to surrender to the free play of phantasy without the imminent threat of a perforation or penetration of ‘reality.’ Experiences of the uncanny, however, often occur in almost identical resemblance to what we take to be reality, indicating with minor and almost indistinguishable displacements of the familiar that something is slightly ‘un-hinged’ or ‘out of joint,’ without, however, being able to point out exactly what or why. Again, these experiences of the uncanny are not restricted merely to an ‘intellectual incertitude’ but rather signal a fundamental ‘existential’ or ‘ontological’ insecurity, making the foundations of the familiar tremble.<sup>496</sup> Still, this fundamental insecurity emerges with an anxious yet strong certitude that, according to Freud, leads back to an unconscious persuasion “welches das sonst Harmlose unheimlich macht.”<sup>497</sup>

This is why, in Freud’s interpretation, the uncanny sense of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Der Sandmann* pertains not so much to the animated puppet

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<sup>494</sup> GW XII, 258.

<sup>495</sup> Royle 2003, 2. This uncertain oscillation is one reason why Derrida often experiences himself as closer to Freud than to Lacan who, in Derrida’s view, reduces ‘fictions’ to mere illustrations of the demonstrations made by psychoanalysis. As Derrida writes in “Le facteur de la vérité,” for Lacan “[i]l s’agit donc de fonder la fiction en vérité, de l’y garantir dans ses conditions de possibilité, et cela sans même marquer, comme le fait *Das Unheimliche*, cette résistance toujours relancée de la fiction littéraire à la loi générale du savoir psychanalytique. De plus, Lacan ne se demande jamais ce qui distingue une fiction littéraire d’une autre” (CP, 454/426–427). Whether this characterization of Lacan might be in need of some qualification will be discussed in the next chapter when we return to the question of ‘framing’ in Lacan’s seminar on anxiety.

<sup>496</sup> In *The Divided Self*, Laing coins the term ‘ontological insecurity,’ which has to do precisely with an insecurity of borders. Among others, Laing gives an example of ontological insecurity of particular relevance to the uncanny questions with which we are engaged in these chapters, namely, the dread “of turning, or being turned, from a live person into a dead thing, into a stone, into a robot, an automaton, without personal autonomy of action, an *it* without subjectivity” (Laing 1969, 46).

<sup>497</sup> GW XII, 250. We shall return to this anxious certitude in Chapter V.

Olimpia in itself, but rather to the exposure to the indeterminable oscillations between the animate and inanimate, between the autonomous and the automatic, between the living and the dead, and between reality and phantasy. Therefore, Freud to a greater extent relates the uncanny of Hoffmann's story with the recurring figure of the Sandman and the concurrent threat of having one's eyes stolen that his appearance indicates, that is, with the threat of being blinded and abandoned to powerless confusion and lack of orientation.

We will not go into further detail with Freud's renowned analysis of *Der Sandmann*, which has been subjected to critical inquiry elsewhere;<sup>498</sup> instead, we will proceed with an inquiry into the two intertwined motifs that Freud identifies as the dominant ones in Hoffmann's uncanny writings. These are the motif of 'redoubling' (*das Doppelgängertum*) and the motif of the 'perpetual recurrence of the same' (*beständige Wiederkehr des Gleichen*), or of the 'repetition of the resembling' (*Wiederholung des Gleichartigen*).<sup>499</sup> This choice of procedure is due to the assumption that with this uncanny intertwining of redoubling and repetition we might have encountered one of the first conspicuous incentives of *Das Unheimliche* that will eventually lead Freud towards the writing of the *Jenseits*. In what follows, we will pursue this assumption of textual interrelation.

#### IV.4 DAEMONIC REDOUBLINGS AND REPETITIONS

According to Freud, the uncanny can be experienced in situations where one's sense of self is so radically put in question that

man an seinem Ich irre wird oder das fremde Ich an die Stelle des eigenen versetzt, also Ich-Verdopplung, Ich-Teilung, Ich-Vertauschung—und endlich die beständige Wiederkehr des Gleichen, die Wiederholung der nämlichen Gesichtszüge, Charaktere, Schicksale, verbrecherischen Taten, ja der Namen durch mehrere aufeinanderfolgende Generationen.<sup>500</sup>

Writing in the first person singular, Freud then proceeds to recount two autobiographical experiences with the uncanny related to the motifs of redoubling and repetition. One thing that these uncanny experiences make manifest to the reader is how the 'other' or the 'double' is always already implicated in our relation to ourselves, all the way into our innermost

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<sup>498</sup> Cf. Rand and Torok 1994; Falkenberg 2005; Royle 2003, 38-50.

<sup>499</sup> Cf. GW XII, 246; 249.

<sup>500</sup> Cf. GW XII, 246.

intimacies of auto-affection, and how it is therefore not always possible to clearly distinguish between these others and ourselves.

The first autobiographical experience with the uncanny concerns Freud getting lost in the labyrinthine streets of some unnamed Italian town. After a period of seemingly directionless or driverless wandering about (*fürherlos herumgewandert*) in the small alleyways, which all resemble each other and which all seem to lead back to the same place, Freud begins to get the uncanny sense that his wandering might not be so driverless after all. Rather, his drifting around now strikes Freud as directed, almost as if behind his back and yet ahead of him, by some elusive and unknown automatism proceeding autonomously yet anonymously outside or beyond his authoritative jurisdiction. These unintentional returns (*unbeabsichtigte Wiederkehr*) to the same place bestow upon Freud an uncanny sense of helplessness and of being delivered over to some fateful and possibly disastrous (*Verhängnisvolle*) chain of events, which under other circumstances might have been experienced as nothing but a harmless coincidence (*Zufall*).<sup>501</sup>

Retracing the steps of some anonymously autonomous automatism, it would seem that Freud was in 1919 already on the trail of his own words to come, as if they were already resounding in his ear: *Wo Es war soll Ich werden*—the same words that have been a refrain throughout our engagement with this solitude of the impersonal. In fact, Freud had already, earlier in the text, mentioned the fact that a presentiment of the uncanny may be conjured forth when the distinction between the automatic and the autonomous is obfuscated and begins to dissolve. For instance, when behind the presumable autonomy of oneself or a fellow human being “Ahnungen von automatischen—mechanischen—Prozessen geweckt werden,” such as in obsessive or traumatic neurosis, epileptic seizures, or, as Freud writes, in “der Äußerungen des Wahnsinnes.”<sup>502</sup> Yet, with this first autobiographical story of the uncanny, it would seem that Freud is beginning to sense that the blurring of the borders between the automatic and the autonomous might be even more habitual to the human psyche than he may have initially thought, and may not be restricted solely to certain pathologies. Thus, in the wake of his first self-experienced example of the uncanny Freud reaches the first mention of the repetition compulsion in *Das Unheimliche*, anticipating what will become the fulcrum of the *Jenseits* when he writes:

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<sup>501</sup> Cf. GW XII, 259–250. Interestingly, even if it is a mere coincidence, one of the very few times that Heidegger employs the word ‘unheimlich’ in the 1929/30 lecture course (three times to my count), which we engaged with in Chapter II, is precisely with reference to a seemingly aimless, repetitive, and vertiginous circling movement, not of the unconscious *per se* but of philosophy. Cf. GA 29/30, 266–267.

<sup>502</sup> GW XII, 237.

Im seelisch Unbewußten läßt sich nämlich die Herrschaft eines von den Triebregungen ausgehenden *Wiederholungszwanges* erkennen, der wahrscheinlich von der innersten Natur der Triebe selbst abhängt, stark genug ist, sich Seiten des Seelenlebens den dämonischen Charakter verleiht.<sup>503</sup>

Freud may no longer believe in neither gods nor ghosts, but he certainly seems still to believe in daemons, and since this is not the first time that the daemonic is referred to in relation to the repetition compulsion, we shall have to make some further inquiries into the sense of the daemonic in the Freudian corpus.

The word ‘daemon’ is of Greek origin and one way to approach the daemonic in Freud’s text might be to consider it in the light of one of Heidegger’s most appreciated dictums of philosophy, namely, the one contributed to Heraclitus’ saying that “the human ethos is its daemon [*ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων*].”<sup>504</sup> One of the etymological roots of *δαίμων* can be traced back to the verb *δαίομαι* or *δαίω*, which can mean both ‘to divide,’ ‘to lacerate,’ or ‘to cleave asunder’—as when for example Athena empathically laments Odysseus by saying that her “heart is torn [*δαίεται ἦτορ*].”<sup>505</sup> In thinking of him—and ‘to assign’ or ‘to distribute.’ According to Agamben, this ambiguity means that: “Only insofar as it is what divides can the *daimōn* also be what assigns a fate and what destines,”<sup>506</sup> which further means that Heraclitus’ fragment may be read in the following way: “‘For man, *ēthos*, the dwelling in the ‘self’ that is what is most proper and habitual for him, is what lacerates and divides, the principle and place of a fracture.”<sup>507</sup> In other words, the human being dwells only in an originary parting from itself and this arche-division constitutes its daemonic ethos.

Readers of Freud may at times feel inclined to think of the unconscious *It* as though it were some psychic domain or entity subsisting in clear demarcation from the conscious *I*, and to think of the daemonic as pertaining solely to this entity and its occasional possession of the *I*. Yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, such a reading would be, if not straight forwardly misconstrued, then at least overly simplistic. Taking Agamben’s etymological indications and translation of Heraclitus’ fragment into consideration, I would instead suggest a reading of the Freudian daemonic

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<sup>503</sup> GW XII, 251.

<sup>504</sup> DK 119.

<sup>505</sup> OD, v. 1.48, 7.

<sup>506</sup> Agamben 1999, 118.

<sup>507</sup> Agamben 1999, 118. Presumably, Agamben is following Heidegger’s translation of *ἦθος* with ‘abode’ (*Aufenthalt*) or ‘dwelling place’ (*Ort des Wohnens*) here. In *Brief über den Humanismus*, Heidegger’s suggestion for a translation of Heraclitus’ fragment reads: “der Mensch wohnt, insofern er Mensch ist, in der Nähe Gottes” (GA 9, 185ff.)

as pertaining to an originary separation of the psyche from itself. Just as the unconscious would not come to be without repression, and the repressive consciousness would not come to be without the repressed, so the *It* and the *I* are constituted only in their relation of separation before which there was no unity other than an unknown X to be named only retrospectively.<sup>508</sup> This equiprimordial constitution of the repressed and the repressive in separation also entails, that what was ‘before’ the repression of the repressed withdraws into an ‘immemorial past,’ which cannot be remembered or represented because it has never been present as such. As Malabou formulates it in *The New Wounded*: “Originary separation takes place without actually happening”<sup>509</sup> insofar as it constitutes the very horizon upon which anything can come to be, including the separation itself.

Hence, we might say that for Freud the uncanny leads back to something old and long familiar, which has long been repressed and forgotten but which nevertheless still returns to haunt the representations of consciousness with its original absence. The experience of the uncanny may then take on a similar structure as that of a *déjà vu*,<sup>510</sup> that is, as the return of something that has never taken place but that is nevertheless experienced as something elusively recognizable and strangely familiar even if its presence remains in abeyance—almost like a remembrance of that which remains forgotten. An uncanny experience—almost like a repetition of the immemorial where that which continues to repeat itself nevertheless retains the secret of itself. An uncanny experience—almost like someone returning to haunt itself *incognito* through compulsive repetitions commanded as if from ‘elsewhere.’

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<sup>508</sup> The movement I point to here is somewhat similar to Schellings rendering in *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie* (1832–33) of an equiprimodality of the withdrawal of ground and the emergence of existence in their originary separation (*Entscheidung*), “sodass eodemque actu Vergangenheit und Zukunft zugleich entstanden” (GP, 447). In the various fragments of his unfinished *Weltalter* project, Schelling perpetually circles around the problem of this primordial decision of separation as the anarchic origin of origin, since “eben daß eines anfangs, eines das Erste sey, muß eine Entscheidung erfolgen” (WA, 220). In other words, a beginning is never pure since it must always stand in relation to something else, which however becomes immemorial with the decision of beginning wherefor the past cannot be remembered but only recounted as a myth or a fable.

<sup>509</sup> Malabou 2012, 130.

<sup>510</sup> According to the OED, a similar ambiguity as that of the *Heimliche* pertains to the notion of *déjà vu*, which according to the OED can designate both “[a]n illusory feeling of having previously experienced a present situation; a form of paramnesia” and “[t]he correct impression that something has been previously experienced; tedious familiarity.” For a further elaboration of the specific uncanniness of *déjà vu*, see Royle 2003, 172–186.

In other words, our suggestion would be to read the Freudian daemonic as pertaining to an originary scission, which allows the psychic apparatus to relate to itself only as separated from itself. Inherent to this constitutive relation of separation, however, is also the possibility of the psyche appearing to itself as other, and even as hostile, to itself, and therefore also the risk of the daemonic split becoming diabolical. Freud associates the originary scission constituting the daemonic ethos of the human being with ‘conscience’ (Freud puts “*Gewissen*” in inverted commas as if to mark his critical distance from or skepticism towards this word) and with the ability for (critical) self-observation, which is always at risk of turning into a pathological or hyperbolic self-monitoring (*Beachtungswahnes*). Thus, the cut relating the psyche to itself in separation from itself can also come to cut off (*abgespalten*) the psyche from itself to such an extent that it appears to itself as a wholly other. So Freud writes: “der Mensch der Selbstbeobachtung fähig ist, macht es möglich, die alte Doppelgängervorstellung mit neuem Inhalt zu erfüllen.”<sup>511</sup>

This structural risk inherent to the arche-division of the psyche, linking the possibility of self-relation and self-observation with the possibility of self-alienation and self-doubling, leads us to the second of Freud’s autobiographical experiences with the uncanny. Freud renders this experience in a footnote, thereby presenting it as more of an anecdotal *parergon* than as something of importance to the main text and proper corpus of the work. However, we shall not let ourselves be duped by such arrangements, but instead remind ourselves of what Derrida writes about such an apparent ‘ornamental feature’ in *La vérité en peinture*, namely that, “un *parergon* vient contre, à côté et en plus de l’ergon, du travail fait, du fait, de l’œuvre mais il ne tombe pas à côté, il touche et coopère, depuis un certain dehors au-dedans de l’opération.”<sup>512</sup> Accordingly, we shall concern ourselves with Freud’s ornamental footnote as though it were neither entirely accessory nor entirely essential to the work itself, but nonetheless somehow operative within its margins.

Freud’s other ‘adventure’ (*Abenteure*) with the uncanny begins with him sitting alone in the wagon-lit of a train, getting ready for the night. Suddenly, the door of the adjoining bathroom swings open due to a violent jolt of the train and an elderly gentleman wearing a dressing gown and a travelers cap enters Freud’s compartment. Startled by this sudden intrusion, Freud jumps up in order to politely inform the elderly gentleman of his honest mistake in confusing the direction of compartments only to realize that the intruder is

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<sup>511</sup> GW XII, 248.

<sup>512</sup> VEP, 63/54.

none other than his own image reflected by the mirror on the inside of the bathroom door. Despite the fact that Freud did not experience the incident as immediately uncanny, he still recalls the displeasing impression that the apparition of the elderly gentleman left on him. And despite the fact that Freud, “qui ne veut pas parler aux phantoms,”<sup>513</sup> refutes any superstitious beliefs, he nevertheless ends his autobiographical tale by pondering whether the displeasure caused by the intruder in the mirror might be an indication of something ancient and long repressed that should have been surmounted by his civilized way of thinking, but that still remains as a secret to return. In other words, Freud wonders whether the incident, and the discomfort it caused, might have been an uncanny reminder of something long and perhaps even originally forgotten returning in the ancient figure of the *Doppelgänger*.<sup>514</sup>

Yet, Freud withholds from venturing into a further discussion of why this apparently harmless, and even quite comical, encounter with his unrecognized self should have had such a displeasing and upsetting effect. In view of what we have now seen of the daemonic, however, we might consider whether Freud’s encounter with himself as another might have been such an uncomfortable experience because it calls into question his very sense of self by indicating the elusive conditions of its constitution and the fragility of its borders. This reading appears to be strengthened by a remark Freud makes just a few pages before recounting this uncanny encounter with his unrecognized self, where he writes that the motif of the double concerns, “ein Rückgreifen auf einzelne Phasen in der Entwicklungsgeschichte des Ich-Gefühls, um eine Regression in Zeiten, da das Ich sich noch nicht scharf von der Außenwelt und vom Anderem abgegrenzt hatte.”<sup>515</sup> In this respect, we are therefore in alignment with Royle when he asserts that: “The uncanny is a crisis of the proper: it entails a critical disturbance of what is proper (from the Latin *proprius*, ‘own’).”<sup>516</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> MA, 146/94.

<sup>514</sup> GW XII, 262–263 n1.

<sup>515</sup> GW XII, 249.

<sup>516</sup> Royle 2003, 1. One could think here of the renowned story of *The Double* by Dostoyevsky where the protagonist Mr. Golyadkin constantly tries to reassure himself of the borders and propriety of his own being but never succeeds in doing so. Thus he repeatedly tells himself that he is a man for himself, that he is his own person, and that others cannot threaten this security in himself: “I keep myself to myself and so far as I can see am not dependent on any one” (Dostoyevsky 1997, 8). However, despite these repeated attempts at self-assurance, Mr. Golyadkin can no longer avoid the exposure of his fragile existence once his double suddenly appears and gradually infiltrates his most personal habitats until “nobody, absolutely nobody, could have undertaken to distinguish



Still, we should not think of this uncanny crisis of the proper as designating an experience of something alien or foreign coming to disturb the already constituted property of a self. Instead, we must recall the Greek inheritance of *κρίσις*, entailing, as it were, not only an event of scission as of decision but also that of a turning point or a sudden change. Accordingly, we must try to relate our thinking of the uncanny understood as a crisis of the proper with what we saw above concerning the originary scission constituting the daemonic ethos of the human psyche. Moreover, we must try to think this originary scission as allowing not only the proper possibility of relating to oneself through critical judgment but also the improper possibility of a crisis separating oneself from oneself to the point where the double *suddenly* emerges in place of oneself.

With this recurrent mention of ‘the sudden’ in relation to the daemonic, we might have a look at *The Concept of Anxiety* in which Kierkegaard states not only that “*the daemonic is the sudden [Det Dæmoniske er det Pludselige]*”<sup>517</sup> that is, the unpredictable, the unforeseeable, and the leaping, but also that “*the daemonic is the contentless, the boring [Det Dæmoniske er det Indholdsløse, det Keedsommelige]*.”<sup>518</sup> This ambiguity is particularly interesting in the present context, insofar as Kierkegaard by conferring both ‘the boring’ and ‘the sudden’ as predicates of the daemonic thereby brings into relation the notion of a duplicitous repetition. On the one hand, Kierkegaard renders the demonic as the machine-like, monotonous movement of the ‘undead’ (*Udøetheden*); the form of nothing (*Intets Form*) ceaselessly repeating itself in a pseudo-continuity (*Skin-Continuitet*)—“like the elf maid who is hollow when seen from the back.”<sup>519</sup> On the other hand, however, the daemonic is also characterized as the interruption of such monotonous continuity, thereby making its fraudulence manifest.

Kierkegaard recalls an instance of such a daemonic apparition that seized him with horror during a ballet by Bournonville when suddenly the figure of Mephistopheles jumped through a window only to remain standing its frame petrified in the position of a leap. As Kierkegaard explains, what is daemonic

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which was the real Golyadkin and which was the counterfeit, which was the old and which was the new one, which was the original and which was the copy” (ibid. 42).

<sup>517</sup> SKS 4, 430/129.

<sup>518</sup> SKS 4, 433/132. We should note here, that in terms of Kierkegaard’s categories we are only considering the daemonic from an ‘aesthetic’ and not from an ‘ethical’ or a ‘religious’ perspective. All too briefly, the daemonic in terms of the ethical designates an anxiety for the good, i.e. communication, resulting in an inclosing reserve (*Indesluttethed*) revolving endlessly around itself; whereas in terms of the religious the daemonic designates an anxiety for the eternal. Yet, as Kierkegaard notes, “eternity is the true repetition [*Evigheden er den sande Gjentaelse*]” (SKS 4, 324/18).

<sup>519</sup> SKS 4, 435/134.

about the figure of Mephistopheles is the fact that there is no continuous passage (*Overgang*) in his movements, which would allow one to anticipate his next step. Instead, his movements are discontinuous, jerking, ruptured, or, with Freud in mind, limping, going from complete standstill (*fuldkommen Stillestaaen*) to an sudden leap resembling those of a raptor surprising its prey.

Now, what does this daemonic figure—both boring in its vacuity and sudden in its unavoidable return—represent if not the death that the unconscious does not believe and that consciousness can only represent to itself through the proxy of a double? As Derrida has emphasized, the possibility of relating to oneself is inextricably bound up with the possibility of becoming severed from oneself. Moreover, the bond between these two possibilities is constitutive of both, wherefore one can no longer speak of a self who is present to itself *before* being exposed to the possibility of its own disappearance. Rather, as Derrida writes in *La voix et le phénomène*: “L’apparaître du *je* à lui-même dans le *je suis* est donc originairement rapport à sa propre disparition possible. *Je suis* veut donc dire originairement *je suis mortel*.”<sup>520</sup> Still, despite the fact that *I* can only appear to myself on the horizon of mortality, my own death nevertheless exceeds my horizon of experience—withdrawing from it yet all the while delimiting it—and this delimiting excess is precisely what marks the infinite finitude of existence.<sup>521</sup>

In light of this ‘mortiferous separation,’ as Malabou calls it, one may view all the images of separation that arise in psychoanalysis—some of the most significant ones being birth, weaning, and castration—as manifestations of the fact that “[f]undamentally it is the cut—the fantasy or anticipation thereof—that opens the psyche to the horizon of its own relation to itself, to the way in which it can *see itself die by doubling itself*.”<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> VP, 60–61/54.

<sup>521</sup> Derrida employs the apparently paradoxical syntagma ‘infinite finitude’ in many different contexts. For instance, in the dialogue between Derrida, Nancy, and Lacoue-Labarthe taking place in Strasbourg in 2004, the latter mentions an ‘infinite finitude’ as an interest shared by both Derrida and Nancy, whereupon Nancy suggests that Lacoue-Labarthe would perhaps be more interested in a tragic ‘finite infinitude.’ Cf. Dia, 88f./18f. Another instance, is Derrida’s seminal statement in *La voix et le phénomène* that “*La différence infinie est finie*” (VP, 114/102).

<sup>522</sup> Malabou 2012, 130. However, as Malabou continues, under certain traumatic conditions the threat of one’s own disappearance constituting one’s horizon can turn into “the threat that the horizon itself might be destroyed” (ibid. 133). Such destruction would no longer allow the psyche to maintain a relation to the possibility of its own disappearance, which is also the condition of its self-relation. According to Malabou, neither Freud nor Lacan pursue this possibility of radical destruction, but rather shy away from it by maintaining a possible relation in separation to the destruction of relation in

In order to come to a further understanding of the various scenes of cutting so significant to psychoanalysis but also of the intercrossing between originary separation and repetition that we have come across in our engagement with the daemonic, we will once again turn to Lacan for assistance. Hence, in the following sections, we will first pursue the link between an originary separation and repetition and then turn to different scenes of cutting in order to explore how this linkage may manifest itself.

#### IV.5 APRES COUP(URE)—REPETITION IN LACAN

In *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* from 1964, Lacan appoints ‘repetition’ as one of the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis—the others being ‘the unconscious,’ ‘transference,’ ‘the drive,’ and, as a fifth addendum, ‘the *object a.*’ Following the trail of Freud, Lacan once again raises the question of why repetition first makes its appearance as a crux for psychoanalysis in the context of traumatic neurosis. Like Freud, Lacan considers the possibility that repetition may be understood as a strategy of mastering a traumatic event, but insofar as “précisément nous ne savons où situer l’instance qui se livrerait à cette opération de maîtrise,”<sup>523</sup> Lacan warns against too hastily affirming such an interpretation.

What is incumbent for Lacan to underline concerning repetition—both when it pertains to the drive for mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) and to the death drive (*Todestrieb*)—is that the ‘agency’ of repetition was not *there* before the repetition ‘began.’ Instead, the agency of repetition is itself a product of repetition originating in the originary cut that constitutes the psychoanalytic subject as always already divided from itself—*après coup(ure)*, so to speak.<sup>524</sup> Therefore, Lacan insists that we must “fonder

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such a way that “separation signifies its own effacement—which is to say that it is never effaced” (ibid. 139). As I read it, this is where Malabou’s concept of destructive plasticity sets in in order to think a complete destruction of any relation in separation without trace, which can occur in the wake of severe trauma interrupting any relation between a before and an after the trauma. According to Malabou, the traumatized psyches that she calls ‘the new wounded’ are not even able to relate to themselves (as traumatized) since “when the damage occurs, it is another self who is affected, a new self, unrecognizable” (ibid. 141).

<sup>523</sup> Sem XI, 50/51.

<sup>524</sup> According to Lacoue-Labarthe, the story of an originary division or cut can be read as a repetition of the very history of metaphysics, which, in turn, can be conceived as a succession of commentaries on the Parmenidian desire for an identity between being and thinking (*τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι*). Or, as Lacoue-Labarthe recounts the fable of identity: “à ‘l’origine,’ il y a la faille, l’écart, la différence qui inquiète l’Identité.

d'abord cette répétition dans la schize même qui se produit dans le sujet à l'endroit de la rencontre" because, as he continues, it is the exposure to this schism "qui nous fait appréhender le réel, dans son incidence dialectique, comme originellement malvenu."<sup>525</sup>

As I read Lacan, saying that we have to ground repetition in the split occurring in the originally inappropriate or 'ill-come' (*mal-venu*) encounter with the real is also a way of saying that the subject is always already split because it is originally cut off from its own origin. It is because of this original cessation that the primal scene, as Lacan articulates it, will always be 'too early or too late'<sup>526</sup> and thus remain a *dystychia*, that is, an encounter that will always already have been missed because of the originally discordant timing of the subject. Much like the originary accident of life in the Freudian rendition of the Genesis, the subject in Lacan begins, as Hyldgaard renders it, with an "ill-timed accident":

The foundation of the subject is a trauma, an accidental event, a mishap, even *dystychia* [...]. No immediate and evident reason or cause for the subject can be pinpointed. A trauma is understood as an event without necessity; a cause for the subject as an accidental, contingent event; an event without immediate purpose; an event that does not make sense, or rather a senseless event that has to be made sense of, an event that hereafter will be the foundation of sense.<sup>527</sup>

To conceive of the subject as a fundamentally traumatic—understood as a foundationless and contingent event that may only receive meaning after its own meaningless fact, and whose originary meaninglessness continues to haunt its subsequently appropriated meanings—also entails that the only 'proper' origin of the subject is repetition—since, as seen in the previous chapter, the immemorial past of a trauma belatedly comes to assert itself through repetition and not remembrance.

Accordingly, just as the repetition compulsion—as a representative of the death drive—came to interrupt Freud's conception of the psychic economy as regulated by the pleasure principle, so Lacan confirms and emphasizes this disruption by stating that it is upon the function of repetition "qu'y pèrit toute conception de l'unité du psychisme, du prétendu psychisme totalisant, synthétisant, ascendant vers la conscience."<sup>528</sup>

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L'histoire est donc l'histoire du Même, qui n'est pas l'identique: l'histoire du manque, du retrait, de la répétition de l'altérité" (Lacoue-Labarthe 1979, 3).

<sup>525</sup> Sem XI, 67/69.

<sup>526</sup> Cf. Sem XI, 67/69.

<sup>527</sup> Hyldgaard 2003, 235.

<sup>528</sup> Sem XI, 51/51.

On Lacan's reading, this originary trauma of repetition is precisely that to which Freud's rendering of little Ernst playing the *fort:da* game testifies. *After* the immemorial trauma of being 'cut off' from his (m)other, the infant is left with the remainder of his abjected being to play around with only symbolically. Originally abandoned with a hole in its being, the infant becoming subject is delivered over to the infinite task of trying to cover up its constitutive gap with substitutive signifiers over and over again. Here again, the repetition constitutive of identity comes very close to a machine-like repeatability, which threatens to undo the very same identity from within. As Lacan explains this perpetual threat in reference to the *fort:da* game:

La fonction de l'exercice avec cet objet se réfère à une aliénation, et non pas à une quelconque et supposée maîtrise, dont on voit mal ce qui l'augmenterait dans une répétition indéfinie, alors que la répétition indéfinie dont il s'agit manifeste au jour la vacillation radicale du sujet.<sup>529</sup>

In this respect, we may ask whether the infantile compulsion to repeat the same thing over and over again might be preoccupied not with repeating the selfsame or the identical, as Freud in part suspected,<sup>530</sup> but rather with the impossibility of repeating the selfsame or the identical due to the originary duplicity of repetition, which we outlined in the above. Could it be, then, that the component of repetition in children's play may in fact be a *mise en scène*, or rather a *mise en abyme*, of one of the oldest aporias of philosophy? Namely, the aporia of how to speak of something as identical to itself without repeating it and how then to avoid this repetition turning the selfsame into another. In other words, might the childish demand to repeat a game or a story in exactly the same way—with the same intonations, emphases, and impressions—be driven not only by a nostalgic desire for returning to the selfsame but also by a preoccupation with the impossibility of such a return, and perhaps even by a fascination with the production of difference within the repetition? Indeed, this appears to be what Lacan is suggesting when he says that "le vrai secret du ludique" is to be found in "la diversité plus radicale que constitue la répétition en elle-même."<sup>531</sup>

For Lacan, as for Derrida, the notion of repetition in Freud is not an unequivocal term but rather fundamentally ambiguous and bound up in the indissolubility of a double bind entailing "deux registres qui s'entremêlent,

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<sup>529</sup> Sem XI, 216/239.

<sup>530</sup> Cf. GW XIII, 36.

<sup>531</sup> Sem XI, 60/61.

s'entrelacent.”<sup>532</sup> To emphasize these two registers of repetition in relation to the traumatic constitution of the subject, Lacan takes up two Aristotelian terms—the *automaton* and the *tyché*—and transposes them to a psychoanalytic context. The two terms are not given very elaborate definitions by either Aristotle or Lacan, but in what follows we will attempt, as clearly as possible, to explicate how we understand Lacan’s adaption of the Aristotelian terms without, however, adapting ourselves entirely to the Lacanian discourse.

In the second book of the *Physics*, Aristotle employs the notions of *αὐτόματον* and *τύχη* in order to distinguish between two types of chance or accidental events. The *automaton*, commonly translated into English as ‘the automatic’ or ‘the spontaneous,’ designates that which happens *by itself*, *automatically*, and without inferring to any cause other than itself. As such, the *automaton* also designates an accident in the sense of an event that cannot be anticipated, calculated, or programmed as part of a causal chain, but that nevertheless takes place with a sort of automatic necessity of its own. *Tyché*, on the other hand, designates that which happens by chance, whether this chance event is of a good or ill fortune, that is, an event that cannot be assigned a determinable cause or that can only be assigned to unknown causes such as fate or divine providence.<sup>533</sup>

Turning to Lacan, the *automaton* comes to designate the way in which accidental and arbitrary events are automatically assimilated by the mechanisms of the symbolic in its production of reality, whereas the *tychic* designates events that resist such assimilation or appropriation and therefore cannot really be experienced as events at all. As Malabou puts it, the non-events of the *tychic* are “*other events* that are like holes within the symbolic fabric.”<sup>534</sup> In more Lacanian terms, we might say that the *tychic* designates

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<sup>532</sup> Sem II, 85/65–66.

<sup>533</sup> As for instance in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, when Neoptolemus teaches Philoctetes that it is good for men to endure the fortunes allotted to them by the gods (*ἐκ θεῶν τύχας*) but not to wallow persistently in pain (Phil. 1318). According to Aristotle, the *automaton* is the more general term pertaining to everything that happens unexpectedly and without determinable cause in nature, whereas *tyché* is a narrower term restricted to that which happens unexpectedly to beings endowed with reason and self-direction: “For *tyche* itself, as a cause, and the results that accrue by the action of *tyche*, are only spoken of in connexion with beings capable of enjoying good fortune, or more generally of ‘doing well’ or ‘doing ill’” (Phys. 197b). Common to both ‘accidental’ and ‘chance’ events, however, is that they interrupt the notion of continuous causality, which makes them insubsumable under Aristotle’s general theory of the four causes (*efficientis*, *formalis*, *materialis* and *finalis*). As Dolar puts it: “Both *tyche* and *automaton* figure like leftovers of causality” (Dolar 2013, 225).

<sup>534</sup> Malabou 2012, 134.

experiences of the ‘real’ understood as the event of the impossible and that the term *dystychia* signifies the unsuccessful or unfortunate encounter with the evasive ‘real’ to which the symbolic subject is perpetually called but which retreats from it indefinitely.

In a prolongation of Freud’s assertion that the pleasure principle regulates the processes of the psyche *automatically*, which the term *automaton* Lacan is designating precisely “du retour, de la revenue, de l’insistance des signes à quoi nous nous voyons commandés par le principe du plaisir.”<sup>535</sup> On this view, the *automaton* designates the signifying machine of desire, which, fueled by metonymic displacements and metaphoric replacements, constitutes the subject as ‘a signifier for another signifier’ and sustains the symbolic network of signifiers constituting what we call ‘reality.’ Thus, the *automaton* bears a resemblance to what Derrida, as we saw above, calls the economic aspect of repetition, which is associated with conservation, remembrance, and the return of the same. In the *automaton*, everything runs according to the laws of ‘symbolic determination,’<sup>536</sup> which automatically turn all chance, contingency, and surprise into a semantically coded meaning pertaining to a structural necessity.

Yet, something other, indeed *another* repetition, continually obstructs the automatic repetition of the selfsame; but, as Lacan insists, this altering belongs to the true nature of repetition, which “est toujours voilé dans l’analyse.”<sup>537</sup> How so? The alterity of repetition remains veiled in analysis—though we could expand this rule to every praxis determined by the symbolic—because that which repetition repeats can only reveal itself through prosthetic substitutes, that is, “*in effigie, in absentia*.”<sup>538</sup> This structural secrecy of repetition becomes obvious in the case of transference, where repetition precisely functions in relation to the analyst substituting as a representative for the absence of the ‘original’ cause of the traumatized compulsion to repeat. This is because that which repetition repeats, in analysis and beyond, is nothing other than the resistance of the unrepresentable, and as such repetition functions *in lieu of a representation* or as ‘le tenant-lieu de la représentation,’ which is one of Lacan’s translations of Freud’s at-first-glance redundant term *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Sem XI, 54/53–54.

<sup>536</sup> Cf. *Écrits*, 60/45.

<sup>537</sup> Sem XI, 54/54.

<sup>538</sup> Sem XI, 54/54.

<sup>539</sup> Cf. Sem XI, 58/60. Lacan’s appropriation of Freud’s *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* in his own chain of signifiers as the has been an issue of much debate. In my view, one circumstance that makes the notion of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* in Freud so significant to Lacan is the way in which it underlines that the unconscious is not some

Hence, the unrepresentable and entirely arbitrary cause of the repetitive automatism would be the *tychic*, which, in Lacan's view, is therefore the name for repetition *strictly speaking* insofar as that which repetition *really* repeats is precisely the real that remains irreducible to the symbolic and irrerepresentable to the imaginary.<sup>540</sup>

At times, these 'impossible' or 'missed' events of the *tychic* can elusively manifest themselves as unintentional interruptions of our intentions or as the unpredictable that comes to disrupt the chains of meaning and purposefulness, such as in *lapsus linguae*, absentmindedness, forgetfulness, mistakes, mishaps, or presumable coincidences. As such, these non-events can be conceived as repetitions of the other that come to interrupt, defer, or displace the automatic repetitions of the same. At other times, however, the *tychic* designates encounters with that which cannot be encountered because of their unfathomable horror, humiliation, shame, or terror and which therefore turn into the missed encounters—also called *dystychias* or traumas. Let us therefore turn to one such missed encounter in the psychoanalytic archive.

As I read Lacan's take on Freud's famous rendition of the dream of the burning child, it stages not only the irruption of the real in the symbolic, as a *tyché* that interrupts and disrupts the *automaton*, but also the effect of an inassimilable trauma encrypted at the heart of mourning. After the event of a child's death, which must always appear accidental since no meaningful cause could possibly make sense of it, all the operations that belong to what Freud calls the work of mourning set in; grieving, funeral preparations, the washing of the body, burying or burning the body, singing psalms, and so

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realm of 'raw' immediate presence in contrast to a representational consciousness. Rather, the drive, as Freud writes in *Das Unbewußte*, "kann aber auch im Unbewußten nicht anders als durch die Vorstellung repräsentiert sein" (GW X, 275–276). This unavoidability of representation underpins the many expressions of Lacan's well-known dictum: "L'inconscient est dans son fond structuré, tramé, chaîné de langage" (Sem III, 135/119). For a more thorough discussion of Lacan's appropriation of the Freudian *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, see Johnston and Malabou 2013, 125–137.

<sup>540</sup> This is why Lacan, drawing on the difference in Freud between *Wiederkehr* and *Wiederholung*, calls the repetitions of the *automaton* 'recurrences' (*retours*) or 'returns' (*revenue*) over and against the 'repetitions' (*répétitions*) of the *tyché*. One reason for this is that while the returns of the *automaton* pertain to the reappearance of the barred subject in the signifying chain, the *tychic* repetitions of the real pertain to the resistance of the always disappearing subject *in between* these chains. In view of the duplicity pertaining to the notion of repetition, which we are investigating here, and bearing in mind Derrida's reminder that there is no repetition *itself*, we should however exercise great suspicion and hold ourselves in suspense with regard to Lacan's designation of a repetition *par excellence*, which would be the repetition of the real.



forth. Yet, do all these gestures of mourning ever encounter the event that caused them, or must the death of a child to some extent remain unencounterable and inappropriable? Like the knotted navel of a dream that resists unraveling by any interpretive strategies, is there not a trauma encrypted in every work of mourning that escapes encounter and thereby makes the work of mourning as impossible and interminable as analysis? As Lacan articulates it:

C'est dans le rêve seulement que peut se faire cette rencontre vraiment unique. Seul un rite, un acte toujours répété, peut commémorer cette rencontre immémorable—puisque personne ne peut dire ce que c'est que la mort d'un enfant—sinon le père en tant que père—c'est-à-dire nul être conscient.<sup>541</sup>

On Lacan's reading, then, the dream of the Father indirectly and discordantly testifies to an irruption of the real in the symbolic precisely by way of its evasion or withdrawal from symbolic representation. In the dream, the deceased child is brought back to life and to symbolic reality, endowed once again with the ability to speak; yet, what the child is telling the sleeping father is the unspeakable: that his speechless body is burning. Thus, Lacan asks if this delivery of the unspeakable in a dream is not somehow more real than what is really happening in the room next to where the father is sleeping, and furthermore, whether the dream is not “essentiellement, si je puis dire, l'hommage à la réalité manquée?—la réalité qui ne peut plus se faire qu'à se répéter indéfiniment, en un indéfiniment jamais atteint réveil.”<sup>542</sup>

According to Lacan, it is therefore no coincidence (but perchance the accident of a missed encounter) that the compulsion to repeat, and thereby the significance of repetition, first appeared on the psychoanalytic stage in the context of traumatic neurosis. This is because, as emphasized by Freud, a trauma only becomes a trauma in a constitutive ‘belatedness’ (*Nachträglichkeit*), ‘retardation,’ or ‘deferral’ (*Verspätung*),<sup>543</sup> whereby the ‘original’ experience or event has always already withdrawn from its own presence. For this reason, the traumatic event, which comes to be traumatic only *after the fact*—or *après coup*,<sup>544</sup> which is one translation of Freud's

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<sup>541</sup> Sem XI, 58/59.

<sup>542</sup> Sem XI, 57/58.

<sup>543</sup> Cf. “Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose” (1918), GW XII, 64–75; 77–109; 128–147.

<sup>544</sup> Cf. *Écrits*, 256/213. Lacan's translation is particularly appropriate in the context of trauma since the French *coup* concisely captures the multiple meanings of the Greek root of *τραῦμα* signifying both ‘a wound,’ ‘a hurt,’ ‘an injury,’ as well as ‘a hard blow’ (cf. LSJ). The significance of this hard blow is crucial for Freud's definition of trauma as an

*Nachträglichkeit* that Lacan employs—cannot be re-presented by memory and hence integrated as a once-present member of a narrative whole, but can only be repeated once more as *another* experience or event. Therefore, the constitutive belatedness belonging to the temporality of trauma also entails a certain futurity that comes along with the other repetition, which carries with it a threat so forceful that the traumatic trace seems to come, in fact, from the future. For Lacan, the compulsion to repeat becomes a symptom precisely of this strange futurity of a past that has never been present.<sup>545</sup>

By extension, Lacan defines the *tyché* as a repeatedly missed encounter with the real, which can only return to haunt the symbolic repetitions of the *automaton* belatedly, as that which remains inappropriable by experience, and thus by memory, precisely because it ruptures the continuity between perception and consciousness. Accordingly, the real becomes available to experience only as the experience of a rupture or caesura that remains resistant to experience and to re-membering, and can only be encountered through repetitions without determinable origins. As Lacan therefore emphasizes, the insistence of this other repetition or the repetition of the other also shows that, “[t]he key to this insistence in repetition is that in its essence repetition as repetition of the symbolical sameness is impossible.”<sup>546</sup>

Once again, then, the subject was not *there* before its repetition because repetition is what constitutes the subject belatedly as always already divided and doubled in itself. This originary repetition leads Lacan to pose the perhaps rhetorical but not self-evident question: “Est-ce que le *un* est antérieur à la discontinuité? Je ne le pense pas [...] le *un* qui est introduit par l’expérience de l’inconscient, c’est le *un* de la fente, du trait, de la rupture.”<sup>547</sup>

Lacan enforces this point by once again turning to Frege’s number theory in order to show that not only does the one come second in order to replace the zero, the one will also not be confirmed in its existence as one until the two appears. Yet, as Lacan underlines, what psychoanalytic experience adds to this mathematical insight is that “the two does not complete the one to make two, but must repeat the one to permit the one to exist.”<sup>548</sup>

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event of stimulation or excitation strong enough to break through the protective shield of the psychic brain. Cf. GW XIII, 29.

<sup>545</sup> As Derrida clarifies in *Voyous*: “Le traumatisme a lieu là où l’on est blessé par une blessure qui n’a pas encore eu lieu, de façon effective et autrement que par le signal de son annonce. Sa temporalisation procède de l’à-venir” (V, 148/104–105).

<sup>546</sup> SIO, 192.

<sup>547</sup> Sem XI, 28/26. Here Lacan plays on the indistinguishability in writing between the German ‘*Unbewusste*’ and the French ‘*un*’ in order to show how any ‘one’ is always the product of a ‘split’ connected to primal repression.

<sup>548</sup> SIO, 191. As Lacan explains: “L’important, pour nous, est que nous voyons ici le niveau où—avant toute formation du sujet, d’un sujet qui pense, qui s’y situe—ça compte,

Let us back up a bit in the attempt to unfold the untimely relation between the originary cut and duplicitous repetition a bit further, without, however going into close detail with Lacanian algebra but impiously selecting what appears to be of relevance to our specific context from the wealth of his textual corpus.

#### IV.6 SCENES OF CUTTING

As Malabou has pointed out “for Lacan, originary separation—characterized as separation of the ego and the subject—is interpreted as the inscription of alterity, or lack,”<sup>549</sup> and this inscription of alterity is the primordial trauma that instigates the history of the subject as always already split. There are several other cuts in the path of the subject, in fact the cuts continue to repeat themselves, but in what follows we will attempt to approach this originary inscription of alterity, which is also a separation of the subject from itself, by narrowing our focus to a few crucial cuts for psychoanalysis.

For Lacan, as for Freud, the earliest cut in the history of the subject is birth. Yet for Lacan the crux of the trauma of birth does not pertain to the separation of the infant from the mother, as Freud would have it, but rather to the separation of the infant from itself in the inscription of alterity. This is so because in its embryonic form the subject lives as a parasitical part of the mother’s body so that once it is born and the umbilical cord is cut the infant subject is not only separated from the body of the mother but also from part of its own body. There are therefore, as Taylor has articulated it, “at least two dimensions of separation that contribute to desire: the separation of the subject from others, and the separation of the self from itself.”<sup>550</sup> Yet, separation is only one element constitutive of the birth trauma, another, and for Lacan perhaps even more crucial, is the intrusive or invasive inscription of alterity. As Lacan explains:

[Q]u’en émergeant à ce monde où il [i.e. l’être vivant humain] doit respirer, il est d’abord littéralement étouffé, suffoqué. C’est ce que l’on a appelé le trauma—il n’y en a pas d’autre—, le trauma de la naissance, qui n’est pas séparation d’avec la mère, mais aspiration en soi d’un milieu foncièrement Autre.<sup>551</sup>

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c’est compté, et dans ce compté, le comptant, déjà, y est. C’est ensuite seulement que le sujet a à s’y reconnaître, à s’y reconnaître comme comptant” (Sem XI, 24/20). In other words, the subject is structurally determined as a ‘one’ in the field of the other before it is able to recognize itself as such, that is, also before it is able to speak in the place of its prescribed oneness and to say *I*.

<sup>549</sup> Malabou 2012, 133.

<sup>550</sup> Taylor 1987, 100–101.

<sup>551</sup> Sem X, 378/327.

In other words, the human being is invaded by the other before it even has a chance to establish itself, which is why Lacan takes the “*prématuration spécifique de la naissance*”<sup>552</sup> pertaining to the human infant to be of great importance to understanding the psychoanalytic subject. The human infant is born prematurely insofar as it is born too early to care for itself and therefore as wholly dependent on the (m)other’s care to sustain its immature being; yet such immaturity presumably goes for most other mammals as well. The *specific* prematurity of the human infant, however, becomes obvious in the way in which this prematurity also entails a constitutive belatedness in the relation of the subject to itself. This belatedness is testified by what Lacan calls the mirror stage, which is yet another cut in the history of the psychoanalytic subject.

According to Lacan, the human infant’s initial identification of itself with its specular image introduces an irreducible and irreversible gap (*beance*) between the infant’s polymorphous body “encore plongé dans l’impuissance motrice et la dépendance du nourrissement”<sup>553</sup> and its imaginary ego projection or *Imago* represented to it in the mirror as a coherent, homeomorphic, and unified *Gestalt*. One could perhaps say that the infant goes from ‘being a body’ to ‘having a body’ as an ideal object, which, however, is misleading insofar as “la seule vue de la forme totale du corps humain donne au sujet une maîtrise imaginaire de son corps, prématurée par rapport à la maîtrise réelle.”<sup>554</sup>

From its earliest beginnings, then, the subject is constituted in ‘a primordial discord’—both chronologically and ontologically, we might add—by which it precipitates itself in such a way that it lags behind itself, and by which it becomes initially inscribed in “une ligne de fiction.”<sup>555</sup> It is constituted in a fictional direction, because this primordial ‘line of flight’ of the idealized ego, as one might be tempted to call it, will remain irreducibly discrepant from the later social determinations to which the subject will become subjected, wherefore it will continually displace the subject in a “discordance d’avec sa propre réalité.”<sup>556</sup>

Hence, from the very outset of self-recognition the subject’s relation to itself is marked by a ‘misrecognition’ (*méconnaissance*).<sup>557</sup> Not because such

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<sup>552</sup> Écrits, 96/78.

<sup>553</sup> Écrits, 94/76.

<sup>554</sup> Sem I, 93/79.

<sup>555</sup> Écrits, 94/76; 96/78.

<sup>556</sup> Écrits, 94/76.

<sup>557</sup> It is difficult to reproduce the same reduplication in English as in French when Lacan speaks of “un méconnaître essential au me connaître,” that is, of ‘a misrecognition

misrecognition could have been avoided in favor of a more appropriate or correct recognition, but because it belongs to the very structure of self-recognition that misrecognition is inscribed in it as an *essential possibility*.<sup>558</sup> Without the possibility of misrecognition, miscomprehension, or misunderstanding there would be no recognition, comprehension, or understanding in the first place—there would only be immediate givens with neither the need nor the space for such procedures. As Lacan explains:

L'analyse considère la conscience comme bornée irrémédiablement, et l'institue comme principe, non seulement d'idéalisation, mais de méconnaissance, comme—ainsi qu'on l'a dit, en un terme qui prend valeur nouvelle de se référer au domaine visuel—comme *scotome*.<sup>559</sup>

In other words, Lacan's optical depictions of the subject emphasize how every auto-inspection is conditioned by an area of partial alteration belonging to the field of vision, which means that the idealized self-image can only be construed against the dark background of blind spots. Accordingly, the *Imago* of the infant's body as a whole both symbolizes the subject's first identification of itself as a relatively stable entity, and, at the same time, also “préfigure sa destination aliénante.”<sup>560</sup>

As Lacan underlines, this cutting instance of the mirror stage is constitutive of the *me, le moi*, in separating the (real) subject from the (imaginary) ego. However, this first identificatory dyad of the real and the imaginary can only acquire a meaningful reality in its legitimation by the Other, that is, by its inscription into the intersubjective register of signifying language, which passes us on to the symbolic register.<sup>561</sup> This necessity of

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essential to recognizing myself,' or, as Fink translates it, “a misrecognizing that is essential to knowing myself” (Écrits, 684/808).

<sup>558</sup> The term ‘essential possibility’ is borrowed from Derrida who, in his discussion with Searle, emphasizes how any concept or theory of a structure said to be ‘normal,’ ‘general,’ or ‘standard’ must be able to account for “la possibilité *essentielle* des cas dits marginaux, des accidents, anomalies, contaminations, parasitages” (LI, 215/118) affecting its construction from the very outset. Accordingly, if one had the intention of developing a ‘standard’ theory or concept of self-recognition, self-understanding, or self-consciousness it would also be necessary to take into account the essential possibilities of misrecognitions, misunderstandings, and unconscious divergences always already inscribed in such ‘standard,’ which, one could argue, is precisely what Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis attempt to do.

<sup>559</sup> Sem XI, 78/82.

<sup>560</sup> Écrits, 95/76.

<sup>561</sup> We will not go into a detailed discussion of Lacan's three registers ‘the imaginary,’ ‘the real,’ and ‘the symbolic,’ here; however, as will hopefully become clearer as we proceed, we will merely note that these registers are interdependently and non-

bringing the imaginary fictional line into relation with the corrective reality of the symbolic, can be observed in the very first gesture of the infant, following its surprised jubilation in recognizing itself in the mirror, which is to turn towards the (m)other holding the child, or standing behind, it for some sign of confirmation of its own experience. The m(other) will often provide a confirmative response to the infant's experience of self-recognition by pointing to the mirror reflection and calling it by the infant's proper name, thus enforcing the sense of a unified identity.

It is first by mirroring itself in others and their employment of language that the infant subject acquires the ability to speak in the first person singular, that is, the function of the *I*, *le je*. As with every word, the subject becomes capable of saying *I* only via imitation, repeating the ways in which 'I' is employed by others in order eventually to make of this general shifter an expression of what the child will by then have become accustomed to as its own particular *I*. This is why the first language is also called the mother tongue; the infant literally borrows the tongue of the (m)other in order to speak for itself. Initially, then, my 'I' is borrowed from and only receives a meaning from another. Lacan therefore discerns the passage from the imaginary to the symbolic register as proceeding “de l'image spéculaire va à la constitution du moi sur le chemin de la subjectivation par le significatif”<sup>562</sup>—a passage that also corresponds to “le glissement par quoi le *Bewusstsein* sert à couvrir la confusion du *Selbst*.”<sup>563</sup>

At the symbolic level, then, the cut of alienation is linked to the incision of the signifying mark, which bars the subject from its acephalic or polycephalic unorganized being by turning it into an one-headed organism defined as a signifier for another signifier, and which Lacan associates with the traumatic, hence immemorial, event of a primary repression (*Urverdrängung*) in Freud.<sup>564</sup> This primary repression gives rise to the initial

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hierarchically structured, as illustrated by one of Lacan's later topologies of the subject called the Borromean knot. Accordingly, one register cannot serve as the principle of the others, and when one of the registers is somehow changed, distorted, or interrupted it will affect all of the other registers of subject as well. See, for instance, Sem XX, 107–123/118–136.

<sup>562</sup> *Écrits*, 809/685.

<sup>563</sup> *Écrits*, 809/685.

<sup>564</sup> As Lacan has it: “Le sujet transformé dans cette image polycéphale semble tenir de l'acéphale. S'il ya une image qui pourrait nous représenter la notion freudienne de l'inconscient, c'est bien celle d'un sujet acéphale, d'un sujet qui n'a plus d'*ego*, qui est extrême à l'*ego*, décentré par rapport à l'*ego*, qui n'est pas de l'*ego*. Et pourtant il est le sujet qui parle, car c'est lui qui, à tous les personnages qui sont dans le rêve, fait tenir ces discours insensés—qui justement prennent de leur caractère insensé leur sens” (Sem II, 200/167).

‘metaphor,’ which *transports* the subject (*S*) to the place of the unary trait of the first signifier (*SI*)<sup>565</sup> in replacing and representing the non-identical with the identical in its difference from others.

Accordingly, the unifying mark of the signifier is also a mark of differentiation in more than one sense. First, because it functions only on the basis of a separation of the subject from itself by introducing a gap between ‘being and meaning,’ ‘signified and signifier,’ ‘thing and word’ or ‘concept,’ ‘immediacy and mediation,’ etc. Second, strongly influenced by Saussure’s linguistic dictum that “*dans la langue il n’y a que des différences*,”<sup>566</sup> Lacan’s defines the signifier as constituted solely by its difference to other signifiers within an open network of differential relations.

This implies that the subject’s definition as a signifier for another signifier necessarily proceeds *ad infinitum* insofar as ‘*il n’y a pas d’Autre de l’Autre*.’<sup>567</sup> That is to say, there is no absolute signifier that would be able to provide closure to a signifying chain, just as there is no Other who would have the infinite knowledge capable of comprehending all the different relations of signifying language in order finally to determine the infinite finitude of subjectification in some sort of metalanguage. This interminable termination, which, as we have seen, is simply a sign of mortality, is, Lacan proclaims, ‘*le grand secret*’ of interminable psychoanalysis at whose termination only ‘*une vérité sans vérité*’ is revealed.<sup>568</sup> As such, the subject of signification remains “un étant dont l’être est toujours ailleurs”<sup>569</sup> and who can therefore never become identical to itself. Or, as Soler has put it, the subject determined by the signifier is “one without identity.”<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>565</sup> Put briefly, Lacan’s *le trait unaire* is an adaptation of Freud’s term *ein einzigen Zug* from the chapter on identification in his *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse*. Cf. GW XIII, 117. According to Lacan, the unary trait denotes that through which every being can be said to be a one, a *monas*, that is, that which makes the subject countable only on the condition of a reduction of difference. See, Sem IX, Chs. 4–5.

<sup>566</sup> Saussure 1995, 166/120

<sup>567</sup> Lacan first expressed this notorious sentence in session XVI of his sixth seminar on *Le désir et son interprétation* from 1958–59. In all fairness, it should be noted that Lacan’s denial of the Other for the Other could also, to a certain extent, be regarded as a denegation of his own earlier position regarding the Name-of-the-Father as the master signifier guaranteeing the symbolic order as “le signifiant de l’Autre en tant que lieu de la loi” (Écrits, 583/485). As Miller underlines, a turn seems to take place in Lacan’s teaching from 1958 to 1959 entailing, among other displacements of his earlier discourse, a pluralization of the Names-of-the-Father, which necessitated that “Lacan had to think against himself in order to formulate: ‘there is no Other of the Other’” (Miller 2013, 15–29).

<sup>568</sup> Cf. Sem VI, 353–354.

<sup>569</sup> Sem XX, 180/142.

<sup>570</sup> Soler 2014, 108.

Hence, if the Lacanian subject on the one hand becomes determinable in and as language, this determinability comes with a price on the other, the costs of which are accounted for in the operation of alienation entailing what Lacan calls an ‘aphanisis’ or a ‘fading’ of the subject.<sup>571</sup> Rendered in a somewhat simplistic manner, the operation of alienation occurs when the subject, which is not yet determined as such, in its constitution is confronted by a disjunctive *vel* (∨) forcing it to choose between its indeterminate, open, and semantically vacuous being and its delimited and determined meaning. However, as Lacan underlines, this choice is not an actual choice but a forced choice because you cannot choose not to choose between the two options and, moreover, because each option implies an unavoidable loss on the other side. We will let Lacan explain the aporetic operation himself:

Nous choisissons l’être, le sujet disparaît, il nous échappe, il tombe dans le non-sens—nous choisissons le sens, et le sens ne subsiste qu’écorné de cette partie de non-sens qui est, à proprement parler, ce qui constitue, dans la réalisation du sujet, l’inconscient.<sup>572</sup>

Of course this situation is a retrospective abstraction, since one could ask who exactly it is that chooses, seeing as the subject only comes to be in this choice. But this is precisely Lacan’s point: the subject has no choice—which is therefore not a choice—than to come into its being as already lost. In other words, once the subject appears as meaning in one place (in the register of the symbolic) it disappears as being in another (in the register of the real), which Lacan in his ‘Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir dans l’inconscient freudien’ refers to as the ‘lethal factor’ of language. Thus Lacan writes: “Être de non-étant, c’est ainsi qu’advient Je comme sujet qui se conjugue de la double aporie d’une subsistance véritable qui s’abolit de son savoir et d’un discours où c’est la mort qui soutient l’existence.”<sup>573</sup>

<sup>571</sup> Cf. Sem XI, 198f./207f. Lacan employs the term ‘fading’ in English insofar as he borrows it from the British psychoanalyst Ernest Jones. See also, Sem VI, 361.

<sup>572</sup> Sem XI, 192/211.

<sup>573</sup> *Écrits*, 802/679. Noticeably, this movement of meaningful, identifying, signifying existence sustaining itself through the death of non-sensical, non-identical, singular being is strongly influenced by Hegel and in particular by Kojève’s reading of Hegel. As previously noted, Hegel renders the life of spirit not only as arising from the death of nature but, as he states in the *Phänomenologie*, also as ‘carrying’ (*ertragen*) and ‘upholding’ (*erhalten*) death in itself (cf. HW 3, 36). The abortive birth of spirit is also indicated in the description of the signifying perception (*Warnehmung*) of things, which, precisely because it perceives the perceived in its thingness (*Dingheit*), implies that “das Ding geht vielmehr durch seine wesentliche Eigenschaft zu Grunde” (ibid. 103). In other words, signifying perception, as well as the meaningful language, kills the singularity of whatever it perceives or articulates in raising it to the sur-vival of spirit. On this, see also



There is no retreating of what retreats with the incision of signifying language and, bearing in mind its Latin etymology, the infant who is born without speech<sup>574</sup> will only ever come to itself as a subject of speech when it is too late to save the speechlessness of its bare being already obliterated in the garments of meaning. Lacan therefore also refers the symbolic cut to the parting of the lips, which, once they have let go of the breast (*sein*), open the void of the mouth that allows the subject first to cry and then to fill out this hollow cry with speech.<sup>575</sup> The language of consciousness would thus live off a forgotten death, which it cannot remember because it was not yet there to experience it and when it arrived there it had already killed that which it henceforth seeks to revive with its words, since “the loss does not exist before this symbolization indicates its place.”<sup>576</sup>

Lacan’s suggestion that it is the very incision of the symbolic cut that inscribes a loss in the real is important in order to avoid a naïve ‘realist’ misunderstanding of the real that would have Lacan proclaim the existence of some pure, immediate, pre-linguistic, and pre-symbolic being prior to the arrival of symbolic language. Rather, it is the inscription of symbolic language as such that retroactively gives rise to the ‘myth’ of such pure primordial being, which would have been originally lost, meaning that this ‘lost origin’ is only constituted retrospectively after the fact of cutting (*après coup(ure)*). This, again, is why traumatic repetition is the only thing that can (im)properly be said to be ‘originary,’ since the primal repression of the subject is the cut that originally marks the unmarked in such a way that it can only ever be re-marked.<sup>577</sup> Or, as Lacan formulates it in 1956: “De cette

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Agamben 1991, 41–48. However, as we shall see in what follows there is an important difference between Hegel and Lacan regarding this deathly language, which has to do with a certain obstruction of the dialectic.

<sup>574</sup> Infant is derived from the Latin *in-fans*, where *fans* is the present participle of *fari*, meaning ‘to speak,’ wherefore the infant is ‘without speech.’

<sup>575</sup> Lacan, knowing Heidegger very well, often plays on the fact that the French word for breast, *sein*, which can also mean ‘womb,’ ‘midpoint,’ and ‘heart,’ is also the German word for being, *Sein*, which is precisely what the subject loses once it lets go of the breast in order to speak.

<sup>576</sup> SIO, 191.

<sup>577</sup> As such, one could suggest that Lacan’s ‘law of language’ to some extent resembles what Derrida, in his readings of Nancy, calls the ‘law of tact.’ According to Derrida, the ‘law of tact’ at the same time demands and forbids touching, so that “[E]n touchant, il est interdit de toucher” (T, 81/66). According to this law, one must therefore “savoir toucher sans toucher, sans trop toucher, là où toucher, c’est déjà trop” (T, 82/67). In a similar way, Lacan’s ‘law of language’ both makes the enjoyment of the Thing possible and impossible. This can be illustrated by Lacan’s portmanteau word *l’interdit*, which designates both an ‘interdict’ and a ‘saying of the in-between’ thus showing how “la

hétéronomie du symbolique, nulle préhistoire ne nous permet d'effacer la coupure"<sup>578</sup> This is undoubtedly true, yet, as Blanchot reminds us in *L'écriture du désastre*, this prehistory that forbids us to efface the heteronomous cut of language because it is itself constituted as effaced by it nonetheless remains elsewhere as the 'immemorabilia' of a forgotten memory in whose unending obliteration we come to speak:

[L]a possibilité de parole et de vie dépendrait, par la mort et le meurtre, de la relation de singularité qui s'établirait fictivement avec un passé muet, en deçà de l'histoire, hors passé par conséquent, dont l'infans éternel se fait figure, en même temps qu'il s'y dérobe.<sup>579</sup>

In a more Lacanian vocabulary, this mute past of an eternal infancy continually effaced by the non-effaceable cut of signifying language belongs precisely to the inaccessibility of the real, which nevertheless bears a trace of "cet Autre préhistorique impossible à oublier."<sup>580</sup> Impossible to forget, indeed, but also impossible to remember insofar as it remains inappropriable to any proper remembrance as "quelque chose qu'au niveau de l'inconscient, seule représente une représentation."<sup>581</sup> Furthermore, this impossibility of forgetting what one cannot remember, namely, the effaced real of the ineffaceable cut of signifying language, exposes that the fact that "[c]ette extériorité du symbolique par rapport à l'homme est la notion même de l'inconscient."<sup>582</sup>

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jouissance est interdite à qui parle comme tel, ou encore qu'elle ne puisse être dite qu'entre les lignes" (Écrits, 821/696).

<sup>578</sup> Écrits, 468/392.

<sup>579</sup> EdD, 116/71.

<sup>580</sup> Sem VII, 87/71.

<sup>581</sup> Sem VII, 87/71.

<sup>582</sup> Écrits, 469/392. Here we should underline that Lacan, in a certain displaced appropriation of Saussurean linguistics, operates with a distinction between *parole*, which is usually translated as either 'speech' or 'discourse,' but which can also mean 'word,' and *langage*, usually translated as 'language,' which, in opposition to a particular language (*langue*), designates any signifying structure constituted by differential relations. When Lacan says that the unconscious is structured *like* (*comme*) a language he is therefore not saying that the unconscious is a discourse of meaningful propositions that can be identified as a particular language with a particular grammatical structure as in the register of the symbolic. Rather: "L'inconscient, à partir de Freud, est une chaîne de signifiants qui quelque part (sur une autre scène, écrit-il) se répète et insiste pour interférer dans les coupures que lui offre le discours effectif et la cogitation qu'il informe" (Écrits, 799/676). Hence, in a somewhat crude assimilation of two different (con)texts, one could say that Lacan's language would belong to what Benveniste calls the 'semiotic,' whereas speech or discourse would be of the order of the 'semantic.' According to both Lacan and

In other words, just as there was no repressed before repression, and vice versa, insofar as the *Urverdrängung* names the immemorial instigation of both at the same, yet anachronic, time, so there was no ‘authentic’ real before the ‘alienating’ reality of the signifier, since neither emerges before the cut that separates them. The point for Lacan is therefore not whether such a pure state of being can be said to have ever really existed or not, but rather that existence as such, which for Lacan is the existence of desire, needs this lacking ground in order to *ex-ist* in the first place. If the (m)other did not show signs of lacking something and therefore also of desiring something, the infant would never let go of the breast (*sein*) in its desire to become the object of that unknown desire.

In order to regain a little freedom from its traumatic alienation by the initial signifier and from the fixation of the (m)other’s desire, the subject must separate itself ‘actively,’ although not necessarily intentionally, in order to defend itself against the originary separation it suffered ‘passively’ by liberating itself from the initially repressive metaphor to the metonymy of substituting signifiers.<sup>583</sup> This second operation of separation, however, cannot be performed without a certain degree of deception insofar as a proper return to a ‘time before’ the originary separation is no longer possible (if it ever was). Instead, the subject must repeat the act of separation in order to make its engendered loss work as the productive force of the dialectics of desire: “Le fantasme de sa mort, de sa disparition, est le premier objet que le sujet a à mettre en jeu dans cette dialectique, et il le met en effet.”<sup>584</sup> Hence, the repeated separation is an operation by which the subject regains some ‘freedom’ through the very circumstance that it was trying to avoid, that is, in the non-meaning of its vanishing being. This vanishing being reveals the irreducible holes in the supposedly determining meaning of the signifiers and thereby allows the subject to play more ‘freely’ with the remainder of his being, which is nothing but these leftover holes in the nets of symbolization, by replacing one signifier with another, whereby “[u]n manque recouvre l’autre.”<sup>585</sup>

Accordingly, the two operations of alienation and separation manifested both in the imaginary alienation of the mirror stage and in alienation of

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Benveniste these different registers constituting the ambiguity of language are separated by a hiatus. Cf. Benveniste 1981, 5–23.

<sup>583</sup> Lacan is here playing on all the fluctuating significations that *separare* has in French since, as Lacan writes in signifies “aussi bien s’habiller, que se défendre, se fournir de ce qu’il faut pour vous mettre en garde, et j’irai plus loin encore, ce à quoi m’autorisent les latinistes, au *se parere*, au *s’engendrer* dont il s’agit dans l’occasion” (Sem XI, 194/214).

<sup>584</sup> Sem XI, 195/214.

<sup>585</sup> Sem XI, 195/215.

symbolic language are constitutive of one of Lacan's most basic algorithms of the subjective structure—namely, the algorithm of phantasy—showing how the support of desire is conditioned by a lack:  $\$ \diamond a$ . What this algorithm denotes is the situating of two 'lacks' (*manques*) on either side of a 'functioning rim' (*bord fonctionnant*)  $\diamond$ : on the one side, the barred subject  $\$$  (*sujet barré*), understood as the empty interval between signifiers in a signifying chain; on the other side, the small object *a* (*objet petit a*), understood as the ever-evasive real of signification. The functioning rim thus symbolizes the two operations at work in the constitution of the symbolic subject in relation to its impossible encounter with the real. These are the disjunctive alienation represented by the lower part of the lozenge ( $\vee$ : *either being or meaning*), and the conjunctive separation represented by the upper part of the lozenge allowing for the metonymic relation of desire to its always-lacking object ( $\wedge$ : *and, and, and, etc.*).<sup>586</sup>

Originally displaced in the gap between the imaginary ego and the abjected real of the subject instigated by the symbolic cut, the subject is therefore assigned the interminable task of negotiating between these orders, a negotiation that is strictly unnegotiable and, as such, interminable but nevertheless unavoidable. Lacan can therefore say that "le chemin du sujet passe entre deux murailles de l'impossible."<sup>587</sup>

#### IV.7 RESUMING: THE SAME IN THE OTHER IS THE OTHER IN THE SAME.

To sum up, with these scenes of cutting I believe Lacan is trying to underpin his view that fundamentally "le sujet n'est sujet que d'être assujettissement au champ de l'Autre."<sup>588</sup> This sentence, so significant to understanding Lacan, could in fact be read as a retranslation of Freud's equally significant sentence *Wo Es war soll Ich werden*. All too simply, we read both these psychoanalytic crescendos as emphasizing that the subject can neither be defined, determined, nor acquire any meaning by 'itself' alone but only in and through its relation to the other—whether 'inside' or 'outside.'

The subject can never be instigated as its own master, because it is always already born into, constituted and predetermined by that which is outside of its authority. Put simply, we are all born (which no one chooses to be) into a

<sup>586</sup> Cf. Sem XI, Chs. 16–17.

<sup>587</sup> Sem XI, 152/167.

<sup>588</sup> Sem XI, 172/188. The subjection of the subject concerns precisely the unconscious emergence of consciousness and meaning in this field of the Other. Wherefore, Lacan explains: "L'Autre est le lieu où se situe la chaîne du signifiant qui commande tout ce qui va pouvoir se présenter du sujet, c'est le champ de ce vivant où le sujet a à apparaître" (Sem XI, 185/203).

language, an environment, a family, and other institutions that provide us with the words, the values, the sensations, the meanings, and the relations by which we come to define ourselves but which we have had no authority in forming. This is not to say that every single human being is preprogrammed all the way from its beginning to its end with no space for accidents, divergences, or surprises. Rather, it is to say that I cannot have a relation to myself that is not somehow already induced and infiltrated by all of these instances of otherness, which I never had a chance to choose before they intimately influenced every single choice that I will ever come to make in the exposure to such accidents, divergences, and surprises.

For Lacan, then, there can be no talk of a subject in and for itself (*an und für sich*); there is only a subject in and for the other, which is why, despite his great admiration for Hegel, Lacan the psychoanalyst nevertheless dissociates himself from Hegel the philosopher. Even if the Hegelian dialectics of recognition to a certain extent displays how the desire of the subject is always the desire of the other, this dialectic remains a violent struggle between two self-consciousnesses where “l’Autre est celui qui me voit, et c’est ce qui, à soi tout seul, engage la lutte.” By contrast, “[p]our Lacan, parce que Lacan est analyste, l’Autre est là comme inconscience constituée comme telle.”<sup>589</sup> That is to say that the Other concerns my desire in the most intimately estranging of ways insofar as every possibility of my object of desire is given by the lack of an Other, who does not know what it lacks, and by the phantasies I then produce about this lack of the Other. As Lacan further explains:

C’est pourquoi il n’y a pas pour moi, non seulement d’accès à mon désir, mais même de sustentation possible de mon désir qui ait référence à un objet quel qu’il soit, si ce n’est en le couplant, en le nouant avec ceci, le \$, qui exprime la nécessaire dépendance du sujet par rapport à l’Autre comme tel.<sup>590</sup>

Without claiming the plausibility of any one-to-one translation or transposition of terms, we might still risk the suggestion that Lacan’s algebraic notations, *S* (the subject of the unconscious who is not yet existing as an I) and  $\$$  (the subject existing by the alienating separation of the signifier allowing it to speak in the first-person singular), could be read as displaced reflections of the *Es* and the *Ich* in Freud. The barred subject designates the subject inscribed in the signifying chains of symbolic language, whose existence is made up of signifiers representing themselves for another signifier. The subject of the real designates that which is originally lost to the symbolic

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<sup>589</sup> Sem X, 33/23.

<sup>590</sup> Sem X, 33/23.

inscription but that somehow remains or returns in the holes and hiatuses of the signifying chains as traces of the unspeakable silence that belongs to language as the intimate exteriority of its infancy.

The real of the subject must therefore remain mythical insofar as it is the always not yet or already no longer existing subject that eludes the *logos* of signification; as soon as it is articulated it has already escaped or been missed by its articulation and turned into what it is not. This also implies that the object *a* of desire is really the inaccessible yet irreducible remainder of the subject ‘itself,’ originally lost in its subjection to speech, signifying language, and meaning: “Where is the subject? It is necessary to find the subject as a lost object. More precisely this lost object is the support of the subject and in many cases is a more abject thing than you may care to consider.”<sup>591</sup>

The subjection of the subject to signification happens unconsciously; the subject is a space of inscription—a ‘mystic writing pad’ (*Wunderblock*) we might say with Freud, or a *subjectile* in the non-sense of Artaud<sup>592</sup>—and as such the history of a subject might be considered as a palimpsest text in the process of continually being written, read, and erased by multiple others.<sup>593</sup> Yet the subject is also the continual exscription of inscription insofar as there remains an irreducible inconsistency between the unconscious inscriptions and what is given to consciousness to read. The exscription of inscription is precisely what makes the subject of a text inexhaustible; it is that which in every text resists being read exhaustively, thus making analysis interminable. In the words of Nancy: “L’âge de l’imprimerie est bien l’âge du sujet—il n’est de livre que d’un je, et je se répète, c’est à cela qu’il se reconnaît.”<sup>594</sup>

It is in this light that we should read Lacan’s preface to the English translation of the eleventh Seminar, where he writes: “A certificate tells me that I was born. I repudiate this certificate: I am not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written, even if it looks like a subject.”<sup>595</sup> In other words, the subject is too late to have been born and is therefore in some sense still unborn—always yet to be born. This means that *I* can only ever repeat myself in the attempt to catch up with my own being, which was never simply there

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<sup>591</sup> SIO, 189.

<sup>592</sup> Cf. “Notiz über den ‘Wunderblock’” (GW XIV, 3–8). See also, ED, 293-340/196–231.

<sup>593</sup> Lacan refers to the so-called ‘interior eight’ topology of the Möbius strip to illustrate how the structural heteronomy of language functions as an “essential inscription at the origin, in the knot which constitutes the subject” (SIO, 192).

<sup>594</sup> RE, 89/325–326.

<sup>595</sup> Sem XI, viii.

but is being continually written by another—even if this attempt will remain an ever-missed encounter.<sup>596</sup>

Accordingly, there remains an irreducible ambiguity in the way in which Lacan defines the subject, which makes it impossible to reduce it to what is said or written about it, that is, to ‘language,’ ‘meaning,’ or other ‘concepts.’ On the one hand, then, the Lacanian subject is neither more nor less than a signifier for another signifier and as such is caught in the nets of signifying language. On the other hand, however, the subject is that which always fades ‘behind,’ ‘underneath,’ or ‘in between’ the signifying chains and thus perpetually resists signification by withdrawing from its grasp. This withdrawing subject is to be read neither as the stable stance of the *ὕποκειμενον* nor as the perpetual presence of the *subiectum*, but rather as the ever fading conception of such concepts. However, as Lacan emphasizes, this “sliding and the difficulty of seizing, the never-here (it is here when I search there; it is there when I am here) is not nothing.”<sup>597</sup>

In order to express this ambiguity, Lacan in his return to Freud introduces alternative, more dynamic, and vacillating topologies of the subject as substitutions for Freud’s topologies of the psyche, which are misleadingly static. Whereas the topologies of Freud, both before and after *Das Ich und Das Es*, still somehow seek to outline an internal psychic apparatus exposed to and confronted by an external environment—even if this apparatus does harbor an inner foreignness that seems to come from the outside—Lacan proposes various topologies of the subject that subvert any clear distinction between the internal and the external as well as between the subject and the object.<sup>598</sup>

In other words, object *a* is the remainder of an intimate exteriority from which the subject is cut off as a part of itself remains inaccessible to it as other than a lack—albeit a lack that is constitutive of the upholding of its subjective reality. In the words of Lacan:

C’est donc en tant que représentant de la représentation dans le fantasme, c’est-à-dire comme sujet originairement refoulé que le \$, S barré du désir, supporte ici le

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<sup>596</sup> Or, as Lacan formulates it, “the subject is the effect of this repetition in as much as it necessitates the ‘fading,’ the obliteration, of the first foundation of the subject, which is why the subject, by status, is always presented as a divided essence” (SIO, 192).

<sup>597</sup> SIO, 196.

<sup>598</sup> Very roughly, Lacan’s topologies can be divided into topologies of surfaces, which have fluid and porous boundaries such as the torus, the Klein bottle, the Möbius strip, and the cross-cap, and topologies of knotted complexes showing how different registers are in inextricably interrelated with others, such as the Borromean knot mentioned above. See, for instance: Sem X, Ch. 7; Sem XX, Ch.10; Sem XXIII, Chs. 1–3.

champ de la réalité, et celui-ci ne se soutient que de l'extraction de l'objet *a* qui pourtant lui donne son cadre.”<sup>599</sup>

What therefore happens when this constitutive lack comes to be lacking is that the very frame of the subject's reality begins to dissolve, which causes great anxiety to the subject that says *I*.

Here we begin to discern a certain relation between the uncanny and anxiety, which both somehow concern borders, thresholds, frames, and other phenomena of the liminal and which both somehow concern the difficult and slippery notion of 'the real' in Lacan, which cannot be understood simply as an unreality in opposition to reality. Rather, the real designates the originally unrealized of what was aborted and repressed in the anarchical *Urverdrängung*, and which afterwards returns to appear only elusively to the ontic optics of consciousness “comme quelque chose qui se tient en attente dans l'aire, dirai-je, du non-né.”<sup>600</sup> On Lacan's reading, it is precisely these experiences of a caesural suspense of experience that, as he says, “contraint à poser ce que Freud appelle, en en faisant l'hommage à Fechner, *die Idee einer anderer Lokalität*—une autre localité, un autre espace, une autre scène, *l'entre perception et conscience*.”<sup>601</sup>

For Freud, this '*andere Schauplatz*,' designating the scene of the unconscious primary processes that remain inaccessible and inappropriable to the secondary processes of consciousness, reveals itself mainly in the dream work.<sup>602</sup> For Lacan, by extension, the 'other scene' designates the space of the real, stretching from trauma to phantasy, that is extracted in the staging of a common 'reality,' but which continues to haunt the constitution of this stage of reality from behind the scenes. The other scene is an *otherwise than reality* that nevertheless has very real effects on reality insofar as it “se répète et insiste pour interférer dans les coupures que lui offre le discours effectif et la cogitation qu'il informe.”<sup>603</sup> With this indication of another scene, or the scene of the other, behind or beyond the stage of reality, we finally seem ready, even if not prepared, to engage with the uncanny in relation to anxiety.

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<sup>599</sup> Écrits, 554/487.

<sup>600</sup> Sem XI, 25/23.

<sup>601</sup> Sem XI, 55/56.

<sup>602</sup> Cf. GW II/III, 51; 541.

<sup>603</sup> Écrits, 799/676.



## V. THE SOLITUDE OF DISSOLUTION

### Lacan and Blanchot on Seeing Oneself Disappear

The bell then beating one—*Enter Ghost*  
– William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Il était aux prises avec quelque chose d'inaccessible, d'étranger,  
quelque chose dont il pouvait dire:  
cela n'existe pas, et qui sentait errer dans l'aire de sa solitude  
– Maurice Blanchot, *Thomas l'Obscur*

#### V.1 INTRODUCTION: THE RELATION OF ANXIETY TO THE UNCANNY

Even if Freud does not explicitly unfold the uncanny in its relation to anxiety, there are nevertheless several indications of such a relation to be found in his writings, for instance, in his insistence on distinguishing specifically uncanny experiences within various other forms of anxious experiences (*innerhalb des Ängstlichen ein 'Unheimliches' zu unterscheiden*), these being precisely experiences that evoke a specific kind of anxiety going back to the old and long familiar secrets of the home.<sup>604</sup>

In his tenth seminar on anxiety held in 1962–63, it would seem that Lacan has taken up the challenge of making the relation of the uncanny and anxiety more emphatic and more prominent, to the point where Freud's text on *Das Unheimliche* even becomes “la cheville indispensable pour aborder la question de l'angoisse.”<sup>605</sup> The notion of anxiety drawn out in the tenth seminar is so tortuously manifold that the task of unfolding even a few of its aspects would merit an entire study for itself. In what follows, I shall therefore restrict myself to a reading of the seminar that follows a very stringent and narrow thread, tracing the relation between the uncanny and anxiety. This means that we will continue to read along the thread delineated throughout the preceding chapters—all the way from the impossibility of being alone, through the dependency of personal solitude on others, to the impersonality of the *Es* and the uncanny unhomeliness in Freud. It is my hope that this thread has now led us to a pivotal point, where we can attempt to approach the almost unapproachable experience of a certain anxious, solitary, and uncanny experience of disappearance and dissolution—of the anxious subject itself and of its reality, which are two inseparable experiences. To begin this approach, we shall mainly look at Lacan's

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<sup>604</sup> Cf. GW XII, 230.

<sup>605</sup> Sem X, 53/41.

seminar on anxiety, but as we go along we shall also encounter other texts by Lacan until, in the last section, we engage in a certain reading together/apart of Lacan and Blanchot.

Yet, the relation between anxiety and the uncanny is not the only challenge taken up by Lacan in the tenth seminar, which also appears to be responding more or less implicitly to a more or less rhetorical question posed by Heidegger in his introduction to *Was ist Metaphysik?* After suggesting that anxiety might be one way for the contemporary human being to become attuned to the destinal forgetting that belongs to the truth of being, and thereby once again alluding to the relation between ‘unconcealedness’ (*Unverborgenheit*) and ‘unhomeliness’ (*Unheimlichkeit*), Heidegger asks: “Was hat das Seinsgeschick dieser Angst mit Psychologie und Psychoanalyse zu tun?”<sup>606</sup> As is quite clear from the fact that he does not even bother to unfold, let alone answer, this question (as though the answer were self-evident), Heidegger is convinced that neither psychology nor psychoanalysis have anything to offer regarding the human being in its anxious relation to destinal being. Lacan, however, seems to be less convinced regarding this matter and even less so by Heidegger’s conviction.

Accordingly, one might read Lacan’s seminar as a conflictual reading-together, or *Auseinandersetzung*, of Freud’s psycho-aesthetic analysis of the uncanny and Heidegger’s existential-ontological account of the unhomeliness of Dasein. This is not to say, however, that Lacan is putting forth an ontology, let alone a metaphysics or a philosophy (putting aside the question of a possible synonymy between these disciplinary terms) of the uncanny in his seminar on anxiety. Rather, in Lacan’s own words, the seminar resembles “plutôt un lavage de cerveau”<sup>607</sup> than a metaphysics, and perhaps even a washing that tries to scrub the metaphysical clots and coagulated scraps of ontology from the minds of his listeners and readers. In fact, the reason for Lacan’s hesitance, reluctance, and even suspicion towards ontology, becomes all the more obvious and insistent when dealing with experiences of the uncanny and other recurring traces of the unconscious insofar as they concern “c’est que ce n’est ni être, ni non-être, c’est du non-réalisé.”<sup>608</sup>

Yet, as we shall come to see, this unrealized, which remains inaccessible to any ontological project, still effects the domain of ontology insofar as everything that comes to be does so against the background of that which does not come to be. To be sure, even if the traces of an immemorial

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<sup>606</sup> GA 9, 371.

<sup>607</sup> Sem X, 85/69.

<sup>608</sup> Sem XI, 32/33.

unconscious never present themselves to an ontology, or any other logic concerned with presence, even in its negative form, they nevertheless retain an ontological function, which Lacan underpins when he writes: “La béance de l’inconscient, nous pourrions la dire *pré-ontologique*”<sup>609</sup> Moreover, this ontological function of the pre-ontological is all too often forgotten by the ontology to which it does not lend itself, and this forgetting itself occurs “d’une façon qui n’est pas sans signification.”<sup>610</sup>

Another way of envisaging the ontological function of the pre-ontological comes from Lacan’s discourse of framings, borders, thresholds, and other liminalities that play a significant role in articulating the anxiety of the uncanny, which we shall examine further on in this chapter. Becoming anxiously aware of the borders of reality is connected to the return of such pre-ontological yet irreducible remainders and residues that remain outside of any ontology of reality—albeit an ‘outside’ that may turn out already to be working on its insides, fracturing, and puncturing ontology from within.

As Lacan writes in *L’envers de la psychanalyse*, psychoanalysis reveals that the truth of ontology is nothing but a veiling of its own truth insofar as it continually seeks to cover up “le trou d’où jaillit le significant-maître.”<sup>611</sup> In other words, just as one can be ashamed of a hole in ones socks, the veiled truth of ontology would be a ‘hontology,’<sup>612</sup> and the revelation of this veiled

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<sup>609</sup> Sem XI, 31/29. As Butler has it: “Lacan disputes the primacy given to ontology within the terms of Western metaphysics and insists upon the subordination of the question ‘What is/has being?’ to the prior question ‘How is ‘being’ instituted and allocated through the signifying practices of the paternal economy?’” (Butler 1999, 55–56). Even though I agree with Butler on the matter of Lacan’s displacement of the ontological question to the question of the conditions of posing this question in the first place, that is, to its linguistic and structural conditions, I nevertheless do not think that we should reduce Lacan’s discourse to a discourse of ‘structuralism,’ but remind ourselves that it is also a discourse about that which eludes the structures of the language of being, i.e. of onto-logy. This, of course, is not the same as proclaiming the possibility of a ‘meta-language’ in which we could speak about the language of being from its outside, an endeavor which Lacan repeatedly claims is impossible. Instead, it is a matter, in the very accountancy of the structural conditions of ontology, of becoming attuned to all the gaps, slides, and slips of such accountancy and thereby of taking account of that which resists being taken into account.

<sup>610</sup> Sem XI, 31/29.

<sup>611</sup> Sem XVII, 219/189. Freud appears to make a similar point when, in *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zu Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, he quotes Heinrich Heine’s satirical verse about the cosmological or ontological philosopher who in wearing “seinen Nachtmützen und Schlafrockfetzen Stopft [...] die Lücken des Weltenbaus” (GW XV, 173).

<sup>612</sup> Sem XVII, 209/180.

truth would reveal the truth of being as being shameful.<sup>613</sup> To psychoanalysis, shame and being are thus indissoluble, and the hontology that Lacan pursues and rigorously questions is just as ethical as it is ontological. Moreover, this ethical questioning takes its dictate precisely from the Freudian imperative of the ‘Wo Es war soll Ich werden.’<sup>614</sup>

One cannot but remark here that Lacan’s suturing of ontology and shame in his (h)ontology bears a certain resemblance to Derrida’s suturing of haunting and ontology into what he, with a certain serious humor, calls ‘hauntology.’<sup>615</sup> Even though Derrida would inarguably object to my all too inconsiderate and violent drawing of resemblances, I will risk the suggestion that both Lacan’s hontology and Derrida’s hauntology have to do precisely with that which slips away, escapes, or eludes any attempt at ontic or ontological categorization, but whose traces and aftereffects may nevertheless not be entirely exorcized from these categorizations insofar as they conjure them up, even if ontology would like to conjure them away.<sup>616</sup>

Perhaps my suggestion will become more palatable when we consider just two of the common reference points of Lacan’s hontology and Derrida’s hauntology: first, their shared reference to Freud’s *Das Unheimliche* and its preoccupation with what returns to haunt the house of being, as it were, even if it should have remained hidden; and second, their shared reference to

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<sup>613</sup> In this respect, Lacan comes into relation with Lévinas, especially the Lévinas of *De l'évasion* from 1935. However, as Copjec points out in her essay on “May’68, The Emotional Month” Lacan’s take on the relation between shame and being is different from that of Lévinas insofar as, “[s]hame is not a failed flight from being, but a *flight into being*, where being—the being of surfaces, of social existence—is viewed as that which protects us from the ravages of anxiety, which risk drowning us in its borderless enigma” (Copjec 2006, 111). See also, Lévinas 1982.

<sup>614</sup> Cf. Sem VII, 7/16.

<sup>615</sup> As Derrida explains the term ‘hauntology’: “Cette logique de la hantise ne serait pas seulement plus ample et plus puissante qu’une ontologie ou qu’une pensée de l’être [...]. Elle abriterait en elle, mais comme des lieux circonscrits ou des effets particuliers, l’eschatologie et la téléologie mêmes” (SM, 31/10).

<sup>616</sup> Despite the fact that Derrida offers a harsh critique of Lacan’s phallo-phonocentric ‘masterspeech’—many points of which I agree with but others I find (more or less deliberately) miss or ignore other tendencies of Lacan’s discourse that perhaps undermines such a masterspeech—in an interview from 1971 he does seem to admit a certain proximity of his own writing to that of Lacan. After commenting on the tense relationship between Lacan and himself, and after listing several critical points in regard to Lacan’s discourse, Derrida concludes with the following statement regarding his prior silence on Lacan: “j’ai jugé que la meilleure contribution ou ‘explication’ théorique consistait à poursuivre mon travail, selon ses voies et ses exigences spécifique, que ce travail doive ou non, selon certains axes, se rapprocher de celui de Lacan et même, je ne l’exclus nullement, plus que de tout autre aujourd’hui” (POS, 117/111).

Heidegger's phenomenological and ontological, or existential-hermeneutical, endeavors, which may be said to be occupied just as much, if not more, with what does not show itself and with what withdraws and veils itself as with what does show itself, that is, with the *difference* between being and beings rather than with the being of beings as such. In other words, both hauntology and hontology are concerned with the spectrality of reality, and the phantomality of phenomenology, just as they are concerned with the unhomely secrets of the home.

After this brief traversing of disciplines, let us turn in more detail to Lacan's seminar on anxiety. To make this turn, however, we must first cast yet another short glance at Freud's essay on *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, which serves as a key text for Lacan's tenth seminar.

## V.2 THE OBJECT OF ANXIETY

For Freud, at least the Freud of 1926, anxiety always occurs in the presentiment of a certain danger, namely, the kind of danger that somehow threatens the *I*, which, according to Freud, is "die eigentliche Angststätte."<sup>617</sup> Seeing, as in the previous section, that the *I* only emerges in and as the organization of the disorganized *It*, anxiety can therefore be conceived as a signal indicating the limits of such an organizing *I* in the encounter with a task that might be too excessive for it to undertake. As Marder has pointed out, it is precisely this conception of anxiety that leads to "one of the most fundamental paradoxes in Freud's text," and, as she further explains, this paradox emerges "[t]o the extent that anxiety is located in the ego, that it *inhabits* the ego, anxiety is the ego's absolute other, its demonic *doppelgänger*, as well as its *raison d'être*."<sup>618</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> GW XIV, 171. It should be noted here that Freud comes to locate the *I* or the ego as the proper site of anxiety only through a revision of his earlier view on anxiety as an after-affect *resulting* from the repression of the libido withheld from discharge, whereas in 1926 anxiety is rather regarded as what *causes* repression. Freud explains his displacement in regard to anxiety as follows: "Das Problem, wie bei der Verdrängung die Angst entsteht, mag kein einfaches sein; immerhin hat man das Recht, an der Idee festzuhalten, daß das Ich die eigentliche Angststätte ist, und die frühere Auffassung zurückzuweisen, die Besetzungsenergie der verdrängten Regung werde automatisch in Angst verwandelt. Wenn ich mich früher einmal so geäußert habe, so gab ich eine phänomenologische Beschreibung, nicht eine metapsychologische Darstellung" (GW XIV, 120). Some pages later, Freud therefore sets things straight: "Immer ist dabei die Angsteinstellung des Ichs das Primäre und der Antrieb zur Verdrängung. Niemals geht die Angst aus der verdrängten Libido hervor" (ibid. 138).

<sup>618</sup> Marder 2012, 85.

We encounter this paradox, which is perhaps rather a double-bind, once we perceive that the *I* only functions as the organizing response to a disorganization that therefore sustains it while perpetually threatening to undo it. As a consequence of this double-bind constitutive of the *I*, there is always a degree of auto-immunity related to the affective response of anxiety insofar as it is an attempt to protect the psyche against that which also sustains it. In short, anxiety is an attempt to protect the psyche against the forces of life, which can potentially be dangerous, destructive, and disruptive and which ultimately, as we all know even if we unconsciously do not believe it, bring death.<sup>619</sup> Keeping these preliminary remarks on anxiety in Freud's oeuvre in mind, let us now proceed with care and caution to Lacan's tenth seminar as it lays out his most elaborate analysis of the affect of anxiety.

According to a certain trajectory of thought, anxiety and fear can be distinguished on account of their differing object relations such that, to put it briefly, fear is referred to in relation to a more or less determinable object, whereas anxiety is referred to as objectless. Lacan clearly interrupts this traditional distinction with one of the key statements of his tenth seminar: "L'angoisse n'est pas sans objet."<sup>620</sup> However, in the seminar, Lacan not

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<sup>619</sup> Weber indirectly notices this structure of auto-immunity when he remarks on the ambiguity of the notion of anxiety in Freud causing him to pose the following still unresolved questions: "Is anxiety a constitutive process by which the psyche maintains its coherence and identity, or does it ultimately entail their dissolution?," and "Is anxiety functional or dysfunctional? Is the danger to which it responds essentially external or internal?" (Weber 1991, 154; 156) One response to Weber's questions might be, that these questions are still unresolved because of an inherent irresolvability of anxiety, which as the protective mean aiming at maintaining the coherence and stability of the organizing *I* is perpetually at risk of dissolving this very organization by closing it off from the disorganization that keeps it going. Weber appears to offer a similar response when he affirms a double-bind of the psyche, according to which "the functioning of the psyche is, intrinsically, as it were, bound up with an irreducible exteriority, with an alterity that it simultaneously denies and affirms" (ibid. 156).

<sup>620</sup> See, for instance, Sem X, 85ff./69ff.; 105/89; 119/100. As noted previously, Freud to a certain extent contributes to this trajectory with the distinction in *Jenseits* between anxiety, fear, and horror or terror. Freud even sharpens this distinction between anxiety and fear and their respective object relations in *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst* when he writes: "Die Angst hat eine unverkennbare Beziehung zur *Erwartung*; sie ist Angst vor etwas. Es haftet ihr ein Charakter von *Unbestimmtheit* und *Objektlosigkeit* an; der korrekte Sprachgebrauch ändert selbst ihren Namen, wenn sie ein Objekt gefunden hat, und ersetzt ihn dann durch *Furcht*" (GW XIV, 197–198). According to Lacan, Kierkegaard is an important exception to this trajectory of objectless anxiety, since in *The Concept of Anxiety* he conceives that anxiety does in fact have an object even if this object is properly speaking: "the object of anxiety is a nothing [*Angestens Gjenstand er et Intet*]" (SKS 4, 380/77). See also Sem X, 35/25.

only challenges the objectlessness of anxiety but also the idea that fear arises from the presence of a determinable object perceived to be somehow endangering or threatening in itself. Commenting on Chekhov's fearful encounter with a pedigree dog at an odd hour in a forest, Lacan argues that, insofar as the dog would probably not have been frightening at an other time—in broad daylight, for example—what causes Chekhov's fear is not the dog as such, but rather “d'autre chose, quelque chose en arrière.”<sup>621</sup> Therefore, Lacan suggests that the objects of fear and anxiety might not be so different after all, and that the distinction between anxiety and fear should be sought elsewhere.<sup>622</sup>

Keeping our focus on anxiety, however, Lacan's claim that anxiety is *not without* an object is not the same as claiming that anxiety positively *has* or is in the possession of an object, because the double negation of ‘not without’—which in French is actually a triple negation ‘*n'est pas sans*’—does not automatically turn into an affirmation, but rather holds the relation between anxiety and its object in a sort of suspense.<sup>623</sup>

This suspension is necessary insofar as the object of anxiety is neither an object that can be properly grasped or comprehended by an intentional subject—which, according to Lacan, is the sole object permitted by modern subjectivist philosophy taken to its extreme by Husserl—nor is it an object that can be metaphorically and metonymously symbolized in its originary loss by desire.<sup>624</sup> Instead, the object of anxiety concerns a much more improbable object or, more specifically, it concerns the very object of impropriety, that is, of everything that makes any recourse to propriety, ownness, authenticity, or identity doubtful. This is because anxiety signals a relation with the irreducibility of the real and of its opaque function in the symbolic reality, which, as we recall from previous chapters, is sustained phantasmatically. It is in this sense that Lacan can say that anxiety is the only affect that does not deceive, because it concerns a relation to that which is

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<sup>621</sup> Sem X, 187/159.

<sup>622</sup> We should note, however, that there appears to be a shift in Lacan's thinking around 1960 in regard to the object relation of anxiety. Before this time, Lacan seems to be following Freud more closely, or more literally at least, when in his fourth seminar *La relation d'objet* from 1956–1957 he distinguishes between anxiety, which is said to be “quelque chose de *sans objet*,” and phobia or fear, which is said always to concern “quelque chose d'articulable, de nommable, de reel” (Sem IV, 244–245/284), and which even serve as a protection against the objectlessness of anxiety. However, instead of a shift in Lacan's thinking one should perhaps rather call it a refinement of his thought on the object of psychoanalysis that, after the accentuation of the *objet petit a*, reaches another level of complexity.

<sup>623</sup> Cf. Sem X, 105/89.

<sup>624</sup> Cf. Sem X, 119–120/101.

‘beyond or outside doubt’ (*le hors de doute*) even if it is the very ‘cause of doubt’ (*la cause du doute*).<sup>625</sup> Indeed, doubt only arises as an attempt to defend oneself against the appalling certainty of anxiety.

This is because anxiety is a presentiment of that for which we can never be prepared but which is nevertheless expected inasmuch as it is always already there in the secret places we call home, and as such it exposes the always unprepared, always surprised response of an existence that can never get behind itself because it arrives too late. Anxiety is the cause of doubt because it makes the limits of our reality tremble with the threatening presentiment that the unrepresentable, the unthinkable, in short ‘the real,’ might come to perforate and penetrate our horizons of possibility and let the impossible happen. Doubt is a mechanism succeeding anxiety insofar as it is an attempt to restore the limits of what can reasonably be expected by discriminating between the certain and the uncertain, the known and the unknown. Yet, anxiety exposes the blindness of wanting to know, which causes Oedipus to tear out his eyes and then become a seer with the certainty that only anxiety can obtain.

However, as Lacan remarks, anxiety is not for the *possibility* of tearing out one’s eyes, but for “l’impossible vue qui vous menace, de vos propres yeux par terre”<sup>626</sup> An impossible sight, a blind sight of one’s own eyes on the ground, which, however, is *not without* seeing. Anxiety is a witnessing of the impossibility of witnessing, of the impossibility of seeing oneself seeing, whereby—anticipating our engagement with Blanchot—“l’aveuglement est vision encore, vision qui n’est plus possibilité de voir, mais impossibilité de ne pas voir.”<sup>627</sup> We shall return to Blanchot in more detail in the last section of this chapter, but suffice it here to say that the certitude of anxiety is other than, and belongs to the shadow side, of any ‘objective’ or ‘fundamental’ certitude precisely because it is a radical calling into question of every foundation and security of knowledge. Anxiety is rather a certitude of incertitude and of the blinding inability to gain insight, leading back to Freud’s intimate association of the fear of castration with the fear of losing one’s eyes in *Das Unheimliche*. This is one reason why for Lacan, the eye

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<sup>625</sup> As Lacan explains, “la véritable substance de l’angoisse, c’est le *ce qui ne trompe pas*, le hors de doute [...]. L’angoisse n’est pas le doute, l’angoisse est la cause du doute [...]. C’est qu’il s’agit d’éviter ce qui, dans l’angoisse, se tient d’affreuse certitude” (Sem X, 92/76).

<sup>626</sup> Sem X, 191/161. Lacan is here alluding to the place in *Das Unheimliche*, where Freud interprets “die auf dem Boden liegenden blutigen Augen Olimpias” (GW XII, 240) in Hoffmann’s *Der Sandmann* as a sign of the castration anxiety leading back to the tragic self-mutilation of Oedipus.

<sup>627</sup> EL, 23/32.



even becomes the object of anxiety *par excellence*, because it is the very object “sans lequel il n’est pas d’angoisse.”<sup>628</sup>

Despite this certainty of anxiety, however, Lacan underlines that the structure of desire as supported by phantasy ( $\$ \diamond a$ ) and the structure of anxiety resemble each other insofar as they are both structured as a relation between the barred or symbolic subject and the impossibility of the real.<sup>629</sup> On my reading, what takes place in Lacan’s account of anxiety can therefore be read as a sort of reversal of the phantasmatic structure of desire by which the relation of the desiring subject to its object, always already lost in the originary cut but supported by phantasy, becomes distorted to the point of obstruction. On this reading, phantastic desire keeps the certainty of anxiety at a distance while, inversely, anxiety signals towards an imminence that threatens to eliminate desire. We will pursue this suggestion in what follows.

Recalling Lacan’s distinction between desire and drive as outlined in Chapter III, we saw that the essential function assigned to the object of desire was its incessant displacement (*Verschiebung*). In fact, desire is dependent on this perpetual default of its object and the ensuing deferral of enjoyment, whereas the drive enjoys these very failures as its success. The anxiety of desire is therefore bound up with the possibility that it might actually achieve its object, which would then result in a ‘default of default’ or a ‘lack of lack’—or, as Lacan places the emphasis: “C’est toujours le *ça ne manque pas*.”<sup>630</sup> Recalling that *ça* is Lacan’s translation of the Freudian *Es*, we should pay attention to the double emphasis of this italicized part of the sentence ‘*ça ne manque pas*,’ which can say both that ‘*there is no lack*’ and that ‘*it is not lacking*,’ meaning that as soon as the desired object is *no longer lacking* the uncanny imminence of *the It is there*.

In his tenth seminar, Lacan therefore adds two points to the distinction between desire and drive: *first*, the object of desire perpetually escapes, slips, or turns away from the intentional gaze or grasp of the subject because it actually concerns something that goes on *somewhere else*—behind its back, as it were, rather than before its eyes. *Second*, anxiety is introduced as the signaling affect that separates desire from *jouissance* and, as such, keeps desire at a safe distance from going under in an excessive expenditure of drives that would destroy the economic organization of the *I*.

Regarding the first supplement, Lacan repeatedly emphasizes that the object of desire is *behind* it and not in front of it.<sup>631</sup> This is because the lost object of desire is actually its cause, albeit a cause that desire cannot turn

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<sup>628</sup> Sem X, 125/106.

<sup>629</sup> Cf. Sem X, 11/3.

<sup>630</sup> Sem X, 67/54.

<sup>631</sup> Cf. Sem X, 120/101.

around to face without the risk of fatal consequences.<sup>632</sup> Hence, the subject of desire is no longer the subject of *Vorstellungen*—already subjected to the auto-deconstruction in Nietzsche and Heidegger—representing itself to itself by projecting itself in front of itself as an object. Rather, the subject of desire is always too late to commit itself to such projects in advance and is instead delivered over to repeating itself from an immemorial past, which has never been present and from which it has been cut off and abjected, thus leaving its object cause behind it. This object cause is, among other things, what Lacan denotes *objet petit a* insofar as “[l]e *a* est ce qui reste d’irréductible dans l’opération totale d’avènement du sujet au lieu de l’Autre.”<sup>633</sup>

This lends a certain duplicity to the *objet petit a*: On the one hand, it is the notation for the ‘lost object’<sup>634</sup> of which the desiring subject is itself a function; on the other hand, it is a remainder of the ‘mythical’ subject who lacked nothing until *after the fact* of the originary alienating separation called birth. This duplicity emerges because the *objet a* is the result, or rather the waste product, of an originary division: “Il y a, au sens de la division, un reste, un résidu.”<sup>635</sup> Moreover, this residue of the subject lost to itself is a trace of the other’s otherness (*de l’altérité de l’Autre*) that constitutes the subject as unconscious, that is, the trace of “l’Autre en tant que je ne l’atteins pas.”<sup>636</sup> Lacan points to this duplicity, when he tells us that right *there* where our habits of ‘conscious’ thinking tells us to look for ‘ourselves’—as the deliberate cause of an action, some conduct, or a desire, or as a responsible subject who ‘takes’ responsibility for such actions, conduct, and desires—that is where we should look, despite ourselves, for the thing that always eludes us: “là où vous dites *je*, c’est là, à proprement parler, que, au niveau de l’inconscient, se situe *a*.”<sup>637</sup>

In other words, the *a* in the algorithm of phantasy is a notation, not only of the originally lost object, but also of the remainder of the subject that must fade and be cast off in order for the subject of desire to come, or rather to be cut or carved, into existence. Hence, this remainder called *objet petit a* is neither an *object* nor a *subject* in the proper sense of these words, but rather the impropriety of that which remains irreducible *after the fact of the cut* (*après coup(ure)*) between subject and object. Lacan sometimes calls this irreducible remainder resisting the opposition between subject and object the

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<sup>632</sup> Lacan writes: “*a* n’est pas l’objet du désir que nous cherchons à révéler dans l’analyse, il en est la cause” (Sem X, 323/279).

<sup>633</sup> Sem X, 189/161.

<sup>634</sup> Cf. Sem X, 189/161.

<sup>635</sup> Sem X, 37/27.

<sup>636</sup> Sem X, 37/27.

<sup>637</sup> Sem X, 122/103.

Thing, and this Thing concerns precisely the *It* of the unconscious subject (S), where the *I* of the desiring subject (\$) can come to be only belatedly.<sup>638</sup>

This duplicity of the notation *a* entails that the lost object, which the subject desires to recuperate, is ultimately nothing other than the remainder of itself cut off in the original cut which constituted it as a subject. Yet because its alienating separation from itself is originary and constitutive, the subject can only desire to receive itself through the desire of another and by becoming the object of the other's desire that remains unknown, not only to the subject but also to the other itself.<sup>639</sup> In other words, the subject is delivered over to the unconscious desires of the other, or constituted in the 'field of the Other,' who knows neither what is lacking nor what is wanted. Hence, the notation *a* ultimately designates the inroad to the other (*l'abord de l'Autre*), which the subject can neither anticipate nor prepare for since its very existence is already a response to it.<sup>640</sup>

Turning now from desire to anxiety, what occurs in this turning is that the lost object, which is behind desire as its very cause, somehow comes to the fore in order to appear there as the return of something that has never been present as such. Lacan therefore concedes with Freud that, in contrast to desire, anxiety is always *before* or *in front* of something (*vor etwas*). According to Lacan, what Freud nevertheless misses in his account of anxiety, despite his engagement with the uncanny and although it remains readable in the interstices of his text, is that what anxiety is anxious *before* is precisely what is *behind* desire. This is because anxiety is an affect that goes back or returns to the very cut that—in its separation of the imaginary from the real—allows not only for the construction of symbolic subject, its desires, and its reality—which resides precisely in the gap between these two impossibilities—but also for the possible return of the impossible that was cut off and repressed in this initial incision. In other words, the proper object of anxiety is what Lacan denotes *objet petit a*, which is the notation of everything that remains inappropriable yet irreducible to symbolization or signification. Lacan explains:

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<sup>638</sup> In this respect, Lacan makes use of the 'coincidence' that the German *Es* and the French *S* are homophones. When we hear *Es* spoken we cannot distinguish it from *S*, which, according to Lacanian algebra, signifies the mythical and uncastrated subject 'before' the originary cut, and which can only return as the originally repressed remainder of the *I*.

<sup>639</sup> According to Lacan, this is the reason why the masochist, perhaps better than anyone, has understood the structure of desire as the desire of the other, when in "de se poser dans la fonction de la loque humaine, de ce pauvre déchet de corps [...]. Ce qui est cherché, c'est chez l'Autre, la réponse à cette chute essentielle du sujet dans sa misère dernière, et cette réponse est l'angoisse" (Sem X, 192/163).

<sup>640</sup> Cf. Sem X, 190/161.

L'angoisse a une autre sorte d'objet que l'objet dont l'appréhension est préparée et structurée par la grille de la coupure, du sillon, du trait unaire, du *c'est ça* [...]. L'angoisse, c'est cette coupure—cette coupure nette sans laquelle la présence du signifiant, son fonctionnement, son sillon dans le réel, est impensable—, c'est cette coupure s'ouvrant, et laissant apparaître ce que maintenant vous entendrez mieux, l'inattendu, la visite, la nouvelle, ce que si bien exprime le terme de pressentiment qui n'est pas simplement à entendre comme le pressentiment de quelque chose, mais aussi comme le *pré-sentiment*, ce qui est avant la naissance d'un sentiment.<sup>641</sup>

Hence, anxiety belongs to a moment which structurally, though not necessarily chronologically, precedes desire insofar as it belongs to the very cut that opens the desiring subject to a horizon of expectation, allowing both for the presentiment of the unknown, whether promising or threatening, and for the eerie premonition of the return of something inescapable. As we saw in the previous chapter, the anxious cut is what establishes a relation of the subject to itself as such, that is, as subjected to the desire of the other, which remains an unknown secret even though it precipitates the desire of the subject and structures its horizon of expectation while all the time withdrawing from it. However, this establishment of the subject's self-relation is at the same time also a relation of the subject to its own disappearance, that is, ultimately, to the always secretly approaching other that we call death, which seems to demand, we know not what from the living.

In Lacan's view, then, anxiety does not arise in the incertitude of coming face to face with some unprecedented novelty, but rather in confrontation with the certainty of something very old and strangely familiar that nevertheless makes its return so unexpectedly that it punctures the horizon of expectation established by the cut. Again, we can think of Dostoevsky's *The Double*, where, upon the anxious shock caused by the unexpected appearance of his double, Mr. Goljadkin nevertheless keeps repeating to himself that he “knew it all beforehand, and had had a presentiment of something of the sort for a long time.”<sup>642</sup> Freud already discerns this ambiguity of anticipant expectation and uncanny return pertaining to anxiety when, in *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, he writes that in anxiety: “Die Gefahrsituation ist die erkannte, erinnerte, erwartete Situation der Hilflosigkeit.”<sup>643</sup>

The object that anxiety is not without therefore has something to do with the uninvited guest (*hôte*), who has always already secretly arrived, not only at the door, but in the house, and who, as Lacan says, “c'est déjà ce qui était

<sup>641</sup> Sem X, 91–92/76.

<sup>642</sup> Dostoevsky 1997, 133.

<sup>643</sup> GW XIV, 199.

passé dans l'hostile."<sup>644</sup> Nietzsche associated this uncanny guest with a certain *nihil*, as did Heidegger with the nothingness of being; Dostoevsky associated it with the *doppelgänger* and Kierkegaard with a daemonic Mephistopheles. Finally, Freud associated the uncanny guest who is always already there, albeit a 'there' without presence, with the *It* in the place of which the *I* must come to be and with the deadly compulsion to repeat. That is, with the uninvited visit of the repressed, which only arrives in the form of a return to the household of hospitality (or of 'hostipitality' as Derrida would have it) that the *I* does not govern.<sup>645</sup> Even if both Freud and Heidegger speak of a certain 'readiness' or a 'preparedness' for anxiety,<sup>646</sup> Lacan will maintain that the uncanny guest always already enters *suddenly*. In this respect, we are reminded again of Mephistopheles suddenly yet stagnantly leaping in of a window in Kierkegaard's *Concept of Anxiety* when Lacan writes that "le magistral *unheimlich* de l'allemand, se présente par des lucarnes [...]. *Soudain, tout d'un coup*, toujours vous trouverez ce terme au moment de l'entrée du phénomène de l'*unheimlich*."<sup>647</sup>

With these associations, we have begun to discern why the unhomely, understood as the return of something once homely but long repressed without ever having been present, is in Lacan's view indispensable for approaching anxiety. Let us try to make this indispensable relation more approachable.

### V.3 A REVERSAL OF THE MIRROR STAGE

As we saw in the previous chapter, the subject of desire cannot come into symbolic existence without at the same time fading somewhere else beneath the alienating cuts of the signifier and "sans voir, de ce fait même, l'objet lui échapper, dans une série de déplacements infinis."<sup>648</sup> Inversely, in anxiety it is the very identity or personal existence of the desiring subject that becomes threatened with dissolution in the anonymous or impersonal existence of the unconscious. Seeing that desire is actually a defense against anxiety

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<sup>644</sup> Sem X, 91/75.

<sup>645</sup> Cf. H, 358–420.

<sup>646</sup> See for example in *Jenseits*, where Freud speaks of an '*Angstbereitschaft*' the default of which may cause such a terrible shock (*Schreck*) that the protective shield (*Reizschutz*) of the terrified one may suffer a puncture that could develop into a recurring trauma (cf. GW XIII, 31–32). See also Heidegger's post-script to *Was ist Metaphysik?*, where he speaks of a necessary "*Bereitschaft zur Angst*," which consists in the enduring insistence (*Inständigkeit*) of listening to the voice of being, which calls the human being to "das Wunder aller Wunder: *daß Seiendes ist*" (GA 9, 307).

<sup>647</sup> Sem X, 90/75.

<sup>648</sup> Sem II, 210/177.

therefore also allows anxiety to reveal something about desire that desire itself tries to veil, namely that all the objects are in fact desired “d’un sujet primitivement désaccordé, fondamentalement morcelé par cet *ego*.”<sup>649</sup>

This sentence can be read as saying several things; it says both that the ego is a fragmentation of the subject (S) before the cut of signification, but it also says that the ego is a fragment of this same subject, which is of course reminiscent of Freud’s definition of the *I* as a piece of the *It* (*ein Stück vom Es*). Yet these two sayings in fact say ‘the same’ as it differs from itself, namely, that the desiring ego constitutes itself as a unity or a ‘oneness’ only in severing itself from the driven *S*, but it thereby also makes itself into an organized fragment of the disorganizing *Es*, and this is what somehow comes to the fore in anxiety. Accordingly, we can say that that which had to disappear in order for desire to appear on the stage is that which reappears in anxiety, which also means that anxiety has an effect on the function of the mirror stage, which is one of the fabulous cuts precipitating the history of the symbolic subject as identical to itself. This is because in anxiety the specular function becomes disturbed—it no longer functions as it should, that is, as a mechanism of identification via alienating separation, but instead becomes a mechanism of auto-dissimulation that may lead to an utter dissolution of self.

In anxiety, the mirror stage is reversed whereby “ce rapport imaginaire atteint lui-même sa propre limite, et l’ego s’évanouit, se dissipe, se désorganise, se dissout.”<sup>650</sup> As a reversal of the mirror stage, anxiety is a signal of an imminence that threatens the organization of the imaginary *I* with fragmentation, dismemberment, and disorganization, or rather it makes

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<sup>649</sup> Sem II, 210/177.

<sup>650</sup> Sem II, 210/178. In this respect, we might ask how Lacan’s conception of anxiety as dissipating and dissolving of identity might relate to Heidegger’s conception of anxiety as a precondition for an ‘authentic,’ ‘proper,’ and ‘singularized’ being: “Die Angst vereinzelt das Dasein auf sein eigenstes In-der-Welt-sein” (GA 2, 249). At first glance, it would seem that anxiety for Lacan blurs and obliterates all attempts of drawing up borders between me and the Other, whereas for Heidegger anxiety would serve to do just that; separate and singularize the anxious one by exposing it to its own being. However, from our discussion of *Vereinzelnung* in Chapter II, we should recall that the singularization of anxiety has very little to do with the isolation of an identical subject from others—“so wenig *ein isoliertes Subjekt Ding*” (GA 2, 250). Rather, in anxiety our ‘everyday’ confidence in and familiarity (*alltägliche Vertrautheit*) with ourselves and others breaks down including the borders that delimit ourselves from others, and Dasein is singularized only in the sense of its unhomey exposure to being-with-others without common grounds (cf. GA 2, 251). Moreover, the solitude to which anxiety exposes Dasein, does not concern a retreat from others into some personal or private space of one’s own; instead it would be closer to the ‘solitude of not being able to be alone,’ which we have outlined in the previous chapters, and perhaps even to an ‘other solitude’ with which we will be engaging shortly.

apparent that disorganization and fragmentation is where and how the ego comes to be in the first place. Anxiety is a presentiment that the symbolic subject senses as the threat of becoming re-consumed by that part of itself from which it cut itself off in order to position itself as such. The resonance of Freud becomes clearly audible when Lacan continues the passage above as follows:

Le sujet est précipité dans un affrontement avec quelque chose qui ne peut être aucunement confondu avec l'expérience quotidienne de la perception, quelque chose que nous pourrions nommer un *id*, et que nous appellerons simplement, pour ne pas faire de confusion, un *quod*, un *qu'est-ce que c'est?*<sup>651</sup>

This *quod*, this *something* that elusively insists somewhere beyond or behind the ego unbeknownst yet strangely familiar to the *I*, is precisely the subject whose murmuring voice psychoanalysis tries to hear in between the statements of the speaking subject (*l'interdit*), or rather in between the subject of enunciation and the enunciating subject. Lacan therefore poses a challenging question to his fellow analysts: “Une interrogation est-elle seulement soutenable sur ce *quod* ultime, qui est celui de l'expérience du sujet inconscient en tant que tel, dont nous ne savons plus qui il est?”<sup>652</sup>

One way to sustain an interrogation with such an unknown would be through the anxiety by which the conscious *I* is affected in its imminence and to look more closely at what happens to the function of specular identification in such affectedness. In anxiety, something disturbs the mediatory relation to the other by way of which *I* gain some access to myself as more or less identical to myself. Anxiety is when I look into the gaze of the mirroring other and what I see in reflection is no longer what I took to be myself but instead a “passage de l'image spéculaire à ce double qui m'échappe.”<sup>653</sup>

With this turning of the specular image of identification and recognition into the estranging and dissimulating image of the double,<sup>654</sup> one can say that the double is the appearance of the subject's own disappearance. In other words, the double is a sort of negative autoscopy in the appearance of which one sees oneself disappear. This is also why the double is more like an apparition than an actual appearance, in the double sense in which Derrida understands ‘apparition’ as belonging to both the phenomenological and the phantomatic, to the appearing of something and to the dissimulation of

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<sup>651</sup> Sem II, 210/178.

<sup>652</sup> Sem II, 210/178.

<sup>653</sup> Sem X, 104/88.

<sup>654</sup> Cf. Sem X, 60/47.

appearance as the simulacrum of ‘mere appearance.’ An apparition is neither present nor absent *as such* or *in itself*; it is rather a manifestation of non-presence, and an appearance of disappearance since as Derrida writes in *Spectres de Marx*: “Il y a du disparu dans l’apparition même comme réapparition du disparu.”<sup>655</sup> We shall return to this appearance of the apparition with respect to Blanchot later in this chapter, but for now we will continue with the apparition of the double.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the figure of the double returns to remind me that there is something in the constitution of myself that escapes me and that there is something in my mirror reflection that I cannot see, or that I can only see turning away from me in the increasing dissolution of myself. In Lacan’s words: “Il s’agit d’un dissemblable essentiel, qui n’est ni le supplément ni le complément du semblable, qui est l’image même de la dislocation, du déchirement essentiel du sujet.”<sup>656</sup> As we have seen, Lacan’s rendering of the mirror stage shows how in the very moment when I recognize myself as ‘one,’ I have already lost my oneness. One does not come before two, just as two does not come before three and so on endlessly, and this is why caesural rhythm is already there in the beginning.<sup>657</sup> However, due to the essential misrecognition of the mirror stage the *I* continually, yet illusory, succeeds in masking its originary duplicity (*masque sa duplicité*).<sup>658</sup>

The anxiety-provoking apparition of the double reintroduces a radical doubt in the anxious one about its own oneness, yet this doubt is actually a defense against that of which anxiety is certain, namely, that the one is never first and never just itself—never simply alone with itself. The double represents that which must disappear in order for me to appear, so that when the double reappears *I* am threatened with disappearance. The double is the manifestation of something more intimate and more central to me than myself, which therefore threatens to disperse and dissipate me from the outside of my ‘within.’ The double comes not to redouble the ‘original’ me but rather returns as someone or something more ‘originary’ and more ‘real’ than myself and my own origin. This is what happens when one begins no longer seeing oneself in the mirror, and instead sees something that can only be seen in its perpetual turning away—a specter rather than a specular image.

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<sup>655</sup> SM, 25/5. On the many aspects of apparition in Derrida, see also Saghafi 2010.

<sup>656</sup> Sem II, 209/177.

<sup>657</sup> I am here paraphrasing Lacoue-Labarthe, who in his essay “L’echo du sujet” speculates on the following proposition from von Bülow: “Au commencement était la rhythm” (Lacoue-Labarthe 1979, 199).

<sup>658</sup> *Écrits*, 685/809.



However, as Lacan stresses, “quand le fantôme se retourne, il [i.e. the subject named Maupassant] voit que c’est lui.”<sup>659</sup> This is because the turning away that makes the *real spectral* and the *specter real* is the outcome of the cut that produces the *I* in the mirror stage, but it also serves as its condition, since the specular image of identification only functions against the background of the specter that turns away behind it.

Hence, anxiety is when *I* see myself disappear in the other from whence *I* first came about. This is why Lacan affiliates anxiety with the ‘primitive object *par excellence*,’ which he furthermore associates with none other than “l’abîme de l’organe féminin d’où sort toute vie, que le gouffre de la bouche, où tout est englouti, et aussi bien l’image de la mort où tout vient se terminer.”<sup>660</sup> Yet this abyssal object is still an object and as such it still allows the anxious subject a certain distance to it; as long as *I* have a presentiment of the other, *I* haven’t been swallowed up entirely since *I* am still there in front of the object that horrifies me. What is so suffocating in the culmination of anxiety, however, is precisely that all distance, but thereby also all intimacy, diminishes until there is no more gap, no interval, no separation, and thus no space for breathing between *who* would be the subject and *what* would be the object of anxiety. Rather, the anxious one, who is already becoming no one, is stuck in an interval between nothing and nothing that leaves no room for anything but a pressing and paralyzing vacuity; a hyper-proximity without nearness; an implosive merger of the outside with inside; an interdiction of movement and speech.

In anxiety, the subject becomes the object that anxiety does not lack, which, in turn, is nothing other than the apparition of the subject’s own disappearance: “Vision d’angoisse, identification d’angoisse, dernière révélation du *tu es ceci—Tu es ceci, qui est le plus loin de toi, ceci qui est le plus informe.*”<sup>661</sup> This ‘formlessness of the flesh,’ as Lacan also calls *it*, is the ultimate danger to the organization of the ego insofar as in its exposure “il n’y a plus personne qui puisse dire je.”<sup>662</sup> Anxiety is an encounter with myself as an ‘it,’ that is, as a strange and disorganized ‘thing’ over which *I* have no authority or possession, but which on the other hand can come to fascinate and possess me like the petrifying gaze of Medusa.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>659</sup> Sem X, 116/99.

<sup>660</sup> Sem II, 196/164.

<sup>661</sup> Sem II, 186/154–155.

<sup>662</sup> Sem II, 196/164.

<sup>663</sup> The etymological heritage of *fascination* stems from the Latin *fascinum*, which can mean ‘bewitching,’ ‘enchantment,’ and ‘witchcraft,’ and which in turn is derived from the Greek *βάσκανον*, designating ‘one who bewitches,’ ‘a sorcerer,’ or ‘someone who is slanderous or malicious.’ The gaze is one of Lacan’s several *objet petit a*’s and references

This leads us to Lacan's second supplement to the distinction between desire and drive in the tenth seminar, which is that anxiety is a signal of an imminence or a hyper-proximity that threatens to extinguish desire by eliminating the distance to its object. Anxiety is a signal of the hyper-proximity of a repressed desire that threatens the relative stability of the *I*, which is stabilized precisely on the grounds of such repression. Since the lost object is the very cause of desire, which sustains desire in its metonymous substitutions of object that are not *it*, the return of the object that would be *it* threatens to destroy the very constitution of desire. What makes the subject of desire anxious is the imminent collapse of the symbolic gap separating the imaginary from the real, which also explains why the object of anxiety often causes simultaneous attraction and repulsion to the subject of desire.<sup>664</sup> “Car le désir est une défense, défense d’outre-passer une limite dans la jouissance.”<sup>665</sup>

This second supplement is perhaps the most surprising with regard to Freud, insofar as Lacan seems to be inverting the relation of anxiety to its object so that anxiety is no longer anxious of *losing* its object, as in castration or separation anxiety, but rather of *gaining* its object, or rather of being smothered by its object. However, even though Lacan at a first glance appears to be contradicting Freud on this matter, we must nevertheless return to Freud's text and his definition of anxiety as a signal of something that threatens the organization of the *I* with disorganization in order to understand what Lacan is getting at with this apparent inversion. In brief, Lacan's point is that there is no *I* without the support of an originary loss, and when this loss comes to be threatened by an imminence that might cancel it out, the *I* becomes anxious. Accordingly, Lacan reduplicates the anxiety of losing by turning it into an anxiety of losing loss, which is therefore also an anxiety of gaining or receiving something that would make the loss that *I* live off

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to the bewitching Medusa are frequent throughout his work. In the seminar on anxiety, for instance, Lacan refers to one of Freud's most famous analysands, the so-called ‘wolf man,’ who as a child was petrified by both horror and fascination by what he saw, which in French is ‘*médusé par ce qu’il voit*,’ gazing back at him in his dream of five wolves in a tree that gave him his moniker. Cf. Sem X, 301/260.

<sup>664</sup> Here again, Lacan might have looked to Kierkegaard who, in his *Concept of Anxiety*, writes precisely of the ambiguous relation that anxiety has to its object, which is no-thing (*Intet*)—because of which Kierkegaard defines anxiety as “a sympathetic Antipathy and a antipathetic sympathy [*en sympathetisk Antipathie og en antipathetisk Sympathie*]” (SKS 4, 348/42). This ambiguity is similar to the ambiguity of desire and dread pertaining to the phantasm of sovereign solitude that we outlined in Chapter II, that is, the phantasm that the lack of absence would be the fulfillment of presence, which is both the object of desire and anxiety for the subject who lives by this distinction.

<sup>665</sup> *Écrits*, 825/699.

become lost. Allow me to offer a lengthy passage from the tenth seminar where Lacan very clearly unfolds what is at stake in this seemingly inverse, but in fact reduplicative reading of Freud:

Ne savez-vous pas que ce n'est pas la nostalgie du sein maternel qui engendre l'angoisse, mais son imminence? Ce qui provoque l'angoisse, c'est tout ce qui nous annonce, nous permet d'entrevoir, qu'on va rentrer dans le giron. Ce n'est pas, contrairement à ce qu'on dit, le rythme ni l'alternance de la présence-absence de la mère. La preuve en est que ce jeu présence-absence, l'enfant se complaît à le renouveler. La possibilité de l'absence, c'est ça, la sécurité de la présence. Ce qu'il y a de plus angoissant pour l'enfant, c'est justement quand le rapport sur lequel il s'institue, du manque qui le fait désirer, est perturbé, et il est le plus perturbé quand il n'y a pas de possibilité de manque.<sup>666</sup>

Hence, seeing that desire only functions against the backdrop of an original loss and its perpetual lack, anxiety is a signal that must be conceived of at this reduplicated level, namely, as the signal of “le défaut de l'appui que donne le manque.”<sup>667</sup>

There are several things at stake on several levels in this definition of anxiety: first, it becomes apparent that it is the function of lack as a hiatus that allows the subject to keep both a *distance from* and a *relation to* the other, who provides the object of desire. This distance-in-relation is what protects the subject from dissolving in the other and from letting the specular image that constitutes me in the division of myself turn into a double who threatens to usurp my space by effacing this originary division between me and myself, and as such also between me and the other.<sup>668</sup> Second, the desiring subject becomes anxious when the lack supporting its independent existence in relation to the other is threatened, not only because a ‘lack of lack’ would mean the death, even if only momentary, of desire in the aneconomic expenditure of drives, but also because it signals the lack of lack as the lack of support of the subject as such.

At the reduplicated level, anxiety signals not only that the support of the subject is withdrawn from underneath it, it also signals the nature of this support, which was based on a phantasm to begin with. Yet, this is not all.

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<sup>666</sup> Sem X, 67/53.

<sup>667</sup> Sem X, 66–67/53.

<sup>668</sup> In this respect, Lacan's admiration for Kierkegaard and his understanding of anxiety might be precipitated by Kierkegaard's emphasis on the effacement of the difference, and the distance between me and the other related to anxiety. In the *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard, somewhat in anticipation of psychoanalysis, writes: “Anxiety is a qualification of dreaming spirit, and as such it has its place in psychology. Awake, the difference between myself and my other is posited; sleeping, it is suspended; dreaming, it is an intimated nothing [*et antydet Intet*]” (SKS 4, 347/41-42).

There is a third moment to Lacan's analysis of anxiety, which I find the hardest moment to grasp not least because it apparently undermines the whole Lacanian discourse from within. In order to conceive of this third moment, we will therefore look more closely at this Lacanian discourse and some of the criticism it has faced.

As emphasized by Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy, and Derrida—each in their own way—, Lacan has a tendency of arranging his entire discourse around the function of a lack or a gap, which thereby becomes the transcendental signifier upon which his theory of the subject hinges.<sup>669</sup> Accordingly, Lacan actually ends up ascribing a place to that which has no place—the lack or the gap—which would be precisely the *same place* or the *place of the same* in the theory of the subject that orients his entire discourse. Despite its presumed emptiness, like the void gravity of a black hole, lack thus comes to function as a sort of zero point, which, as the theoretical Archimedean point of the discourse, draws everything around it and gives everything its proper place in the order it holds together—whereby lack turns into ‘an apodicticity.’ In other words, as Nancy writes it in *Ego Sum*, Lacan ends up deciding the undecidable *as such* and thus endows it with “l’étrange indentité de son indécidabilité, c’est-à-dire véritablement de le constituer en substance, et en Sujet.”<sup>670</sup>

Yet, even if I subscribe to certain respects of this reading, the question that, in my view, still remains unanswered is what happens with this discourse of a central “place du manque circonscriptible”<sup>671</sup> when it begins to speak, not only of a ‘lack of lack’—which is still to some extent a lack—but also of the great ‘psychoanalytic secret’ that ‘*there is no lack*’ or that ‘*it is not lacking*’ (*ça ne manque pas*). Would it not appear, then, that a sort of auto-deconstruction of its own discourse is taking place in Lacan's tenth seminar? Moreover, the question also remains as to what happens to the galactic order of symbolic desire held together by the black hole of a lack, when this black hole implodes/explodes. What happens to Lacan's discourse on the subject of desire when ‘lack comes to be lacking’ (*manque vient à*

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<sup>669</sup> Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1973, 119ff./116ff.; RES, 76ff./57ff.

<sup>670</sup> ES, 21/9. As Nancy further shows in his reading of Lacan, “la théorie qui prétend s’enforcer, comme telle, dans cet écart, se ramène immanquablement à se poser elle-même comme l’identification (la réduction) de l’écart (ou *comme son sujet*)” (ibid. 19/8). Via this lack, the subject of the theory is thereby allowed to fold back on itself and to (re)turn to itself in “cette auto-fondation de l’abîme, cette façon de porter l’abîme à son comble et ce le combler du même coup” (ibid. 20/8). However, this is the movement *par excellence* of the absolute Subject, which is precisely what Lacan is trying to distance himself from with the subject of the unconscious.

<sup>671</sup> RES, 76/57.

*manquer*), or rather, when *there is* no more lack? To respond to such questions, we must try to read closely and see what Lacan's text offers with respect to this repeated '*ça ne manque pas*' denoting the way in which the hyper-proximity of the '*it*' that *is not lacking*—which is precisely the object that anxiety is *not without*—disrupts the desirable play of presence and absence sustaining the subject who can say *I*.

In this respect, it is therefore important to remark that the threatening imminence or hyper-proximity of the object of anxiety is not to be confused with a pure presence that would actually come to fill out a previous absence, because, as Lacan emphasizes, the very possibility of presence already depends on the possibility of absence and vice versa. In contrast, the object of anxiety undoes the very opposition between presence and absence and along with it the whole structure that the dialectic play between them upholds and sustains, that is, to speak with both Heidegger and Lacan, the presencing-absencing of the being (*sein/Sein*) by which everything that exists is nurtured.<sup>672</sup> Anxiety is experienced in the syncopes of the *Fort:da*, where the self-conscious subject faints in the caesura's of this rhythm of presence and absence, subject and object. But what is this syncope of the *Fort:Da* if not the *Thing* in the form of a wooden reel on a string, or more precisely, *la chose freudienne* as yet another name for the unconscious "qui vacille dans une coupure du sujet"<sup>673</sup>

For Lacan, anxiety reveals to us the heteronomy or the "non-autonomie du sujet,"<sup>674</sup> not only to the extent that it reveals that the desire of the subject is the desire *of* the other; it also goes so far as to show the subject of this desire "sous la forme de l'objet que je suis en tant qu'il m'exile de ma subjectivité, en résolvant par lui-même tous les signifiants à quoi elle est attaché."<sup>675</sup> Hence, what we have called the reversal of the mirror stage may be discerned as a sort of collapse of the imaginary *I*, with the real of the

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<sup>672</sup> This is why, in the seminar subsequent to the one on anxiety, Lacan can say that the truly atheist formula is not 'God is dead,' which would allow everything to proceed as usual, continuing to obey the law of presence-absence and even strengthening it, but rather 'God is unconscious,' which would entail the absolute upheaval of law whereby nothing would be permitted because *nothing* would inter-dict. According to Lacan, rather than doing away with the Father, Freud instead protects him when he locates "l'origine de la fonction du père sur son meurtre" (Sem XI, 58/59). Derrida makes a similar point when, in his text "Préjugés. Devant la loi," he writes that the murder of the Father fails because it only result in bestowing him more power. Therefore Derrida rhetorically asks: "La meilleure manière de le tuer, n'est-ce pas de le garder vivant (fini)? et la meilleure manière de le garder en vie, n'est-ce pas l'assassinat?" (P, 116/198)

<sup>673</sup> Sem XI, 29/28.

<sup>674</sup> Sem X, 60/48.

<sup>675</sup> Sem X, 61/48.

unconscious subject *S/Es* leaving no gap for symbolic mediation.<sup>676</sup> This is because anxiety is provoked by the hyper-proximity of an apparition, which, as Lacan explains

résume ce que nous pouvons appeler la révélation du réel dans ce qu'il a de moins pénétrable, du réel sans aucune méditation possible, du réel dernier, de l'objet essentiel qui n'est plus un objet, mais ce quelque chose devant quoi tous les mots d'arrêtent et toutes les catégories échouent, l'objet d'angoisse par excellence.<sup>677</sup>

What happens in this anxious reversal of the mirror stage is that the *impossibility of the real* is turned into the *real of impossibility*. The interval of anxiety involves no space in which the *I* can come to be in place of the *It*; rather, anxiety is the usurpation of this space where *It* returns in the place of the *I*. According to Lacan, one of the most significant insights of Freudian psychoanalysis is that in anxiety “dans l'irréel, c'est le réel qui les tourmente.”<sup>678</sup> In other words, the anxious one is not troubled by the unreal *in* reality, such as phantoms, phantasms, or nightmares, but inversely, by the real *of* the unreal. This real of the unreal also designates phantoms, phantasms, and nightmares, albeit no longer in clear contrast to reality; rather, it designates that which is ‘beyond’ the reality principle but which nevertheless remains very real. Anxiety is a signal of the irreducibility of the real that falls outside of reality and in this very falling outside constitutes reality, which is precisely the irreducible remainder that ought to have remained secret but that keeps returning to haunt the homes of the anxious.<sup>679</sup> Indeed, one might understand the uncanny as a return of the real in the reality of the symbolic, which is also a return of the doubles whose ‘veiled faces’ normally hide in the ‘penumbra of symbolic effectiveness.’<sup>680</sup>

What somehow returns to the fore in anxiety, then, is what desire had left behind it as its cause, namely, the point “où le sujet reconte l'expérience de

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<sup>676</sup> For a literary scene of such reversal in Rilke, see Excursus IV.

<sup>677</sup> Sem II, 196/164.

<sup>678</sup> Sem X, 95/79.

<sup>679</sup> Cf. Sem X, 188/160. With a reference to Schelling's *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (1809), one could say that anxiety signals “die unergreifliche Basis der Realität, der nie aufgehende Rest” (SW VII, 360), which supports existence only in its withdrawal from existence and which therefore threatens existence with its haunting return. For, as Schelling in his anticipatory psychoanalytic style writes, “immer liegt noch im Grunde das Regellose, als könnte es einmal wieder durchbrechen, und nirgends scheint es, als wären Ordnung und Form das Ursprüngliche, sondern als wäre ein anfänglich Regelloses zur Ordnung gebracht worden” (ibid. 359).

<sup>680</sup> *Écrits*, 95/77.

son déchirement, de son isolement par rapport au monde.”<sup>681</sup> Yet, the solitary and anxious experience of such dismemberment does not leave the world untouched, since the subject of desire is always already a subject of the world as the world is always that of a subject. Therefore, anxiety exposes the anxious one to the immemorial fact that “[l]e rapport humaine au monde a quelque chose de profondément, initialement, inauguralement lésé.”<sup>682</sup> In what follows, we shall therefore take a closer look at this relation of the human subject to its world.

#### V.5 THE FRAMING OF REALITY, THE UNCANNY OUTSIDE, THE OTHER SCENE

As indicated, when lack comes to be lacking in the tenth seminar on anxiety we, as readers, also seem to encounter a certain limit in and of Lacan’s writing. As I read it, however, this limit is also a place in which Lacan’s writing brushes up against another writing, namely, the writing of the impersonal or ‘the neuter’ as we find it in Blanchot. In what follows, we will therefore attempt to co-read these two writings under the signatures of Lacan and Blanchot, at the limit where they stand together apart—which, as we shall see, as a limit also constitutes a point of passage from one solitude into another.

In Lacan’s text, when ‘it is not lacking’ in anxiety something appears in place of a lack—something that in its apparition signals towards a ‘presence elsewhere’ (*présence ailleurs*), which makes the place where the apparition takes place, which is the reality of the subject, appears as an absence (*fait cette place comme absence*).<sup>683</sup> Here the proximity of Lacan’s writing to that of Blanchot is already evident, insofar as Blanchot in *L’espace littéraire* from 1955 discerns a difference between what we can call an operative lack of being, which Blanchot associates with the dialectic negativity in Hegel and which in Lacan’s writing would be the support of desire, and an inoperative being of lack, which in Lacan brings on anxiety. Blanchot explains the difference, which is really more of a *différance*, as follows:

Quand l’être manque, quand le néant devient pouvoir, l’homme est pleinement historique. Mais quand l’être manque, l’être manque-t-il? Quand l’être manque, cela signifie-t-il que ce manque ne doive rien à l’être ou bien ne serait-il pas l’être qui est au fond de l’absence d’être, ce qu’il y a encore d’être quand il n’y a rien? Quand l’être manque, l’être n’est encore que profondément dissimulé. Pour celui qui s’approche de ce manque, tel qu’il est présent dans ‘la solitude essentielle,’ ce

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<sup>681</sup> Sem II, 199/167.

<sup>682</sup> Sem II, 199/167.

<sup>683</sup> Sem X, 60/47.

qui vient à sa rencontre, c'est l'être que l'absence d'être rend présent, non plus l'être dissimulé, mais l'être *en tant que* dissimulé: la dissimulation elle-même."<sup>684</sup>

This appearance of dissimulative concealment makes everything that depends upon the concealedness of concealment in order to appear disappear, and, as Blanchot continues, this appearance of disappearance is “qu'on appelle *apparition* est cela même: est le ‘tout a disparu’ devenu à son tour apparence.”<sup>685</sup> In Lacan, this apparition of what should have remained concealed or lacking designates the uncanny in more ways than one. First, it exposes the subject to the realization that “un miroir ne s'étend pas à l'infini,”<sup>686</sup> and that there is something unknown and ungraspable beyond or behind the frame of the mirror—‘a presence elsewhere’—which is nevertheless operative in the constitution of the subject as its abject remainder. Second, it reveals the unhomely circumstance that, as Lacan writes, “[l]'homme trouve sa maison en un point situé dans l'Autre au-delà de l'image dont nous sommes faits.”<sup>687</sup>

Again, anxiety makes manifest that *there is* something in the constitution of the subject and its world that eludes it. *There is* something, which is anterior to everything that can be elaborated on and analyzed by the subject; *there is* the anteriority of alterity; *there is* the relation with the other which precedes the grasp, knowledge, and understanding of the autonomous subject, wherefore Lacan states: “Il n'y a pas d'auto-analyse, même quand on se l'imagine. L'Autre est là.”<sup>688</sup> To return to the distinction between desire and anxiety with regard to their object, we might say that desire is a relation with the anteriority of the elusive yet constitutive Other *as lacking*, whereas anxiety is a certain relationship with the *there is* of this other. Yet this elusive other, which is ‘normally’ experienced as a lack of something, is also what supports the constitution of the subject and frames the reality of its world. Should this constitutive lack, which makes both for normality and for anomaly by providing the very norm for such a distinction, therefore all of a sudden happen not to be lacking, “c'est à ce moment-là que commence l'angoisse.”<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>684</sup> EL, 265/252.

<sup>685</sup> EL, 265/253.

<sup>686</sup> Sem X, 89/72.

<sup>687</sup> Sem X, 47/60. As Lacan later explains: “L'*unheimlich* est ce qui apparaît à la place où devrait être le moins-*phi*. Ce dont tout part en effet, c'est de la castration imaginaire, car il n'y a pas, et pour cause, d'image du manque. Quand quelque chose apparaît là, c'est donc, si je puis m'exprimer ainsi, que le manque vient à manquer” (Sem X, 53/42).

<sup>688</sup> Sem X, 32/22.

<sup>689</sup> Sem X, 53/42.



Anxiety is the experience of the heteronomy of the *autos* as of the alterity of its home, wherefore it is also a relation of the subject with the fading of itself as of its reality. In various ways, Lacan therefore repeats that ‘reality is precarious,’<sup>690</sup> which is not the same as declaring that reality is ‘merely’ an illusion nor the same as denying the reality of reality, so to speak, as in some not particularly sophisticated form of ‘idealism’ versus a naive ‘realism.’

Rather, what I take Lacan to be conveying is that ‘reality’ cannot be conceived as some common and stable ground on which we may immediately find our bearings, and to which we may all refer knowing without a doubt exactly what we are referring to. Neither is ‘reality’ some enclosed territory protected against all that would not be real by clearly drawn, solid borders. Rather, the borders of reality are fragile and not uncontaminated by that which they are bordered up against, because reality is not simply given—it is artificial, constructed, ‘symbolic’ and therefore not impervious to what might threaten the frames of its construction. Alongside the dissolution of the subject who can say ‘I,’ what becomes disclosed in anxiety is precisely the framing of reality, which is one reason why Lacan states that “l’angoisse est encadrée.”<sup>691</sup> Let us therefore try to better understand this anxious disclosure of framing.

According to Derrida, a frame always relates that which is framed and appears to be inside of it to that which is outside and excluded from the framed vision. As such, the frame is a *parergon* insofar as it designates something outside of, besides, or around a work (*ergon*), which nevertheless cooperates with the constitution of the inside of this work. Therefore, the parergonal frame is “[n]i simplement dehors ni simplement dedans”<sup>692</sup> the

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<sup>690</sup> Cf. Sem VII, 27/30.

<sup>691</sup> Cf. Sem X, 92/73. In this regard, Derrida’s claim in “Pour l’amour de Lacan” that Lacan along with the failure to take notice of the literary structure of narration also misrecognizes—and here Derrida uses the word *méconnaissance*, which is undoubtedly not a fortuitous choice of words—‘the frame’ (*cadre*), and in particular its parergonal effects, which does indeed seem somewhat odd considering the frequent references to frames and framings, not to mention all the other liminal phenomena such as borders, rims, and threshold, swarming the texts of Lacan (cf. RES, 77/59). As Johnson suggests in her reading of Lacan’s text on *The Purloined Letter* and Derrida’s text on both Poe and on Lacan on Poe, one may at times suspect Derrida of framing Lacan’s texts in his readings of them. As Johnston explains, “one of the major crimes for which Lacan is being framed by Derrida is precisely the psychoanalytical reading’s elimination of the literary text’s *frame*” (Johnson 1977, 479). Yet, according to Derrida’s ‘parergonal logic’ of framing, this crime at the same time corresponds to eliminating “not the frame but the Unframability of the literary text” (ibid. 481). For us, the question is whether Derrida is framing Lacan so as to leave Lacan’s engagement with framing out of the frame.

<sup>692</sup> VEP, 63/53.

work; it is rather a borderline or a threshold between the inside and the outside, which at the same time constitutes and destabilizes the very status of this dichotomy.

Now, as we saw in the preceding section, to Lacan the reality of the world is sustained only by the extraction of something that must remain on its 'outside' in order to maintain its frame; yet in anxiety this 'outside' appears 'within' the frame, thus endangering the very function of framing. Anxiety is the premonition or presentiment of that which cannot be seen inside the frame of reality but that nevertheless conditions it from elsewhere. However, there is a 'catastrophe,' a disastrous turning point, at which this presentiment of anxiety may turn into the uncanny and sudden apparition of this 'elsewhere' inside the frame *as* that which remains outside of it. The liminal phenomenon of the uncanny is precisely the appearing inside of what should have remained outside in order to uphold and sustain the untainted separation of both, but that now makes the borders vacillate. In other words, uncanny apparitions happen when the liminal space of the spectral, which should merely function as the dark background against which the specular constitution of the subject instituted in the world of recognition, suddenly appears within the frame of the mirror. Thus, what is experienced in anxiety is not so much a simple loss of reality in the revelation of its unreality, as rather the *reality of unreality*.

Anxiety reveals the framing of reality, its artificiality, and exposes the infinite depths of its surface. In such anxious experience, the world may manifest itself as neither more nor less than a construction of shallow coulisses and set pieces amongst which the one who experiences this *mise-en-scène* turns into a hollow mask "derrière lequel il n'y a personne, derrière lequel il n'y a rien d'autre que justement le rien."<sup>693</sup>

In this anxious experience, however, there is still someone who experiences the world dissolving, and who sees herself disappearing. In other words, there is still a perspective, but is this perspective still a first-person perspective? Is it still a personal perspective in any sense? Who sees, who experiences, when the one who sees and experiences has become no one? As I read it, this is precisely one of the limit-questions where Lacan's writing comes to an end and the writing of Blanchot begins. And while one must admit that this is the limit where a certain Lacanian discourse reaches its end, it is also the very place where another begins, namely the discourse beginning with the question "Qui parle? quand il s'agit du sujet de

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<sup>693</sup> This is a quote from Eugen Fink, which Deleuze repeats in *Le Pli* (Deleuze 1988, 90/76).

l'inconscient"<sup>694</sup>—a question that, moreover, is not entirely foreign to the question of the 'Who?' that haunts the writing of Blanchot and to which we will return shortly.

At this limit point, we therefore begin to discern how the trajectory of the 'solitude of not being able to be alone,' which we have been following from the very beginning, has led us towards an 'other solitude' (*l'autre solitude*), which escapes the solitude of what one calls oneself since it is a solitude where "précisément manquent toute solitude personnelle."<sup>695</sup> In *L'espace littéraire*, Blanchot calls this other solitude 'the essential solitude,' in contrast to 'the solitude of the world,' because what is at stake in it is precisely a certain *disappearance of the world*. Yet, as we learned in our reading of Tournier's *Robinson* in Chapter II, the disappearance of the world is the consequence of an abandonment of the structure-other whose countenance grants us the secrets that make us into somebody, without which we turn into nobody and dissolve into an otherness other than what we call our fellow others.<sup>696</sup>

As Blanchot renders it, mundane solitude is associated with the attempt of a subject who supposes itself to be autonomous and authoritative subject to break "la tension dialectique par laquelle elle [i.e. la solitude] se réalise," in order to cultivate its own unique separateness as "l'absolu d'un Je suis qui veut s'affirmer sans les autres."<sup>697</sup> In contrast, the solitude that is no longer in or of the world discloses the nothingness that founds this supposedly sovereign solitude of the 'I am,' whereby the 'I' still considers itself to be separated from the others "mais n'est plus capable de reconnaître dans cette séparation la condition de son pouvoir."<sup>698</sup>

Hence, in the first solitude the separation from others serves to strengthen the personal identity of the solitary one as 'the only one,' whereas the other solitude, as Blanchot writes in *L'entretien infini*, delivers the solitary ones over to "un rapport de non-identification avec eux-mêmes."<sup>699</sup> When entering the essential solitude 'I' therefore do not approach a more intimate, personal, or profound essence of myself; instead, I am approached by something that "n'est pas que je sois un peu moins moi-même, c'est ce qu'il y a 'derrière moi,' ce que moi dissimule pour être à soi."<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>694</sup> *Écrits*, 800/677.

<sup>695</sup> LV, 48/32.

<sup>696</sup> Cf. Deleuze 1969, 370/319.

<sup>697</sup> EL, 264/251.

<sup>698</sup> EL, 264/251.

<sup>699</sup> IC, 478/384–85.

<sup>700</sup> EL, 263/251.

In this respect, something happens in the passage from the solitude of the world to the solitude of the impersonal, which resembles what happens when the psychoanalytic subject of desire encounters the uncanny in anxiety, that is, “quelque chose leur arrive, qu’ils ne peuvent ressaisir qu’en se dessaisissant de leur pouvoir de dire ‘je’, et ce qui leur arrive leur est toujours déjà arrive.”<sup>701</sup>

Prolonging this resemblance between two writings, Blanchot discerns a certain anteriority of alterity, which, similarly to the impossibility of auto-analysis discerned by Lacan, makes the solitary one inaccessible to itself in the passage from one solitude to the other. This inaccessibility is accentuated in writing because of the impossibility on the part of the writer of any *auto-lecture*, which may be read as the impossibility both of reading and of gathering oneself. Blanchot writes:

[L]’écrivain ne lit jamais son oeuvre. Elle est, pour lui, l’illisible, un secret, en face de quoi il ne demeure pas. Un secret, parce qu’il en est séparé (...) La solitude de l’écrivain, cette condition qui est son risque, viendrait alors de ce qu’il appartient, dans l’oeuvre, à ce qui est toujours avant l’oeuvre.”<sup>702</sup>

So, what is it that precedes the work in such a way that it separates the writer from it as from herself? What is this anteriority ‘behind me’ that ‘I’ must conceal in order to be able to say ‘I’ in the first place? Or, are we perhaps asking the wrong question? Should we rather ask, with Blanchot, *who* this someone is who, “regardant par-dessus mon épaule (moi peut-être)”<sup>703</sup> asks the question of the *who*? The difficulty in deciding on how to properly ask these questions is partly due to the undecidable ambiguity pertaining both to the French *qui*, which can mean both ‘who,’ ‘what,’ and ‘which,’ and to the French *il*, which can signify both ‘him’ and ‘it,’ which is difficult to reproduce in English. Nevertheless, it is precisely this undecidability between the personal (who, him) and the impersonal (what, it) that is at issue at this limit shared between one writing and another, as in the passage from one solitude to an other, which we are trying to envisage here.

The solitude that must be concealed in order for personal solitude and self-relation to arise in the world of others is precisely that which appears in the disappearance of all possibility of preserving *oneself* in solitude. It belongs to what Blanchot calls ‘the outside’ (*le dehors*) or ‘the neutral’ (*le neutre*), designating a pressing vastness entirely deprived of intimacy, and therefore belongs to an experience without any personal subject, that is, an experience

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<sup>701</sup> IC, 478/384–85.

<sup>702</sup> EL, 15/22–23.

<sup>703</sup> ASQV, 49/58.

of anonymity read in the double genitive. It is an improper experience because it properly belongs to no one, and yet a solitude still remains there where, as Blanchot writes in *Celui qui m'accompagnait pas*, “le dehors est vide, le secret est sans profondeur, ce qui est répété est le vide de la répétition, cela ne parle pas et cependant cela a toujours été déjà dit.”<sup>704</sup> Hence, the essential solitude is the solitude that remains in the dissolution of oneself in the world; it is “[I]a solitude ou la non-intériorité, l'exposition au dehors, la dispersion hors clôture, l'impossibilité de se tenir ferme, fermé.”<sup>705</sup>

With this ‘exposure to the outside,’ we will return with Blanchot to Lacan, who states that the field of anxiety with its spectral phenomena of the uncanny is always somehow involved with borders and with framing, in that, more specifically, it concerns “le rapport de la scène au monde.”<sup>706</sup> In calling forth this relation between the world and the scene, Lacan is of course alluding to ‘*der andere Schauplatz*,’<sup>707</sup> which Freud at times refers to as the place of the unconscious. In revealing the framing of the world that should have remained concealed, anxiety thereby lifts the veil on this other stage as well, which however is not exactly ‘beyond’ (*pas au-delà*) this world; rather, anxiety exposes the anxious subject to this ‘other scene’ as being far more intimate to its world than it might have believed.<sup>708</sup> As Lacan explains: “L’angoisse, c’est quand apparaît dans cet encadrement ce qui était déjà là, beaucoup plus près, à la maison, *Heim*. C’est l’hôte [...] cet hôte inconnu qui apparaît de façon inopinée a tout à fait affaire avec ce qui se rencontre dans *l’unheimlich*.”<sup>709</sup>

As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy have pointed out in their essay “La panique politique,” this ‘other scene’ of the unconscious therefore rather designates an ‘off-stage’ (*hors-scène*) or the ‘ob-scene’ (*ob-scène*), than it constitutes another scene understood as a delimitable space behind or beyond

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<sup>704</sup> CAP, 136/72.

<sup>705</sup> EdD, 53/30.

<sup>706</sup> Sem X, 90/75.

<sup>707</sup> Cf. GW II/III, 51; 541.

<sup>708</sup> Here we may once again recall Heidegger, who in *Sein und Zeit* explains how that which anxiety is anxious about comes from ‘nowhere’ (*nirgends*). Yet, as Heidegger specifies, this ‘nowhere’ “bedeutet nicht nichts, sondern darin liegt Gegend überhaupt, Erschlossenheit von Welt überhaupt für das wesenhaft räumliche In-Sein.” In other words, anxiety is anxious about the ‘nowhere’ in which our very world is constituted, or ‘framed,’ and which permeates everything that surrounds us including ourselves since, as Heidegger writes, “*es ist schon ‘da’—und doch nirgends, es ist so nah, daß es beengt und einem den Atem verschlägt—und doch nirgends*” (GA 2, 248. My italics).

<sup>709</sup> Sem X, 91/75.

the stage of the world.<sup>710</sup> This ‘other scene’ is therefore not really a scene at all but rather the place where the staging of the world is revealed and as such becomes unstaged, where the frame of the mirror appears against the background of the unframeable, and where everything familiar and recognizable goes *incognito*. The other scene is the unknown habitat of that Freudian ‘inner abroad,’ which is where the *It* resides and from whence the death drive inoperatively disorganizes the reality of the subject, but which may ‘itself’ only be discerned as “un point de fuite de toute réalité possible à atteindre.”<sup>711</sup>

Returning, in turn, to Blanchot with Lacan, one can perhaps say that the passage from one solitude to the other may be discerned as a shifting of perspectives, since—speaking in psychoanalytic terms—in the ‘other solitude’ it is no longer the anxious ‘I’ who trembles in the elusive approach of the foreign alterity of the ‘it’ that threatens its constitution or organization from within. Rather, the other solitude is when the ‘I’ gazes out at its own disappearance and dissolution into otherness from the impersonal perspective of the ‘it’ already outside within itself.

In approaching an end of this reading together-yet-apart of Lacan and Blanchot, a final question therefore remains as to whether anxiety remains in the experience of essential solitude, which is without a personal subject? Blanchot might give us an answer to this question in his consistent engagement with writing, which, in his view, is essentially bound up with this impersonal solitude. We will not go into detail about the significance of writing in Blanchot’s work, but merely note that part of this essential bond between the impersonal, solitude, and writing has to do with the paradoxical fact that the act of writing is that which gives a writer her authoritative identity and disrobes her of it at the same time. Moreover, writing designates an extremely solitary occupation that is nonetheless entirely occupied by multiple ‘others’ in more than one sense.

Perhaps, some of the most finely attuned voices of this anonymous or impersonal solitude is to be found in Beckett—since, as Blanchot asks: “Qui parle dans les livres de Samuel Beckett?”<sup>712</sup> The unnamable voices in Beckett may use the word or the linguistic sign ‘I,’ but only disbelievingly so. As empty linguistic subjects, they are wandering voices that do not

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<sup>710</sup> As the authors explain, the ‘other scene’ is “une scène plus autre, ce qui ne voudrait pas dire, surtout pas, ‘tout Autre,’ mais, de manière bien plus simple et bien plus complexe, [...] plus primitive qu’aucune scène primitive, et peut-être hors-scène ou ob-scène, ne s’agirait-il pas de la scène d’*autrui*?” (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 2013, 12–14/4).

<sup>711</sup> Sem VII, 29/21.

<sup>712</sup> LV, 286/210.

belong to anyone in particular, deprived as they are of any authenticity, interiority, personality, or substantiality. Even so, these voices also appear endlessly solitary, cut off as they are from all relations that would endow them with a personal existence, they continue to exist as absolved from themselves. The voice of the unnamable appears in the disappearance of itself, it appears as an exhausted (*infatigable*) voice, which even if it is deprived of itself, nonetheless cannot get rid of itself, cannot stop speaking.

Thus, Blanchot associates both writing and anxiety with the essential solitude of the impersonal—they both constitute a strange relation without relation because it is a relation with what not only withdraws from but also undoes relation. Accordingly, both writing and anxiety maintain a relation with that which “me perd en m’empêchant de me perdre.”<sup>713</sup> Thus, in the first part of *Faux Pas* from 1943, entitled “De l’angoisse au langage,” Blanchot writes:

L’existence de l’écrivain apporter la preuve que, dans le même individu, à côté de l’homme angoissé subsiste un homme de sang-froid, à côté du fou un être raisonnable et, uni étroitement à un muet qui a perdu tous les mots, un rhéteur maître du discours. Le cas de l’écrivain est privilégié pour cette raison qu’il représente d’une manière privilégiée le paradoxe de l’angoisse. L’angoisse met en cause toutes les réalités de la raison, ses méthodes, ses possibilités, sa possibilité, ses fins, et cependant elle lui impose d’être là: elle lui intime d’être raison aussi parfaitement qu’elle le peut; elle-même n’est possible que parce que demeure dans toute sa puissance la faculté qu’elle rend impossible et anéantit.<sup>714</sup>

Perhaps this strange relation without relation with the very thing that annihilates relation, is the fate which the arts of psychoanalysis and writing share. Moreover, perhaps this shared fate of maintaining a relation with that which escapes relation is what Lacan has in mind when, in his eleventh seminar, he compares the situation of the psychoanalyst with that of Orpheus: “Pour me laisser aller à quelque métaphore, Eurydice deux fois perdue, telle est l’image la plus sensible que nous puissions donner, dans le mythe, de ce qu’est le rapport de l’Orphée analyst à l’inconscient.”<sup>715</sup>

By way of closing this chapter, we can return to the thought that this other solitude, which we have here chosen to call a ‘solitude of dissolution,’ can be discerned almost as if ‘behind’ the initially outlined ‘solitude of not being able to be alone.’ This is because, when alone, one is also “[s]eul pour s’exposer à la pensée du désastre qui défait la solitude et déborde toute espèce de pensée, comme l’affirmation intense, silencieuse et désastreuse du

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<sup>713</sup> CAP, 111/59.

<sup>714</sup> FP, 12/4.

<sup>715</sup> Sem XI, 27/25.

dehors.”<sup>716</sup> At the risk of simplifying, we might say that our personal solitude, the solitude that make us appear as who we are, is given to us in our exposure to others. Inversely, in the abandonment of others we are delivered over to a solitude of the impersonal in which we disappear as ourselves, and as such, we share the unshareable solitude of not being able to be alone. Therefore, the solitary awareness of the dependency of ‘my-’self upon others can also lead to the elusive presentiment that were I to be abandoned to myself entirely, I would also be delivered over to a solitude in which I turn into someone else, who would be no one in particular. Since, as Blanchot writes: “Là où je suis seul, je ne suis pas là, il n’y a personne, mais l’impersonnel est là.”<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> EdD, 14/5.

<sup>717</sup> EL, 22/30.



CLOSING REMARKS  
A SOLITUDE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THE FRIENDS OF SOLITUDE

*Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen*  
– Paul Celan, ‘Große, Glühende Wölbung,’ *Atemwende*

“WHERE NOW? WHEN NOW? WHO NOW?”

While we began this thesis by asking—echoing Nancy’s question from 1986—‘who or what remains in the auto-deconstruction of *the* self?’ we might now, in approaching the end, ask whether we have come across an answer to this question. For instance, by supposing that ‘solitude’ or ‘a solitary self’ is what or who remains as though subtracted from the abandonment of the self.

In my view, we have not encountered such an answer, and for essential reasons, since it would run the risk of reestablishing the place of the definite article whose calling into question was the very departure point of our inquiry. In other words, we would have simply replaced ‘the self’ with ‘a solitary self,’ or ‘solitude,’ whereas the intention of this thesis was to put the function of the ‘the,’ as the placeholder for such replacement, on trial.

Moreover, answering in such a manner would not only turn the question of ‘who’ into a question of ‘what’—which Derrida calls ‘the instituting question of philosophy’<sup>718</sup> because it always asks for the essential, fundamental, or substantial aspect of whatever it questions, thus paving the way for a movement of thought to proceed via systematic exclusion of differences and divergences towards some unified core of meaning—it would also ignore the destabilization that surreptitiously lies at the basis of the distinction between the ‘who’ and the ‘what’—indeed, between the *auto* of the autonomous and the *auto* of the automatic—which has been a concern throughout this study.

This does not mean, however, that the risk of reestablishing, reinstitutionalizing, or reappropriating (hidden in the words we use) that which we have been trying to expose in its auto-deconstructive dismantling, destabilization, and disappropriation has been consistently avoided. Indeed, such confidence in a successful avoidance of the risk of reappropriation would itself risk presuming the overcoming of a risk that, as elaborated in the methodological considerations, is inherent to deconstruction insofar as

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<sup>718</sup> Cf. G, 31/19.

deconstruction is always an auto-deconstruction, and as such, is never in a position beyond contamination by what is under deconstruction.

As Derrida points to in “Comment ne pas parler. *Dénégations*” from 1986, deconstruction is not so much a question of avoiding something in an attempt to stay untainted, as a question of avoiding the avoidance of avoidance, because as soon as one speaks one has in a certain sense already avoided that of which one speaks. Again, as mentioned in the introduction, deconstruction is an incessant negotiation between the unspeakable or inexpressible and the expressions of speech, between the unthinkable and thought, between the impossible and the possibility of experiencing the impossible taking place as soon as one speaks. Yet, as Derrida underlines, this negotiation does not amount to the endeavor of a negative theology—if one thereby understands an attempt to guard and preserve the purity of some essentiality, with respect to which all predicative language can only be considered inadequate and insufficient. Instead, trying not to avoid avoidance means engaging with the unavoidability that the inexpressible and the expressible, the singular and the general, the idiom and the repeatable have always already intermingled and intersected with one another, and that “le croisement lui-même, ou la *symplokè*, n’appartienne proprement à aucun des deux modes et sans doute précède même leur distribution.”<sup>719</sup>

In this regard, we might say that it is not a deconstructive concern to avoid speaking improperly about something in order to preserve its propriety and keep it safe from contamination or corruption—for how does one speak properly or improperly of that which owns neither property nor propriety? How does one speak appropriately or inappropriately of the disproportionate and auto-heterogeneous? How does one speak rightly or wrongly of that which differs in itself and thus infinitely defers its own definition? For this reason, the concern is, rather, to try to expose the undecidable and disproportionate intersections of the proper and the improper, and, in the necessity of speaking, to try to speak *along with* the experience of the inexpressible interruptions of speech, since, as Derrida writes:

Même si l’idiomaticité doit nécessairement se perdre ou se laisser contaminer par la répétition qui lui confère un code et une intelligibilité, même si elle *n’arrive qu’à s’effacer*, si elle n’advient qu’en s’effaçant, l’effacement aura eu lieu, fût-il de cendre.<sup>720</sup>

Accordingly, this thesis has sought to be attentive toward the auto-deconstructive gestures of the texts with which it has engaged—gestures that

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<sup>719</sup> PSY, 557/(II) 162.

<sup>720</sup> PSY, 560–561/(II) 166.

displace, defer, and disrupt the effort of gathering answers in advance. Undoubtedly, this engagement has made the task of writing a conclusion all the more difficult—or differently difficult at least—than that of writing an introduction. No least because it has been an exploration into different experiences of the impossibility of determining, locating, or naming the remains of a self—even if it cannot get rid of itself—, wherefore any conclusive answer to the question of such remains would make manifest a betrayal of the opening that this impossibility signals. Thus, I have tried to avoid (unsuccessfully, no doubt) answering the opening question of the thesis as though it were a methodical questioning striving to gather something together by closing it off from something else in order to make it accessible for the essential grasping and handling of conceptuality—and yet, we have tried responding to it otherwise.

Where does this leave us, then? In a certain sense, it leaves us where we left off; by the interminable auto-deconstruction of *the* self, which does not transpose us to another determinable place but rather exposes how our starting place is already a trace of somewhere else. In another sense, however, it therefore leaves us elsewhere inasmuch as we are no longer in the same place, if there ever was such a place. Perhaps, then, our concern with the remains has left us ‘nowhere,’ because of their circumvention or diversion of the coordinates that would allow us to locate and determine their place. Let us therefore try to retrace our steps, in order to see how this dislocation occurred.

In the first chapter, we began our inquiry into the remains of a self with the sense of solitude that may arise from an experience of not being able to be alone with oneself. This solitary experience brought into focus, on the one hand, a sense of being bereft or abandoned by oneself because of the alterity between one and oneself, and, on the other hand, the risk of autoimmunity inherent to the attempt of purging oneself of this alterity in order to gain access to a solitude of one’s own.

In the second chapter, this ambiguity gave rise to a further exploration into the equiprimordiality of solitude and being-with-others, which conferred the sense of being delivered over to and dependent on others upon us, resulting in the ambivalent desire for an ‘absolute’ or ‘sovereign’ solitude, which, however, is also dreaded seeing as its achievement would amount to an annihilation of itself. Thus, it became clear that the solitary one in fact depends on others for a sense of personal solitude, because without others the solitary one would cease to exist as such, and instead disperse into an anonymous otherness that is no longer that of one’s ‘fellow’ others.

In Chapter III, this emergence of an anonymous solitude spurred us to proceed with an inquiry into the German pronoun ‘*es*’ as it figures in the

writings Freud, by focusing on two crucial sentences: ‘*wo Es war soll Ich werden*’ and ‘*das Ich ist nur ein Stück vom Es.*’ We conducted this inquiry through a reading of Freud’s *Jenseits*, which made the importance of the notions of repetition and (counter-)rhythm conspicuous with regard to the relation between the ‘It’ and the ‘I’ as well as between the drive and desire.

This repetitive and caesural relation between *I* and *It* drew us into a reading of *Das Unheimliche* in Chapter IV, where we undertook a specification of various differences and resemblances between Freud’s and Heidegger’s understandings of the uncannily unhomely in relation to the human ‘ethos.’ This specification came about through an analysis of the notion of the ‘daemonic’ in both Freud and Heidegger, understood as an originary separation of the human being from itself, which in the apparition of the double could turn out to be disastrous. In turn, the notion of originary separation made us aware of the various psychoanalytic ‘scenes of cutting’ in Freud and Lacan.

In Chapter V, we tried to interlace some threads from the previous chapters in a reading of Lacan’s tenth seminar on anxiety, aiming to elucidate the relation between the uncanny and anxiety. Through an analysis of what we called a ‘reversal of the mirror stage,’ I demonstrated how, in Lacan’s view, the distance between the ‘I’ and ‘It’ collapses in anxiety, whereby the reality of the symbolic subject becomes threatened not only by the apparition of the double but also by the exposition of the ‘other scene.’ Finally, this exposure to the ‘other scene,’ designating the exterior intimacy (*extimacy*) of the unconscious ‘It’ to the ‘I,’ prompted us towards a reading together—yet apart—of Lacan and Blanchot, in particular with regard to the latter’s notion of an ‘other solitude’ as a solitude of the impersonal. In my view, what Blanchot calls the essential solitude, which we in turn have called a ‘solitude of the impersonal’ or a ‘solitude of dissolution,’ may appear almost as if ‘behind’ the initially outlined ‘solitude of not being able to be alone.’

This is because the solitary awareness of the dependency of the ‘my’-self and my ‘own’ solitude upon others may also lead to the elusive experience that *if* I were to be abandoned to myself alone, I would also be delivered over to a solitude which would no longer belong to me insofar as I would be without a relation to myself, since, as Derrida writes in *Politique de l’amitié*, “l’autre est la condition de mon immanence.”<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>721</sup> PA, 63/42.

### A SOLITUDE OF RESPONSIBILITY

As we have seen in the previous chapters, deconstruction and psychoanalysis—each in their different ways—call into question the notion of solitude, obligating us to ‘revaluate’ its significance, that is, to overturn and displace the significance(s) of solitude without thereby devaluating it. It is for this reason that we conceived of a solitary self who is unable to be alone with itself inasmuch as it is bound up with plural others from its very coming into being. Yet the question of solitude as a remainder of the ongoing auto-deconstruction of the self is not only an ‘ontological’ question since, as Nancy stresses in *Être singulier pluriel*, “[i]l n’y a de différence entre l’éthique et l’ontologique: l’‘éthique’ expose ce que l’‘ontologie’ dispose.”<sup>722</sup>

In light of Nancy’s understanding of the ontological question as the sense of being shared out between us, it became evident that our questioning of solitude also called into question, not only the notions of ‘authority,’ ‘autonomy,’ and ‘identity,’ but also the notion of ‘responsibility.’ However, calling these notions into question is not the same as overthrowing them; on the contrary, it is an attempt to pay rigorous attention to what they mean to signify, historically and in the specific contexts in which they appear, thereby also exposing the moments where they might differ from their own signification, and testing their ability to survive their own deconstruction instead of solidifying them into fossilized sedimentations.

Hence, as promised in the introduction and in approaching the end, we will finally bring to the fore the question of responsibility, which has been the more or less inconspicuous and silent travelling companion to the question of solitude, which we will now try to bring into the discussion. For, how does one take responsibility for oneself if this self is never merely one’s own? What does it mean to ‘be responsible’ if the notions not only of ‘authority’ and ‘autonomy,’ but also of ‘auto-affection,’ ‘self-presence,’ and ‘self-transparency’ have already been marked and called into question by an anterior heterogeneity?

One way of thinking about responsibility under these conditions is to try to take into consideration the originary irresponsibility that comes along with, and even preconditions, any attempt at being responsible. Accordingly, the responsibility which this thesis has called into question concerns, as mentioned in the introduction, a sense and an experience of being ‘responsible without and before autonomy’ because the very *autos* of whomever is called into question only arises as a response to the other on

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<sup>722</sup> ESP, 123/99.

which it depends.<sup>723</sup> Hence, the question remains as to how one ‘takes’ responsibility for the irresponsible response to the other that one always already is. This requires further explanation, but first, let me be clear that it is not the intention of these closing remarks to pursue the question of responsibility in detail, as this would require a lengthy study of its own, but rather to open it up in an indicative manner by recourse to some of our previous findings.

Thus, for Lacan the Freudian imperative of the ‘*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*’ marks an ethical experience,<sup>724</sup> which we now may understand both as the exposure to an ethos (a *daemonic ethos*, a *divided ethos*) and as an ethical injunction. The *I* that must come to be in the place where *It* was is obliged to make a home for itself in the field of the Other, which destines me in advance, and as such will always already be responsible for this unconscious space at which it will have arrived only belatedly. In other words, the symbolic subject is always already responsible for its unconscious symptoms, even if it has never consciously chosen to be. This also means that ‘I’ must try to take into account the unaccountable, namely, the unconsciousness of ‘my’ consciousness and the automatism of ‘my’ autonomy, just as ‘I’ must respond to the irresponsibility of ‘my’ responsibility. One has never chosen to be born, neither has one chosen by whom or under what circumstances one was brought into the world—whether born or thrown—nor how one will be perceived and judged by others. Moreover, according to Lacan, one has not even chosen one’s own desires since they are always the desires of the other; and, finally, one has never chosen to be dying.

Yet, despite all of these ‘unchosens’ one is still responsible for that which one has never chosen, if nothing else, then for the simple reason that no one else is responsible in my place. Therefore, one must (*il faut*), or rather one cannot avoid trying to, reappropriate the originary disappropriation of oneself by reactively responding to the ill-timed and discontinuous other that was the cause of one—even if this is an impossible and infinite task. This is, at least, one way of reading Lacan’s statement that “le statut de l’inconscient est éthique, non point ontique.”<sup>725</sup>

Accordingly, the attempt to take into account the originary irresponsibility of responsibility does not amount to a renunciation of responsibility; on the contrary, it makes its injunction even more relentless and restless, since it awakens us to a “responsabilité de cela même dont on se tient pour

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<sup>723</sup> Cf. ASQV, 95/100.

<sup>724</sup> Sem VII, 15–16/7.

<sup>725</sup> Sem XI, 35/34.

irresponsable.”<sup>726</sup> As Derrida points out in *La carte postale*, it is psychoanalysis that, in the wake of Nietzsche, made inevitable the thought that “[o]n peut être coupable de ce dont on se croit par essence innocent, endetté de ce dont on se sent toujours d’avance acquitté. Nietzsche a osé lier la responsabilité, la dette et la culpabilité à l’inconscient.”<sup>727</sup> Thus, it is precisely *because* I am originally irresponsible—because originally heteronomous—that I am also preoriginally responsible for the fact that in the abyss of my being I am already a response to the trace of the other, which also entails that I can never be responsible in advance, but always only *after the fact*. As such, nothing is given in advance for responsibility, meaning that no criteria, no norms, no rules may serve as a guarantee of good ethical conduct or as foundation for acting responsibly because it is precisely the abyss of irresponsibility that conditions the unconditionality of responsibility.<sup>728</sup>

Thinking about responsibility in this way is therefore not so much a matter of thinking up prescriptions of what to say or how to act in order to be responsible, nor is it a matter of providing determinate answers, whether in the form of a fixed proposition, a dogma, or a conviction.<sup>729</sup> Instead, as Nancy suggests, it may be that it is not the reponse in itself but rather “la seule obligation de répondre”<sup>730</sup> that is called responsibility.

Responsibility as the obligation to respond unconditionally—without premises or presumptions about how or what to respond—requires that the response must be re-invented every time the responsible one is called into question by the singular appeal of the other. One can never measure up to this responsibility, simply because it is without measure, wherefore the experience of being responsible for a self that never simply belongs to itself but only ever relates to itself in the response to another is also a solitary experience of being finite over against the exposure to a responsibility that infinitely exceeds this finitude.<sup>731</sup> By way of closing these remarks, I shall briefly consider how such an infinite responsibility may be at work and how it may be related to the question of solitude.

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<sup>726</sup> CP, 282/264.

<sup>727</sup> CP, 282/264.

<sup>728</sup> Cf. H, 400.

<sup>729</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 241.

<sup>730</sup> RE, 95/323.

<sup>731</sup> In *Spectres de Marx*, Derrida calls this condition of unconditional responsibility the ‘law of finitude,’ which in turn designates the “loi de la décision et de la responsabilité pour des existences finies, les seuls vivants-mortels pour lesquels une décision, un choix, une responsabilité aient un sens, et un sens qui devra faire l’épreuve de l’indécidable” (SM, 144/109).

## FRIENDS OF SOLITUDE?

In the chapters preceding these concluding remarks, our main concern has been with the experiences of solitude and responsibility of a self that remains in the auto-deconstruction of the self and in the exposure to the other. However, in Chapter II we also engaged with a community without community, which is the community that remains when the metaphysical or universal warranties that assure us of having something other than nothing in common have been withdrawn. Above all, the retreat of all commonalities and universalities entails that ‘the world,’ understood as a common ground or space of whatever exists, has disappeared—if indeed it has ever been present.

Accordingly, the community without community is the community of that which remains in this worldly abandonment, leaving behind an irremediable solitude of those who are absolutely separated from one another because of “l’absence sans recours de tout monde, c’est-à-dire de tout sens commun du mot ‘monde,’”<sup>732</sup> but who nevertheless have no place of their own. We therefore examined this community without community as the community of solitary beings who share nothing but their inability to be alone by themselves and who are thus dependent on each other for a solitude of their own. Hence, as Blanchot reminds us in *La communauté inavouable*, even while we remain solitary, we are not alone in our incapability of being alone with ourselves, wherefore the solitude that is shared out (*partage*) between us also binds us to “une responsabilité inconnue,”<sup>733</sup> understood as an “attention infinie à Autrui.”<sup>734</sup>

Celan’s epigraph to these remarks discloses that “*Die Welt ist fort ich muss dich tragen*,”<sup>735</sup> where to we read: in the abandonment of the world as the common ground under our feet, we are delivered over to one another, and on this lack of ground and in this void we are obliged to carry each other. Yet, since we are all others for each other, this infinite responsibility of finitude makes us doubly responsible: we are responsible for ourselves *as* traces of others, which at the same time means that we are responsible for the traces *of* others.

‘Death’ may be the name we give to the utmost other to whose call we must all respond, but at the arrival of this other called death, the remains of the other will fall into my hands just as my remains will eventually fall into the hands of others. This is perhaps the utmost sense in which we can understand the solitude of not being able to be alone as a solitude also of

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<sup>732</sup> BS II, 366/266.

<sup>733</sup> CI, 39/21.

<sup>734</sup> CI, 72/43.

<sup>735</sup> Celan 2000b, 97.



being delivered over to others. Indeed, in or after what is called ‘my’ death I have no authority, no control, and no say in what happens to ‘my’ remains or to the remains of what was called ‘my’ life. Therefore, Derrida asserts:

[S]i peu que je sache de ce que veut dire l’altérité de l’autre ou des autres, j’ai bien dû présupposer que l’autre, les autres, ce sont précisément ceux qui peuvent toujours mourir après de moi, me survivre et disposer ainsi de ce qui reste de moi, de mes restes.<sup>736</sup>

The ‘others’ are those who may always possibly come to have ‘my’ remains at their disposal, and this disposal of my remains in a certain sense already takes place while I am still breathing, since, as Derrida continues, “l’autre peut m’enterrer vif, me manger ou m’avaler vif, me brûler vif, etc. Il peut me mettre à mort vivant, et excercer ainsi sa souveraineté.”<sup>737</sup> In other words, even before the arrival of ‘my’ death, I am already surviving on the account of others who may survive me, since ‘I’ am already a trace of the other, and “c’est là qu’il y a de l’autre qui dispose de moi, c’est là que tout moi est sans défense. Voilà ce qu’est le moi, voilà ce que je suis, ce que le *je* est, que je sois là ou pas.”<sup>738</sup>

In this double responsibility, we are therefore exposed to an irresolvable tension between survival and inheritance, according to which I inherit the remains of others even if I am neither more nor less than a remainder of the other. Yet, such responsibility does not amount to a reciprocal relationship in which we can take shifts in carrying one another or rest our feet on common grounds in order to catch our breaths. Rather, the breath of the other is in my hands even though I breathe only insofar as the other carries me; and yet we do not breathe the same air or carry on the same grounds, suggesting that the only remaining reciprocity is a reciprocity of non-reciprocity. Accordingly, others are responsible for our remains just as we ourselves are responsible for the remains of others, not only in the sense of “un corpus, un tas de cendre in soucieux de garder sa forme”<sup>739</sup> but also in the sense of the remains that are already there when *there is*... Since, as Derrida writes in *Feu la cendre*, “[a] la place d’autres, au pluriel déjà, de leurs noms et non d’eux-mêmes, il y a là cendre, ‘d’autres, il y a là cendre.’”<sup>740</sup>

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<sup>736</sup> BS II, 188/126–7.

<sup>737</sup> BS II, 189/127.

<sup>738</sup> BS II, 194/131.

<sup>739</sup> FC, 77.

<sup>740</sup> FC, 71.

In his readings of Celan and others, Derrida contemplates the trope of cinders as “le meilleur paradigme de la trace,”<sup>741</sup> because a trace is always “destinée, comme toute, à disparaître d’elle-même,”<sup>742</sup> and as such, it is already a mark of its own effacement. A cinder names what remains of a singularity, an event, an other that only leaves a trace in the effacement of itself and as such keeps its secret in the dispersion of itself. On this understanding, every other is already a cinder, because every other already bears the mark of its own disappearance, and as such is already the remains of itself understood as that which “ne pas rester auprès de soi, ne pas être à soi.”<sup>743</sup> That is to say, everybody is responsible for the remains of every other—and not only ‘human’ others—because no-body belongs to itself.

The cinders and ashes scattered throughout the writings of Celan and Derrida in the effacement of their own traces are, for both writers, associated with “ce qui reste sans rester de l’holocauste, du brûlé-tout, de l’incendie l’encens.”<sup>744</sup> In this regard, however, we should draw a distinction. For it is one thing to speculate, like Freud, on the ‘I’ in general as a ‘*Stück*’ of the ‘It,’ or to experience oneself as a ‘*Stück*’ in the abandonment of oneself to an anonymous other, but it is another thing entirely to regard others as anonymous, impersonal *Stücke* with no solitude of their own.

As is known from the testimonies handed down to us in Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*, and reenacted in László Nemes’ *Son of Saul*, the SS officers of the concentration camps developed a custom of referring to the bodily remnants of the gas chambers precisely as ‘*Stücke*’—that is, as mere pieces to be hobbled together and stacked in piles in order for the cremation process to run more efficiently.<sup>745</sup> Perhaps the gravest responsibility that we all carry in the irresolvable tension between survival and inheritance is the responsibility towards the possibility of reducing each other to nothing but ‘*Stücke*,’ which is a possibility inherent to the very independency of the beings we call ‘our’-selves. In trying to avoid letting any-body ‘fall into pieces,’ we must therefore acknowledge and beware of the unavoidable risk of doing so—whether intentionally or not. This does not entail that we must

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<sup>741</sup> FC, 43.

<sup>742</sup> FC, 57.

<sup>743</sup> FC, 61.

<sup>744</sup> FC, 43.

<sup>745</sup> For instance, in *Shoah* Filip Müller who was a member of the *Sonderkommando* in Auschwitz recounts an incident that took place when he was on a night shift at one of the crematoria: “I fetched the kapos—kapo Schloime, and kapo Wacek. They came in, and he [Oberscharführer Voss] asked them: ‘How many pieces are left?’ By ‘pieces’ he meant bodies. They told him: ‘Around five hundred pieces.’ He said: ‘By morning those five hundred pieces must be reduced to ashes’” (Lanzmann 1985, 158).

affirm the idea of some inviolable kernel of identity or some unshakeable sense of self in order to be responsible; rather, it is precisely because of a fundamental violability of the remains of a self whose *aseity* and *ipseity* have withdrawn that we are infinitely responsible toward each other.<sup>746</sup>

By way of resuming, though at the risk of over-simplifying, we can say that our personal solitude, which is the solitude that make us appear as who we are, is given to us only in our exposure to others. Inversely, in the abandonment of others, I am delivered over to a solitude of anonymity in which ‘I’ disappear and every sense of ‘property’ regarding myself dissolves because “personne n’accompagne personne.”<sup>747</sup> We share, then, the unshareable solitude of not being able to be alone that is also a mark of the unshareable finitude that ‘I’ as an other is exposed to in the infinite responsibility to carry the remains of the other. Hence, we will close by opening up to some questions that are not unrelated to the concerns of this thesis but whose responses exceeds its scope, wherefore we will have to restrict ourselves to some tentative suggestions that may invite further studies still to come. For does the sharing of the unshareable bring us closer or further away from one another? Does it make us enemies or friends of each other’s solitude?

As Artaud writes in *L’ombilic de limbes*, he considers his enemies “ceux qui me prennent pour l’ombre *que je me sens si bien être*.”<sup>748</sup> Yet how do we avoid turning each other into the shadows we might already feel ourselves to be and to which we are always at a risk of being reduced? Perhaps we should strive to become the ‘*Freunde der Einsamkeit*’ that Nietzsche called upon in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*<sup>749</sup>—a call that, according to Derrida, is precisely “à partager ce qui ne se partage pas, la solitude.”<sup>750</sup> Nietzsche also calls these friends of solitude the philosophers of the future and of the dangerous *perhaps*, but the question remains how such solitary friends would be amongst each other. Here we can only speculate: perhaps the friends of solitude would be those who do not precipitate the death of the other for whose remains they are already responsible. Perhaps they would be those who leave the future of the other open by not deciding the undecidable or closing the abyss that separates one from the other. Perhaps they would be those responsible for providing the time and the space for the other to remain there where it has no proper place or property. Perhaps they would be those responsible for the secrecy of the other who is never closest to itself,

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<sup>746</sup> Cf. V, 71/ 45–46.

<sup>747</sup> EI, 30/22.

<sup>748</sup> OC I, 82/SW, 69

<sup>749</sup> KSA 5, 63.

<sup>750</sup> PA, 53/35.

guarding it like a secret without secret. Finally, perhaps the friends of solitude would be those responsible for giving the other who is unable to be alone a solitude of its own.

Perhaps, but for now we will let the always incomparable words of Blanchot bring us to a close: “Ainsi est, ainsi serait l’amitié qui découvre l’inconnu que nous sommes nous-mêmes, et la rencontre de notre propre solitude que précisément nous ne pouvons être seuls à éprouver.”<sup>751</sup>

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<sup>751</sup> CI, 46/25.

## SUMMARY

The overall aim of this study is to show how instances of otherness can be said to be at work in the construal of self as a relation taking place in the relation to itself, thereby deferring the determination of such a relationship through interminable displacements. The opening question of the thesis concerning ‘*what or who remains* in the ongoing auto-deconstruction of the self?’ introduces the thought of a deconstruction in terms of which one can no longer speak of ‘*the self*,’ wherefore a retreat of this definite article constitutes the departure point for an inquiry into a self-relation that remains under deconstruction.

With a view to deconstructive gestures of reading and writing, the study sets out not to reconstruct a new concept, model, or theory of ‘the self’ or ‘selfhood,’ but rather to undertake an in-depth investigation of the various contexts and experiences in which the construal of ‘the self’ appears to tremble, vacillate, and deconstruct itself, thus exposing the destabilizing otherness already roaming the foundations of this construction. The thesis therefore seeks to offer a reconsideration of the displaced *topos* of an *autos*, as it were, which, in the wake of psychoanalysis and deconstruction, no longer appears conceivable as the stable reference point of self-consciousness, self-reflection, and self-presence. Yet, it is also the suggestion of this study that some sort of self-relation still *remains* in the auto-deconstruction of the self, even if such a relation may only be experienced in the abandonment of itself. For this reason, the thesis discusses various indications of such disappropriated self that occurs along with a certain sense of solitude and responsibility.

The exploration into the remains of a self is carried out in five chapters whose main concern is the question of solitude, which, however, is consistently and significantly bound up with the calling into question of responsibility. The first chapter takes up an experience of solitude confronted with the challenge of ‘not being able to be alone with oneself,’ because of an otherness that, as becomes evident in the writings of Artaud, perpetually interrupts the relation to oneself. The second chapter proceeds with an inquiry into a double-bind, according to which others constitute both a condition of possibility and of impossibility for the solitary one and for the sense of a solitude of one’s own. Through readings of Heidegger, Derrida, and Nancy, it will be argued that this intimate dependency on others implies that that which one might call one’s ‘own’ is never simply owned by oneself alone. By going into detail with the German pronoun ‘*Es*’ as it figures in the writings of Freud, the third and fourth chapters explore the various

experiences and situations in which the sense of personal self and solitude is exposed to the threat of disappearing into what we shall call ‘a solitude of the impersonal.’ The fifth chapter continues the psychoanalytic trajectory by examining how the distance between the ‘I’ and ‘It’ collapses in Lacan’s seminar on anxiety, whereby the solitary self comes to experience a threat of dissolution as it sees itself disappear into the ‘other.’ This exposure to one’s own dissolution leads on to a reading together—yet apart—of Lacan and Blanchot, with regard to the latter’s notion of an ‘other solitude,’ which is to be understood precisely as a solitude where no personal solitude remains. To a certain extent, the closing remarks shift the focus from oneself to that of the others upon whom every solitary self depends, wherefore the thesis ends by opening up to the question of responsibility that ensues from this dependency on others at the heart of solitude.

## RESUMÉ

Formålet med denne afhandling er at bidrage til en forståelse af, hvorledes momenter af en andethed kan siges at være på spil i konstruktionen af et selv som en relation, der finder sted i relationen til sig selv således, at bestemmelsen af forholdet bestandigt udsættes gennem ubestemmelige forskydninger. Spørgsmålet, som denne afhandling indledningsvis rejser, angående *'hvad eller hvem der resterer i den fortsatte autodekonstruktion af selvet?'* medfører, at man ikke uden videre kan opretholde en diskurs om *'selvet.'* Afhandlingen tager derfor udgangspunkt i tilbagekaldelsen af denne bestemte artikel knyttet til selvet for at åbne undersøgelsen af et selvforhold, der forbliver under dekonstruktion.

Med afsæt i en række dekonstruktive tankebevægelser er det ikke så meget en rekonstruktion af et nyt begreb, en model eller teori om *'selvet,'* der er indeværendes interessefelt, som det er et forsøg på at undersøge de erfaringssammenhænge, hvori konstruktionen af *'selvet'* synes at vakle og dekonstruere sig selv således, at den destabiliserende andethed, der allerede huserer i selvkonstruktionens grundlag, bløtlægges. Disse betragtninger fører til en genovervejelse af selvets forskudte sted, som i kølvandet på psykoanalysen og dekonstruktionen ikke længere kan konciperes i form af et selvnærværets holdepunkt. Det foreslås dog, men netop med afsæt i en autodekonstruktion af selvet, at et art selvforhold endnu resterer i selvets autodekonstruktion, skønt et sådant forhold måske kun lader sig erfare ved at forlade sig selv. Følgelig anføres og diskuteres en række forskelligartede indikationer på et sådant disproprieret selv, med særligt henblik på en vis betydning af ensomhed og ansvar.

Undersøgelsen af selvets rester falder i fem kapitler, hvis hovedanliggende angår spørgsmålet om ensomhed. Første kapitel bringer den ensomhed i erfaring, som mødes i det *'ikke at kunne være alene med sig selv,'* da en andethed, hvis udtryk vi møder i Artauds skrifter, uafsladeligt afbryder selvforholdet. Det andet kapitel fortsætter med spørgsmålet om ensomhed ved at tage den dobbeltbinding i betragtning, i medfør af hvilken *'det andet'* eller *'de andre'* konstituerer både muligheds- og umulighedsbetingelsen for den ensomme og dennes erfaring af en *'egen'* ensomhed. Gennem læsninger af Heidegger, Derrida og Nancy fremsættes en af afhandlingens bærende teser om, at den af andre afhængige samværen indebærer, at det, der kaldes *'ens eget,'* imidlertid aldrig kun er ejet af en selv. Afhandlingens tredje og fjerde kapitel tager afsæt i en detaljeret analyse af det tyske pronomen *'Es,'* sådan som det kommer til udtryk i Freuds skrifter, for på den baggrund at tage de mange erfaringer og situationer i øjesyn, i hvilke betydningen af det

personlige selv og dettes ensomhed er udsat for truslen om at forsvinde ind i det, der i afhandlingen kaldes for 'en upersonlighedens ensomhed.' I femte kapitel fortsættes den psykoanalytiske kurs frem mod en undersøgelse af, hvorledes afstanden mellem 'Jeg' og 'Det' synes at kollapse i Lacans angstseminar, hvorved det ensomme selv bringes i en truende erfaring af opløsning, idet det ser sig selv blive opløst i den 'anden.' Denne udsættelse for ens egen opløsning fører til en samlæsning—ihvorvel brudt—af Lacan og Blanchot med særlig henblik på sidstnævntes forståelse af en 'anden ensomhed,' hvor ingen personlig ensomhed forbliver. Afhandlingens afsluttende betragtninger over de tematikker, der er sammensat undervejs, skifter i en vis forstand fokus fra en selv til de andre, af hvem det ensomme selv er afhængig. Således bringes afhandlingen til ende med en åbning af spørgsmålet om det ansvar, der opstår ud fra det i ensomheden iboende andet.



## EXCURSUS I

### KAFKA ON THE SENSE OF BEING-DELIVERED-OVER TO OTHERS IN THE MIDST OF ONE'S SOLITUDE

As we saw and sensed in the chapter on Artaud's writing, the heteronomous dependency of one's most intimate being can seem quite invasive, intrusive, to the point of a suffocating claustrophobia that can make one sick to the stomach. Another writer who has his difficulties with the solitude of not being able to be alone, Franz Kafka, complains in a letter to his fiancée of the time, Felice Bauer, about his insufficiently solitary and sovereign existence, and about being inescapably bound up with others by the simple fact of descending from them. At the sight of his parent's conjugal bed—which all-too literally and all-too vulgarly indicates the inappropriable yet inescapable *Urszene* from whence he comes—this dependency upon others becomes nauseatingly obvious to Kafka, who in October 1916 writes:

[D]er Anblick des Ehebettes zuhause, der gebrauchten Bettwäsche, der sorgfältig hingelegten Nachthemden kann mich bis nahe zum Erbrechen reizen, kann mein Inneres nach außen kehren, es ist, als wäre ich nicht endgiltig geboren, käme immer wieder aus diesem dumpfen Leben in dieser dumpfen Stube zur Welt, müsse mir dort immer wieder Bestätigung holen, sei mit diesen widerlichen Dingen, wenn nicht ganz und gar, so doch zum Teil unlöslich verbunden, noch an den laufenwollenden Füßen hängt es wenigstens, sie stecken noch im ersten formlosen Brei.<sup>752</sup>

In light of what we have considered so far, one cannot help but take this nausea very literally: *Perhaps* Kafka wants to pull all his insides out, because the obscure room of his parent's bedroom all too clearly confirms to him a familiar sense of foreignness, or of foreign familiarity, already unknowingly known to him like the Freudian *Unheimliche*. That is, the unfamiliarly familiar sense that his utmost intimate inside is already outside, as the outside is already inside, as well as the sense that his very sense of self only comes to him because of his originary self-estrangement in the heteronomy of the first formless brew where all simple origin dissolves. And *perhaps* what both Artaud and Kafka encounter in their nauseating and intrusive experiences of being originally stolen or secreted away from themselves is a solitude of absolute dependency that hollows out any being of their own.

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<sup>752</sup> Kafka 1967, 729.

Thus, in an earlier letter to Felice, the perhaps most solitary of writers complains of not being able to be alone in his solitude and phantasizes about a solitude that would be ever more uninterrupted, ever more solitary:

Deshalb kann man nicht genug allein sein, wenn man schreibt, deshalb kann es nicht genug still um einen sein, wenn man schreibt, die Nacht ist noch zu viel Nacht [...]. Oft dachte ich schon daran, dass es die beste Lebensweise für mich wäre, mit Schreibzeug und einer Lampe im innersten Raume eines ausgedehnten, abgesperrten Kellers zu sein. Das Essen brächte man mir, stellte es immer weit von meinem Raum entfernt hinter der Äußersten Tür des Kellers nieder. Der Weg um das Essen, im Schlafrock, durch alle Kellergewölbe hindurch wäre mein einziger Spaziergang. Dann kehrte ich zu meinem Tisch zurück, würde langsam und mit Bedacht essen und wieder gleich zu schreiben anfangen. Was ich dann schreiben würde!<sup>753</sup>

Reading this passage, one cannot help noticing that even in his most solitary phantasies Kafka is still not capable of imagining a solitude in which he would be entirely independent of others and absolutely alone in order to write. Yet, what would writing be without the other? As Nancy emphasizes even the most solitary writer writes only for the other insofar as “la littérature inscrit l’être-en-commun, l’être pour autrui et par autrui.”<sup>754</sup>

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<sup>753</sup> Kafka 1967, 250.

<sup>754</sup> CD, 165/66.

## EXCURSUS II

### SADE ON THE INTRIGUE OF SOVEREIGN SOLITUDE

Perhaps some of the most extreme literary phantasies of the desire for sovereign solitude are to be found in the writings of Sade. There are a great many characters from the Sadean corpus that could be considered in this regard, but we shall restrict ourselves to one character whom, on my reading, embodies the desire for sovereign solitude taken to its absolute extreme. In his *Histoire de Juliette ou les prospérités du vice*, Sade tells us a tale of the giant Count Minski, a Muscovite by birth, who dreams of creating a world entirely purged of the otherness of others and in which he would be able to be absolutely and independently alone with himself. As Minski himself formulates it, “je suis un être unique dans mon espèce”<sup>755</sup> and the goal of his desire is to “assez puissant pour n’avoir besoin de personne, assez sage pour me plaire dans ma solitude, pour détester tous les hommes.”<sup>756</sup>

In order to obtain this goal of absolute autonomous solitude, Minski does everything in his power to demonstrate his utmost disdain for sociality by way of altrucide but also by way of humiliating and torturous practices designed to make a nothing of the other by breaking all forms social bonds, norms, or taboos, e.g. cannibalism, incest, sodomy, pedophilia, necrophilia, and, as always with Sade, the list goes on.

Having performed these various deeds in great numbers—the rapes and murders of his own mother and sister constituting a significant step in the settling of his affairs—the one last outstanding but decisive deed that remains necessary for Minski to obtain his absolute independence of other is the murder of his own father. Yet, since his father died when Minski was still a child, this last and most decisive deed, which would allow him to annihilate the other half of his parental origins, remains impossible for him to accomplish. So Minski laments his unfortunate situation: “Hélas! j’ai manqué mon père, c’est ce qui me désole: j’étais trop jeune quand il mourut.”<sup>757</sup> The premature death of his father thus becomes an emphatic insignia of the constitutive belatedness of Minski with regard to his own past, which perpetually prevents him from ever completing his future masterpiece of absolute, independent, and sovereign solitude insofar as it impedes him from negating and sublating his heteronomous origin into himself by killing and devouring his paternal originator. Preceded by his father’s premature death, Minski’s object of desire will remain forever unattainable to him, and

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<sup>755</sup> Sade 1987, 598/583.

<sup>756</sup> Sade 1987, 598/583.

<sup>757</sup> Sade 1987, 613/598.

Minski is left to suffer the hauntings of regretting what could never have come to be and the despair of not being able to escape his engendered existence. Sinking into hopelessness, he sighs, “je suis assez malheureux maintenant pour ne pouvoir plus sacrifier que des victimes ordinaires; mon cœur se blasé, je ne jouis plus.”<sup>758</sup> The enjoyment has vanished from Minski’s mutilating and murderous practices, which have become nothing but empty repetitions of the same, dealing only apathetically with insignificant others whom he can no longer meaningfully negate or annihilate since they already mean nothing to him.<sup>759</sup> The ever-deferred object of Minski’s desire, indeed of most of the Sadean Libertines, is precisely the phantasm of solitary sovereignty by which “on fait ce que personne ne fait; on est donc unique dans son genre. Voilà la pâture de l’orgueil.”<sup>760</sup>

The tale of the great count Minski exemplifies the Sadean aporia, which—in a manner similar to that of the Hegelian dialectics of slave and master<sup>761</sup>—exhibits the impossibility of absolute solitude, seeing as Minski is perhaps the most solitary offspring to have sprung from Sade’s imagination. Minski operates alone, he has no need of fellows or friends, and he refuses to become

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<sup>758</sup> Sade 1987, 614/598.

<sup>759</sup> Remarkably, the phenomenon of repetition in Sade’s writings has received two seminal interpretations, one by Klossowski the other by Blanchot, which are quite similar in terms of their thematic movement but which precisely on the theme of apathetic repetition differ and assume almost contradictory perspectives. In *Sade mon Prochain*, Klossowski renders the endless repetitions of murders, mutilations, orgies, etc., in Sade as signs of impotency and powerlessness on the part of the libertines and their desires signaling their dependence on dialectic negativity for attaining their satisfaction. Klossowski thus describes the repetitive movement of negativity as a “pathos de l’emprisonnement et de l’impuissance, de l’impatience d’être une créature,” which incessantly aspires “la liberté du non-être, la liberté de Dieu que l’on accuse d’enfermer ses créatures dans la prison de l’être” (Klossowski 1947, 99–100/99). By contrast, in *Lautrémont et Sade* Blanchot considers the dialectical repetitions as demonstrating the sovereignty of the Sadean human being, precisely by virtue of his mastering the transcendence of negativity to the point of transforming the whole world into a desert of his apathetical desires, wherein “les êtres qu’il y reconte sont moins que des choses, moins que des ombres et, en les tourmentant, en les détruisant, ce n’est pas de leur vie qu’il s’empare, mais c’est leur néant qu’il vérifie, c’est leur inexistence dont il se rend maître et de laquelle il tire sa plus grande jouissance” (LS, 33/25).

<sup>760</sup> Sade 1987, 209.

<sup>761</sup> On the possibility of reading Sade with and against Hegel, Blanchot in *L’entretien infini* writes: “Sade n’est pas Hegel, il s’en faut. Toutefois, je ne vois nul anachronisme à appeler dialectique au sens moderne la prétention essentiellement sadique de fonder la souveraineté raisonnable de l’homme sur un pouvoir transcendant de négation, pouvoir qu’il ne manque pas de reconnaître au principe de la plus claire et de la plus simple raison positive” (EI, 327/220).

a member of the Society of the Friends of Crime (*Société des Amis du Crime*) to which Juliette and the rest of the libertines belong. Nevertheless, no matter how hard and how violently Minski tries to cut or untie all bonds of otherness in order to become unique in his kind, even he cannot absolve himself from his natality, that is, from his descendance from others and from his originary belatedness regarding the matter of choosing to come into existence or not.

Moreover, even if the condition of mortality does not appear to be as problematic an issue as the condition of natality to Minski, one might add that Minski will never be able to absolve himself from the traces he will leave behind after his death either, and that these remains of him will become scattered around in the hands and memories, traumatic or not, of others, out of his power. In other words, despite himself, Minski will not be able to avoid the survival of himself after his death, a death that can never be his own anymore than his coming into existence. Finally, even in annihilating, murdering, or torturing the others, Minski still remains dependent on the dependency of his victim's upon him and on their affirmations of his absolute indifference towards them.<sup>762</sup>

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<sup>762</sup> Blanchot formulates the paradox of solitary sovereignty in Sade as follows: "Du moment qu' 'être maître de moi' signifie 'être maître des autres,' du moment que mon indépendance ne vient pas de mon autonomie, mais de la dépendance des autres à mon ègard, il est visible que je demeure lié aux autres et que j' ai besoin des autres, fût-ce pour les réduire à rien" (LS, 31/23).



### EXCURSUS III

#### HEIDEGGER ON THE SOLITARY IMPERSONALITY OF BOREDOM AND ANXIETY

Le passé compris des sa race qui pèse sur lui en la sensation de fini,  
l'heure de la pendule precipitant cet ennui en temps lourd, étouffant,  
et son attente de l'accomplissement du future, forment du temps pur,  
out de lénnui, rendu instable par la maladie d'idéalité [...] comme  
menacé par le supplice d'être éternel qu'il present vaguement, se  
cherchant dans la glace devenue ennui et se voyant vague et près de  
disparaître comme s'il allait s'évanouir en le temps  
– Stéphane Mallarmé, *Igitur ou la folie d'Elbehnon*

Lang ist  
Die Zeit, es ereignet sich aber  
Das Wahre  
– Hölderlin, 'Mnemosyne' (2. Fassung)

#### III.1 INTRODUCTION: A BORING SOLITUDE

The linkage of solitude and boredom is by no means a new discovery. Indeed, already the stoic Epictetus spoke of solitude<sup>763</sup> as a form of becoming bored with oneself that makes grown men behave like infants, which is even worse than children who—like the child-god of Heraclitus<sup>764</sup>—are at least capable of entertaining themselves with deconstructive play in their solitude. Solitude is something that should be avoided but that nevertheless appears difficult to steer clear of; wherefore Epictetus poses a series of questions to his fellow men:

What solitude [*ἐρημία*] is there then left; what destitution [*ἀπορία*]? Why do we make ourselves worse than children? What do they do when they are left alone? They take up shells and dust; they build houses, then pull them down; then build something else; and thus never want amusement. Suppose you were all to sail away; am I to sit and cry because I am left alone [*μόνος*] and solitary [*ἐρημος*]? Am I so

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<sup>763</sup> According to Epictetus, “solitude [*ἐρημία*] is a certain condition of a helpless human being [*ἀβοήθητος*],” and this state of helplessness is in part due to the dependency of the solitary one upon the companionship and kindness of others; when this dependency is felt but its demand not met, one is the most solitary. Cf. EPI, III.13.

<sup>764</sup> I am here thinking of Heraclitus' fragment: “Time is a child playing draughts, the kingly power is a child's [*αἰὼν παῖς ἐστὶ παίζων, πεττεῶν παιδὸς ἢ βασιληῆς*]” (DK 52; Burnet 1908, 153). See also Nietzsche's comment on the fragment in *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*: “Ein Werden und Vergehen, ein Bauen und Zerstören, ohne jede moralische Zurechnung, in ewig gleicher Unschuld, hat in dieser Welt allein das Spiel des Künstlers und des Kindes” (KSA 1, 830).

unprovided with shells and dust? But children do this from folly; and shall we be wretched through wisdom [ὕπὸ φρονήσεως δυστυχοῦμεν]?<sup>765</sup>

Grown men, and especially men who are philosophically inclined, should be capable of entertaining and sustaining themselves independently of others, and if they become bored with themselves it is simply because they have failed in making themselves interesting enough—meaning that men who become bored with themselves have not exercised their imagination or their thinking well enough to provide themselves interminably with intriguing subjects to be played around with. Grown men should be self-propelled and self-sufficient; they should not be in need of inspiration or stimulus from others in order to keep themselves busy and away from the impasses of boredom. Such a dependency on others would only expose a weakness on the part of the solitary subject. In principle, then, solitude should not even be possible for the properly mature subject, but only a ‘being alone’ or a ‘being one with oneself’ (μόνον εἶναι) in which the subject, like Zeus, would enjoy his own company in the dialogue of his soul without the need of others. Consequently, Epictetus discerns an intimate relation between helplessness, boredom, and solitude.<sup>766</sup>

In this line of thought—which with some variation extends all the way up today—a tendency to consider boredom as a sign of insufficiency, or even deficiency, on the part of the bored one appears to prevail. Quite frequently, then, boredom is interpreted as an inability to play, to think, to sense, or even

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<sup>765</sup> EPI, III.13,18–19.

<sup>766</sup> It is interesting to note that the distinction between ‘solitude’ and ‘being alone’ is by no means exceptional to Epictetus. Rather, in the Greek context it appears that a distinction prevails between a ‘good,’ ‘creative,’ or ‘productive’ kind of solitary living on the one hand, and a ‘bad’ or ‘destitute’ kind of solitude on the other. The term frequently employed to describe the non-pejorative or ‘positive’ kind of solitude is precisely *μόνος*, or an inclination thereof, which can indeed confer the sense of being solitary but also of being singled out, being one, being the only one, etc. An example of such productive solitude is to be found in the depiction given by Diogenes Laertius of Thales as “having always lived in solitude [*μονήρης*]” (DIO I,1.25) and in the final words of the *Enneads*, where Plotinus praisises the life of blessed men delivered from worldly troubles through an “escape in solitude to the solitary [*φυγή μόνου πρὸς μόνον*]” (ENN VI. 6–9, 345). In contrast, when there is talk of solitude in a pejorative or ‘negative’ sense, the term often employed is *ἐρημία* in one of its differing inclinations. Besides Epictetus, we have Aristotle’s description in the *Eudemian Ethics* of a solitude, and here the term is *ἐρημίαν*, which is not associated with an ability to be alone or to be one with oneself, but rather as a state of destitute friendlessness (*ἀφιλίαν*), which according to Aristotle is “a very terrible thing [*δεινότατον*]” (Eud.Eth. VII, 1234b18). Accordingly, the distinction of *τὸ μόνον εἶναι* and *τὸ ἐρημιον εἶναι* appears also to yield another distinction, namely, the distinction between a voluntary seclusion and an involuntary isolation.



to experience deeply or intensely enough, and for this reason boredom is associated with a certain shallowness or hollowness of existence. However, as we shall see in the following, Heidegger—who is one of the first thinkers of Western philosophy, though Kierkegaard and especially Nietzsche are important predecessors here, to carefully and elaborately engage with the phenomenon of boredom as a matter for serious thought<sup>767</sup>—will come to show how the tendency to regard boredom as a sign of superficial shallowness is itself a shallow and ‘vulgar’ way of approaching the matter.<sup>768</sup>

Making a leap in chronological time, for there is no easy passage here, we find another philosophical linkage of solitude and boredom in the Grecophile German Nietzsche who is less disapproving of boredom than Epictetus, and even observes some affirmative aspects in its sting, but who in line with the Greeks still denotes an intimate relation between solitude and boredom. Thus, in a passage from “Der Wanderer und sein Schatten” entitled “*Der Einsame spricht*,” Nietzsche consolingly reassures his readers that in return for much disgust (*Ueberdruss*), discontent (*Missmuth*), and boredom (*Langeweile*) brought on by a long-term solitude (*Einsamkeit*), the bored and solitary one earns the wage (*Lohn*) of the deepest immersion (*Einkehr*) into the nature of herself. Accordingly, Nietzsche warns: “Wer sich völlig gegen die Langeweile verschanzt, verschanzt sich auch gegen sich selber.”<sup>769</sup> After this short introductory note, let us now return to Heidegger and his 1929/1930 lecture course, which contains his most elaborate analysis of the phenomenon of boredom.

### III.2 THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTUNEMENT OF BOREDOM

According to Heidegger’s thought on destinal being (*Seinsgeschick*), every epoch has its predominant attunements (*Stimmungen*) towards the grounds of its historical being. In Ancient Greece, for instance, one such fundamental attunement was astounded wondering (*τὸ θαυμάζειν*), which Socrates

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<sup>767</sup> By this I do not mean to say that boredom was not tematized in the history of Western thought before Heidegger. Undoubtedly, one can think of many significant instances of boredom throughout philosophy and beyond; Pascal’s *ennui*, Schopenhauer’s bored suffering, Baudelaire’s spleen, Mallarmé’s *Igitur* and his ‘heures vides,’ to mention but a few. Yet to my knowledge Heidegger is one of the first thinkers to engage philosophically with the phenomenon of boredom in such detail and breadth.

<sup>768</sup> As Heidegger writes: “Die Langeweile ist im vulgären Sinne störend, unangenehm und unerträglich. All dergleichen ist für das vulgäre Verständnis auch schon geringwertig, unwürdig, zu verwerfen. Gelangweiltwerden ist ein Zeichen der Oberflächlichkeit und der Äußerlichkeit. Wer seinem Leben eine rechte Aufgabe stellt und ihm Inhalt gibt, braucht die Langeweile nicht zu fürchten und ist vor ihr sicher” (GA 29/30, 238).

<sup>769</sup> KSA 2, 641.

designated as the proper attunement of philosophy because of its exposure to the openness of being, that is to say, the exposure to the wonder *that* there is something rather than nothing.<sup>770</sup> To the misfortune of Heidegger and his contemporaries, however, some of the most prevailing ‘attunements of ground’ or ‘fundamental attunements’ (*Grundstimmungen*) of ‘our situation’ (*unsere Lage*) are anxiety, which Heidegger pays special attention in his writings of the late twenties,<sup>771</sup> and boredom, the analysis of which occupies the majority of the first part of the 1929/1930 lectures.<sup>772</sup>

In order to come to an understanding of why Heidegger gives prominence to anxiety and boredom as the fundamental attunements, if not for Dasein in general (for it is indeed problematic to speak of a Dasein in general), then at least for the Dasein of ‘our situation’—which at the time of Heidegger’s lecturing was not only the beginning of the end of the Weimar republic, of the great depression, and the atrocities of the 1930s and 1940s to come, but also an era of industrial landmarks of technology—we must first try to grasp what is meant by ‘fundamental’ with respect to the attunements of anxiety and boredom, and especially so with respect to our main focus here, namely, their relation to solitude.

Like anxiety, boredom is rendered a fundamental attunement in an at least *threefold* manner. *First*, boredom can be said to be a fundamental attunement insofar as it exposes us to the abyssal grounds of our existence, that is, to the lack of ground that is the only grounding of (free) existence. Thus Heidegger discerns “eine *tiefe* Langeweile in den Abgründen des Daseins.”<sup>773</sup> *Second*, boredom becomes a fundamental attunement when it *grips* and *takes hold* of us in our very essence (*wesenhaften Ergriffenheit*),<sup>774</sup> in a way that ultimately leads to groundbreaking changes in our most basic self-understanding:

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<sup>770</sup> Cf. Thea. 155d. See also, GA 45, §§36–38.

<sup>771</sup> Some of Heidegger’s most seminal elaborations of anxiety are provided in §40 of *Sein und Zeit* and in the 1929 lecture *Was ist Metaphysik?*

<sup>772</sup> In §18 of the lecture course, Heidegger himself problematizes the use of such collective pronouns and their delimitation: who are ‘we,’ or ‘us,’ and who are ‘we’ referring to when talking about ‘our’ time? In order to answer such questions, it is not a matter of providing some metaphysical essence to our present existence; rather ‘we’ must first try to orientate ‘ourselves’ regarding the ‘our contemporary situation’ (*unsere heutigen Lage*), not so much in order to ask *where* ‘we’ are standing, but rather “*how* it stands with us [*wie steht es mit uns*],” that is, how we find ourselves situated (*wie befinden wir uns*)? Cf. GA 29/39, 103–4; 116. Thus, it is not a matter of observing and interpreting some present-at-hand place or state of the contemporary as such, as though it were a delimitable object of research, but of asking about and challenging the presumable existence of referents to such collective denominations.

<sup>773</sup> GA 29/30, 119.

<sup>774</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 199.

“einen Wandel der Grundauffassung des Menschen.”<sup>775</sup> In other words, an attunement of ground does not leave us unaffected but makes our foundations tremble and displaces our presupposed understanding of ourselves as human beings towards our naked being-there (*Da-sein*). *Third*, boredom can be rendered a fundamental attunement insofar as it offers an opening to the very grounding concepts of philosophy, that is, insofar as it brings about the question of beings as a whole or of the *world*, the question of time or of *finitude*, and the question of the singular being or of *solitude*.

These three folds, which are characteristic of the fundamentality of an attunement, are intertwined in such a way that one fold cannot occur without the others, and vice versa. Accordingly, one cannot gain access to a philosophical questioning without having been fundamentally gripped, and as such attuned, in advance by something to which the philosophical questioning itself is a response. Inversely, however, neither can one gain access to the grounds of being without trying to understand this becoming fundamentally gripped or seized by way of philosophical questioning.<sup>776</sup>

This is why Heidegger spends the entire first part of the 1929/1930 lecture course trying to awaken his listeners and readers to the possibility of becoming fundamentally gripped and as such attuned towards the grounding concepts of philosophy that question the grounds of our being there.

One reason why Heidegger appoints boredom as one of the privileged *Grundstimmungen* of ‘our time’ is that it can (re)awaken the contemporary human being from its slumber in the hollow yet popular ‘philosophies of culture’ (*Kulturphilosophien*) to a more profound thinking of its *Da-sein*. Even if Heidegger admits that the diagnoses made by the popular philosophies of culture may to some extent describe our contemporary way of life “correctly,” they do so only in a naively anthropological, or even cybernetic, sense, and in an unfounded and postulating manner that only serves to unbind us from our own being rather than to obligate us towards our existence. Instead of sincerely trying to grasp (*ergreifen*) our historical being by its roots (even if this should lead only to an uprooting), the philosophies of culture confer a role upon our contemporary *Dasein* to be acted out in the theatrical ‘history of the world.’

For Heidegger, these more or less desperate and hasty attempts to cast meaningful and purposeful attributes or props onto our contemporary way of life can only be a symptom of the fact that our very being has ceased to concern us and to address us as a sign *in need* of considerate and thoughtful

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<sup>775</sup> GA 29/30, 123.

<sup>776</sup> Thus Heidegger writes: “Das Philosophieren bestimmten wir als begreifendes Fragen aus einer wesenhaften Ergriffenheit des Daseins. Eine solche Ergriffenheit aber ist nur möglich aus und in einer Grundstimmung des Daseins” (GA 29/30, 199).

interpretation, in the sense of *Besinnung*, even if this interpretation should remain without resolution. Hence, Heidegger poses the following decisive questions to his contemporaries:

Was liegt darin, daß wir uns diese Rolle geben und gar geben *müssen*? Sind wir uns selbst zu *unbedeutend* geworden, daß wir einer Rolle bedürfen? Warum finden wir für uns keine Bedeutung, d. h. keine wesentliche Möglichkeit des Seins mehr? Weil uns gar aus allen Dingen eine *Gleichgültigkeit* anghäht, deren Grund wir nicht wissen?<sup>777</sup>

In this series of questions, we are already presented with several crucial terms indicative of why the attunement that must be awakened in order to attune us to the abyssal depths of our cotemporary situation is boredom, namely, the italicized terms ‘must’ (*müssen*), ‘insignificance’ (*unbedeutend*), and ‘indifference’ (*Gleichgültigkeit*).<sup>778</sup> These terms are crucial because, according to Heidegger, the greatest and most critical, yet also most secret, ‘need’ (*Not*) of our epoch is nothing less than the very *absence* of need and the *default* of any essential constraint or distress (*Ausbleiben der wesenhaften Bedrängnis*).<sup>779</sup>

To be sure, Heidegger concedes that it is not that ‘our’ time is entirely without its particular concerns and needs; there is social misery, political confusion, an erosion of both the sciences and the arts, an impotence of religion, and so on. Neither does Heidegger deny that ‘our’ time lacks anything in terms of programmatic and technological means to resolve these

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<sup>777</sup> GA 29/30, 115. A few years later, in his lectures on Hölderlin’s hymns, Heidegger will cite the first verses of Hölderlin’s poem “Mnemosyne”: “Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos / Schmerzlos sind wir, und haben fast / Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren” (HSW 10, 81). These verses obtain a crucial significance for Heidegger’s thinking in years to come. Cf. *Hölderlins Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein,”* GA 39, 135ff.; *Hölderlins Hymne “Der Ister,”* GA 53, 31ff.; *Was heisst Denken?*, GA 8, 11ff.

<sup>778</sup> In 1927 Heidegger was already attentive towards such ‘unattuned indifference’ (*Ungestimmtheit der Gleichgültigkeit*), which in *Sein und Zeit* he associated with the everyday fallenness of Dasein: “die an nichts hängt und zu nichts drängt und sich dem überläßt, was je der Tag bringt, und dabei in gewisser Weise doch alles mitnimmt, demonstriert am *eindringlichsten* die Macht des Vergessens in den alltäglichen Stimmungen des nächsten Besorgens. Das Dahinleben, das *alles ‘sein läßt,’ wie es ist,* gründet in einem vergessenden Sichüberlassen an die Geworfenheit” (GA 2, 345; my emphasis). In retrospect, one cannot help but wonder how such indifferent ‘letting be’ differs from the *Gelassenheit* promoted as a listening response to the very gift of being (*es gibt*) in the later writings, but unfortunately we do not have space to explore this here.

<sup>779</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, §38. This motif of thought will remain of great import and significance in Heidegger’s writings throughout the thirties and forties, where he will come to write of a ‘needlessness’ (*Notlöslichkeit*) constituting the ‘greatest need’ (*höchste Not*) of our epoch. See for example GA 65, 125.

needs. Still, Heidegger maintains that none of the particular needs and their means explain the indifference and the insignificance that permeate the grounds of our contemporary being.

Therefore, the question that Heidegger consistently and repeatedly poses to his contemporaries concerns whether or not the human being, in all its technological superiority, has ultimately become boring to itself: *Ist der Mensch am Ende sich selbst langweilig geworden?* Has the human being exhausted its own possibilities and thus brought itself to its own end(s)? Is our entire Dasein today permeated by an all-encompassing emptiness (*Leere im Ganzen*) and, if so, how so? Is it because we human beings have lost something that we used to possess? But then again what could we possibly be lacking with all these new possibilities and resources available to us? What is our lack and what is our need (*Not*), if not the very *lack of need*?

As Heidegger renders it, the problem with the contemporary human being is that it narrows down the expanse of its concealed and most profound need to those particular needs in the face of which some programmatic means of self-defense (*Notwehr*) may be employed for their appeasement. However, the insistence of a more urgent need betrays itself in the abrupt and hasty restlessness with which the human being tries to escape the profound boredom hovering over the abysses of its Dasein, wherefore Heidegger argues that the utmost need of our epoch is, in fact, the default of an essential need. Moreover, if the human being fails to become attuned to this need of needlessness in the profound boredom of its time it will remain a prisoner of its own insignificant restlessness, bored unto death like a sickness.

Hence, Heidegger's appeal to his contemporaries is thoughtfully to consider how this needlessness (*Notlosigkeit*) is actually the greatest need (*Not*) of our time insofar as such consideration is necessary (*Notwendig*) in order to *return* (*wenden*) and reopen ourselves to the abyssal freedom of our existence. The contemporary human being must free itself from its fixation in boredom precisely by way of the attunement of this boredom itself, which signals towards the impoverished state of its Dasein, which has lost its mystery and secrecy to itself. As Heidegger clarifies: "Das Geheimnis fehlt in unserem Dasein, und damit bleibt der innere Schrecken aus, den jedes Geheimnis bei sich trägt und der dem Dasein seine Größe gibt."<sup>780</sup> No greatness without secrets, but then again, no greatness without terror either, which is why the reawakening of the fundamental attunement of boredom demands a courage of heart (*Mut des Gemüths*).

Thus discouraged, let us proceed with Heidegger's analysis of boredom, which as the German word *Langeweile* indicates, concerns a certain relation

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<sup>780</sup> GA 29/30, 244.

to or a ‘sensing of time’ (*Zeitgefühl*). In order to further investigate this relation between boredom and time, Heidegger distinguishes three moments or forms of boredom, passing from superficiality to increasing profundity, which, as Michel Haar has pointedly observed, “are like three concentric circles of tormented temporality.”<sup>781</sup>

### III.3 THE PROFOUND BOREDOM OF HEIDEGGER

The three forms of boredom are epitomized by Heidegger in three corresponding headings: 1) a “becoming bored by something” (*Gelangweiltwerden von etwas*), corresponding to the most superficial form of boredom; 2) a “boring oneself with something” (*Sichlangweilen bei etwas*), which is already well on its way toward the depths; 3) and finally, the most profound form of boredom, which reaches its crescendo in the sentence “it is boring for one” (*es ist einem langweilig*).

As the text proceeds, however, the superficial form of boredom will come to reveal itself as having already harbored the more profound—(*die oberflächige soll sich als die tiefe Langeweile offenbaren*).<sup>782</sup> This movement of exposing the profundity of the superficial will lead us to ponder whether inversely, profound boredom may also come to expose itself as superficial or, in other words, whether the becoming exposed in boredom coheres with an exposure to a certain superficiality of the profound belonging to the abyssal depths of the surface. We will return to this question later in this excursus, but for now we shall proceed stepwise with Heidegger’s analysis of boredom—of which we will have to restrict ourselves to a selective, and sometimes even cyclopean, reading, seeing as it is extremely rich and carefully elaborated over more than 130 pages.<sup>783</sup>

In our present context of trying to map out the intercrossings of solitude and boredom, of particular interest to us is the way in which the different temporal moments of boredom pass, not only from the most superficial to the most profound, but also from the determinate to indeterminate as well as from the personal to the impersonal. The question to be kept in mind is therefore how we are to understand these movements of increasing profundity, indeterminacy, and impersonality and how to understand their interferences with one another. Since the second and third form of boredom will probably provide us with the most food for thought in responding to

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<sup>781</sup> Haar 1999, 303.

<sup>782</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 122.

<sup>783</sup> In passing, one cannot help wondering if his talking so lengthily about the long duration of boredom was an ironic gesture on Heidegger’s part pointing indirectly to the performativity of language.

these questions, we will linger the longest with them, which means that we will also to some extent neglect the five paragraphs devoted to the first form of boredom.

To open up the various discussions of boredom and its relation to solitude, we will begin by giving a somewhat schematic rendition of the three epitomized forms of boredom with reference to their different temporalities. Before becoming too schematic, however, it should be noted that the three forms of boredom have two structural moments or movements in common, which, according to Heidegger, are definitive of boredom: On the one hand, a certain ‘detainment’ or a ‘being-held-in-suspense’ (*Hingehaltenheit*),<sup>784</sup> and, on the other hand, a certain ‘emptying out’ or a ‘being-left-empty’ (*Leergelassenheit*). Whomever becomes bored—whether by something determinate or indeterminate, whether by oneself or someone else, whether by something or nothing—does so because she gets caught and is left hanging some way or another in a limbo of these two structural moments, that is, she is being detained, withheld, or held in suspension by or with something, someone, or nothing, which nevertheless leaves her empty: “*Langweilige ist das Hinhaltende und doch Leerlassende.*”<sup>785</sup> On this note, let us proceed with the overview.

1) Starting from the surface down, the first form of boredom concerns someone in particular becoming bored by something determinate (*etwas bestimmtes*) in a specific situation. Heidegger’s main example of this most superficial moment of boredom is the situation of getting involuntarily detained on a train station because of delays or cancellations. Because of this being-held-in-suspense by the delay, the train station becomes boring inasmuch as it fails to function in the way it should, that is, it fails to work as a place of transition and instead turns in to a place of detainment where the bored one is held back from transit and thus forced to wait out the slow passing of time, which seems wasteful seeing as it was intended for some other purpose, which Heidegger refers to as ‘the ideal time’ (*die Idealzeit*).<sup>786</sup> Thus, it is only because we expect (*erwarten*) something particular from a specific situation at a certain time that it can become disappointingly boring to us and leave us with a sense of emptiness.

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<sup>784</sup> To employ the English term ‘detainment’ in this translational context has advantages insofar as it derives from the Old French *détenir*, which again refers back to the Latin *dē-tinēre*, -tinēre being a combining form of *tenēre*, meaning ‘to delay,’ ‘to keep from proceeding,’ ‘to hold off,’ or ‘to hold back,’ reflecting, as it were, the ‘halten’ of the German *Hingehaltenheit*.

<sup>785</sup> GA 29/30, 131.

<sup>786</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 159.

What occurs in boredom, then, is first and foremost that time befalls one as long and languid (*Lange-weile*), dragging itself along, leaving us empty, and making the passing of time seem unbearably wasteful while we are not able to fill it out in order to make it pass as quickly as possible, or even to ‘kill time,’ as one says. Inversely, when time does not require passing, but passes by on its own without making itself noticeable as such, we say that time goes ‘too fast’ or that time is ‘too short.’ What boredom makes manifest, however, is precisely the emptiness of the ‘pure’ passing of time, which in boredom seems to slow down and stretch itself unendingly, weighing down on us with its wasteful emptiness and making us heavyhearted to the point of depression (*Schwermut*). Most of us may want to live long lives but we also want them to feel short, and when time begins to feel too lengthy, we instead begin to wish for a shortening of time; to have it come to an end in order to have passed the gravity of languid time. This is why Heidegger can say that there is actually something to the ‘everyday’ expression of ‘being bored to death,’ in that the more deep draught of boredom becomes the more fatal (*tödlicher*) also: “Denn wir sehen, die Langeweile ist, je tiefer sie wird, um so völliger in der Zeit verwurzelt—in der Zeit, die wir selbst sind.”<sup>787</sup>

In the first and most superficial boredom, then, time lasts (*dauern*) and hesitates (*zögern*) for a long while providing us with *nothing* (*nichts bieten*) to fill it out and therefore leaves us deserted: “Öde besagt: es füllt uns nicht aus, wir sind leer gelassen.”<sup>788</sup> Whatever we become bored with forsakes (*versagen*) us, it abandons us in the absence of anything to fill out the presence of time, and as such, time itself becomes present in its empty passing. This leads us toward the second and more ‘originary’ (*ursprünglicheres*) form of boredom, which occurs when the bored one is not held in suspense and left empty by something or somewhere in particular but rather by oneself as emptied time.

2) Passing on to the second and increasingly profound form of boredom, time no longer appears unbearably slow and languid but rather to have been brought to a halt or a standstill (*die stehende Zeit/Stehen der Zeit*). Heidegger’s example of such a stagnated time is given in the rather humorous illustration of a dinner party where everything is perfectly pleasant, the food and wine are delicious, the conversation is flowing unproblematically; nothing is out of the ordinary, everything is as could be expected and yet it is terribly boring. Heidegger’s premise for this illustrative example is that one has *given oneself the time* to attend this dinner, so that the time spent on it is not experienced as wasted on it but, quite the contrary,

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<sup>787</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 201.

<sup>788</sup> GA 29/30, 131.



has been specifically reserved for it in advance. Nevertheless, when one returns home from such an evening out and thinks back on it one might find, slightly to one's surprise, that one had in fact been trying to suppress a yawning and drumming one's fingers on the table throughout the whole evening, pausing only to smoke a cigar in order to pass the time in a civilized manner.

Despite these signs of boredom, Heidegger maintains that one fails to find anything *particularly* boring about the event. Rather, it is because the very *duration* (*während*) of the entire evening, including oneself, is experienced as boring that it now seems as though time had stagnated in some immovable present. In this 'extended' (*ausgedehntes*) present, the duration of time itself and our own boredom have become conflated to such an extent that we are unable to find any routes of escape that would allow us ways of distracting ourselves by passing the time. During this increasingly profound boredom, a sort of unremarkable and uneventful collapse of the ecstasies of time into a statically dilated present occurs and thus cut off (*abgeschnitten*) from its past and its future, time no longer appears in its pure passing but rather in the lasting duration of an empty present with no horizon of possibility: "Das Jetzt hat keine Möglichkeit als die, das derzeitige Jetzt der Jetzt zu sein."<sup>789</sup>

Hence, in its second form boredom no longer arises because of some determinate object or situation, such as a delayed train on a station, which one would be able to escape simply by departing from it, shifting one's attention, or seeking out new distractions of passing the time. Instead, in the unsuccessful attempt to find any 'external' cause, boredom now arises because one is enchained to oneself as time, thus making the relation to solitude more distinct insofar as one is thrown back on oneself as the very origin of boredom: "*es steigt auf dem Dasein selbst aus.*"<sup>790</sup> Stuck with oneself as the source of one's own boredom, and caught in a standstill that offers no possibilities of engaging or distracting oneself, *one bores oneself* (*Sichlangweilen*). In this more profound boredom, then, we are abandoned by the possibility of passing time and delivered over to ourselves in the restlessness of a stagnate present: "gestellt werden von dem stehenden Jetzt, das unser eigenes, aber aufgegebenes und leeres Selbst ist, langweilen wir uns."<sup>791</sup>

Thus delivered over and abandoned to ourselves in an extended yet stagnated now, what the increasingly indeterminate and profound boredom

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<sup>789</sup> GA 29/30, 188.

<sup>790</sup> GA 29/30, 193.

<sup>791</sup> GA 29/30, 185.

reveals to the human Dasein is that it might not be bound by anything or anyone in particular, but that it is nonetheless bound to this unboundedness, which weighs on it as the burden of an abyssal freedom. In boredom, as in anxiety, Dasein is therefore called to respond to this fundamentally unfounded freedom in and as which it must overtake its ‘there’ of existence.

In this respect, Rudi Visker’s suggestion that boredom, in a similar way to anxiety, functions as “a kind of purgatory in which Dasein is ultimately forced to come to terms with the kind of being that it is and has to be”<sup>792</sup> does sound appealingly fitting. However, as always when something presents itself as almost too fitting or too close to purgatory, we must hold such an appeal in skeptical suspense rather than surrendering ourselves too readily to a hasty resolve or resolution, in order to try to pay attention to the possibly poisonous and unfitting side effects of such a purgatory. We must therefore ask, exactly what kind of being Dasein *is* being exposed as in boredom?

In the hollowing out of time in boredom something happens to our self (*Selbst*), once so familiar (*bekannt*) and close (*nähe*) to itself in busying itself with something. Stripped of all its quotidian attributes and distractions and abandoned to its naked Da-sein, the self no longer recognizes itself, but rather finds that it has become so “unbestimmt *und* unbekannt, *so dass es als dieses merkwürdige Unfassliche uns bedrängt.*”<sup>793</sup> In boredom, one is reflected as ‘no one’ (*Niemand*), and thrown back upon one’s own ‘being there’ as ‘being gone,’ that is, as the *Wegsein* which, according to Heidegger, originally belongs to *Dasein* as the absolute otherness of its ownmost intimacy, and which keeps it from ever becoming entirely present to itself.<sup>794</sup> If anxiety discloses the nothingness of the world to an anxious Dasein, boredom, as Igitur experienced it the in the vacated reflection of the mirror,<sup>795</sup> exposes the bored one to the untimely and impersonal vacuity of oneself.

So, returning to Visker’s suggestion, how does one ‘come to terms’ with such an abandoned being that one ‘is and has to be’? Heidegger’s urgent request to his contemporaries, who are bored to death without even knowing it, is that we must learn how to move in these abyssal depths of our being

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<sup>792</sup> Visker 2004, 215.

<sup>793</sup> GA 29/39, 185.

<sup>794</sup> Accordingly, being-gone is neither the negation nor an annihilation of being, but instead a certain way of being-there (*eine Weise des Da-seins*, GA 29/30, 96) which can only present itself to itself in its absencing. Regarding the being-gone as a constitutive (im)possibility of being-there see also sections 201–202 of Heidegger’s *Beiträge zur Philosophie*; GA 65, 323–325.

<sup>795</sup> Cf. “une glace d’ennui où, suffoquant et étoufflé, je suppliais de rester un vague figure qui disparaissait complètement dans la glace confondue” (Mallarmé 1976, 53).

(*verstehen lernen, sich in der Tiefe des Daseins zu bewegen*).<sup>796</sup> In order to somehow approach an understanding of such an abyssal movement, we must therefore continue with the final and most profound form of boredom that Heidegger outlines for us.

3) Whereas time hesitatingly dragged itself along in the first form of boredom, and the second form of boredom seemed to remove the bored one from the flow of time into the stagnation of an eternally empty and solitary now, time in the third form of boredom strangely enough comes to remark itself in its absence. Hence, in the most profound, indeterminate, and impersonal boredom of ‘*es ist einem langweilig*,’ time is experienced as timelessness (*zeitlos zumute*).<sup>797</sup>

Yet, as in anxiety, where the distancing of beings as a whole refers the anxious one to the very being of these beings in its uncanny nothingness, so the remoteness of the flow of time testifies to a sort of blindness on the part of the bored one due to the very nearness of a more ordinary temporality in boredom—“gleich als seien wir von der Nähe des Wesens der Langeweile geblendet.”<sup>798</sup> In its apparent timelessness, then, profound boredom conceals the very essence of time (*Wesen der Zeit*), which, as Heidegger insists, remains essentially abyssal, dark, and enigmatic (*rätselhaft*).<sup>799</sup> In genuine thinking, however, it is precisely a matter of not being afraid of the dark and of freeing the enigmatic grounds of being from the constraint of the all too narrow ray of reason’s light.

What happens in profound boredom, then, is that time begins to weigh on the bored one as that which in its intimate remoteness and strangeness conditions and constitutes its very existence. In profound boredom, one can no longer flee the passing of time by passing the time and thus finds no escape from time; one is caught in the impasses of time insofar as one exists. In this regard, Heidegger plays on the multifaceted German verb *bannen*, when in the *Gebanntsein* of boredom he designates both a *being bound up* with time, which *spellbinds* the bored one, and as such *bans* its access to the ‘customary’ (*gewöhnliche*) temporality of the day in which one can pursue distractions and go about one’s business as dictated by the watch whereas in

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<sup>796</sup> Cf. GA 29/39, 198.

<sup>797</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 213.

<sup>798</sup> GA 29/30, 213.

<sup>799</sup> For instance, Heidegger says that “die *Langeweile* überhaupt ist dann offenbar ganz *in diesem rätselhaften Wesen der Zeit verwurzelt*” (GA 29/30, 149), which is why we must proceed towards “die Abgründe des Wesens der Zeit” (GA 29/30, 220) by way of a path that goes “direkt ins Dunkle” (GA 29/30, 225).

the entrancing time of profound boredom, “das Auf-die-Uhr-sehen verliert hier jeden Sinn.”<sup>800</sup>

Hence, the empty time of boredom binds the bored one by forbidding it to break loose from its constraint. As Haar formulates it, a sort of inversion therefore takes place in which: “The absence of constraint in emptiness and boredom is itself constraining. Time is pressing. Boredom reveals the time at the depths of Dasein to be essentially pressing, as distress and constraint.”<sup>801</sup> Furthermore, not only does time become pressing in boredom, profound boredom also exposes a temporality of time that forces the bored one to confront the timeliness (*Zeitlichkeit*) that oneself *is*, insofar as it makes manifest the law of time that outlaws<sup>802</sup> Dasein by excommunicating it from any common time of being. Thus profound boredom exposes the bored one to its singular possibility of existing: “*diese bannende Zeit ist selbst diese Spitze, die das Dasein wesentlich ermöglicht.*”<sup>803</sup>

According to Heidegger, this exposure comes about insofar as boredom calls into question and puts on trial the conception of the individual subject, or of the subjectivity of the subject, conceived *primarily* as consciousness. In fact, such a conception of subjectivity designates nothing less than ‘the chief obstacle’ (*das Haupthindernis*) that prevents (*versperrt*) our access to original time,<sup>804</sup> that is, to the originary time of our ‘proper’ (*egentliche*) Dasein to which boredom somehow allows us access. But how, more specifically, does profound boredom pave the way towards a more original understanding of time, and how does this paving challenge the traditional presuppositions and inhibitions of the conscious subject?

For Heidegger, from early till late, originary time is ecstatic, meaning that the temporality of Dasein concerns “die Zeitlichkeit als das *ἐκστατικόν* schlechthin. Zeitlichkeit ist *das ursprüngliche ‘Außer-sich’ an und für sich selbst.*”<sup>805</sup> That Dasein is originally *outside* itself *in* and *for* itself is a sign—dare I say a symptom—that the overreaching transmission (*Überlieferung*) of the ecstasies, which constitutes its historical being, remains unfathomable to it. As Heidegger has it in *Sein und Zeit*, the past of Dasein remains enigmatic (*rätselhaft*), the future is still to come (*noch-nicht*) and as such is principally unknown in its remaining default (*der ständige Ausstand*), and the present is divided from itself as an repetition of itself and as such always

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<sup>800</sup> GA 29/30, 217.

<sup>801</sup> Haar 1999, 310.

<sup>802</sup> “Jemanden in Acht und Bann tun” means to make someone an outlaw by law.

<sup>803</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 223.

<sup>804</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 201.

<sup>805</sup> GA 2, 329.

absent in its very presence.<sup>806</sup> Because of its discordant temporal constitution, Dasein therefore cannot be designated *primarily* as self-consciousness insofar as it is never simply present to itself but always already exceeds and escapes itself. This does not imply, however, that Dasein cannot become conscious of its own excessiveness, but it does imply that consciousness remains conditioned by what principally exceeds it. In boredom this principal excessiveness, which is the pure autoheteroaffection of time, comes to remark itself in all its enigmatic emptiness as what constitutes the very being of Dasein, thus making the intransparency of existence to itself apparent.<sup>807</sup>

In order to further unfold these intricacies, we must try to open ourselves up to a more loosely elaborated discussion of boredom and its movements of increasing profundity, indeterminacy, and depersonalization in which we no longer keep ourselves rigidly within the confines of its three demarcated forms, which, as Heidegger himself points out are fixed neither by category nor by chronology. In this discussion, we will focus on two moments that figure in the aforementioned crescendo of profound boredom, namely, on the *es* and the *einem* of the ‘*es ist einem langweilig*.’

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<sup>806</sup> Regarding the temporal ecstasies in *Sein und Zeit*, see §§46–48 on the default of the future, §69 on the presence (*Gegenwart*) as *Wiederholung*, and §74 on the enigma of the destinal past or *Geschichtlichkeit* of Dasein. See also, “Zeit und Sein” from 1962 (GA 14, 3–31). For a further discussion of ecstatic time in Heidegger, see McNeill 1999a.

<sup>807</sup> With respect to the challenge that ecstatic time poses to the primacy of (self-) consciousness, it is of interest already here to note that, according to Freud, our abstract representation of time as a one-directional succession of now points is derived from the way in which the system of perception-consciousness works: “*Unsere abstrakte Zeitvorstellung scheint vielmehr durchaus von der Arbeitsweise des Systems W-Bw hergeholt zu sein und einer Selbstwahrnehmung derselben zu entsprechen*” (GW XIII, 28). In other words, our predominant representation of time is constructed solely on the basis of the relation between preconscious perception and consciousness without consideration for the unconscious, which is therefore said to be ‘timeless’ (*zeitlos*) since it does not follow the rules of such *chronology*. One could therefore ask whether or not the timelessness of the unconscious might have some affinity to another experience of time like the ecstatic temporality of Dasein or the almost timeless time of profound boredom where time is neither unidirectional nor dominated by presence? If nothing else, then we might at least consider this question in terms of a resistance to the hegemony of chronological time that seems to be shared by both thinkers. This indeed seems to be Derrida’s suggestion when in “Freud et la scène de l’écriture” he writes: “Il faudrait peut-être lire Freud comme Heidegger a lu Kant: comme le *je pense*, l’inconscient n’est sans doute intemporel qu’au regard d’un certain concept vulgaire du temps” (ED, 318/215).

#### III.4 WHEN ONE BECOMES IT AND IT BECOMES ONE: HEIDEGGER APPROACHING FREUD?

In the most profound moment of boredom everything has become so indeterminate and impersonal that is drawn into a vortex of insignificant indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit*), including the one who is bored. The time of this all-consuming boredom is overpowering (*übermächtig*) and disempowering insofar as it makes impotent every possibility of passing time (*Zeitvertrieb*). With one blow (*mit einem Schlag*), every possibility of making a choice, taking action, or somehow engaging with the world seems to fade and withdraw (*ausweichen*); all becomes insignificant except “diese merkwürdige Inhaltslosigkeit.”<sup>808</sup> In other words, when everything has become unremarkable *nothing becomes remarkable*, when one’s entire being is permeated (*durchstimmt*) with the indifference of boredom *nothing stands out*. In contrast to the more superficial moments of boredom where ‘I,’ ‘you,’ ‘we,’ or ‘they’ become bored with or by something determinate or someone in particular, profound boredom is entirely bereft of personal pronouns or indexes of any sort, indicating that it is a radically impersonal experience, or an experience of the anonymous. Heidegger explains:

Wir sprechen jetzt nicht mehr von diesem *Sichlangweilen* bei..., sondern sagen: es ist einem langweilig. Es— einem—nicht mir als mir, nicht dir als dir, nicht uns als uns, sondern *einem*. Name, Stand, Beruf, Rolle, Alter und Geschick als das Meinige und Deinige fällt von uns ab.<sup>809</sup>

At this point, there is a slippage from the second moment of boredom, where the bored one is delivered over to itself in the abandonment of possibilities of passing the time, to the third moment of boredom, where the bored one is abandoned by itself leaving only an anonymous experience of *einem*, that is, of *someone* who is *no one* in particular to remain. According to Heidegger, what is decisive (*Entscheidende*) in this slippage is therefore “daß wir dabei zu einem indifferenten Niemand werden.”<sup>810</sup>

What the bored one encounters in the transition from the second to the third moment of boredom is precisely the yawning sur-face of itself, because whomever experiences *it* to be boring is turned into an impersonal *someone* and the personal is exposed as a mask through the holes of which a voice may sound (*per-sonare*), but beneath which no original authority of this voice may be revealed. In profound boredom, then, the mask of the personal is exposed, not as the surface of some hidden yet disclosable depths of

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<sup>808</sup> Cf. GA 29/39, 216.

<sup>809</sup> GA 29/30, 203.

<sup>810</sup> GA 29/30, 203.

authenticity, but rather as an infinite profundity of superficiality.<sup>811</sup> With this slipping transition, we are returned yet again to Nietzsche, who in his linkage of solitude and boredom not only discerns the deepest immersion of the bored one into itself but also into confrontation with a certain *horror vacui* “weil ihm die Langeweile ihr gähnendes Gesicht entgegenhält.”<sup>812</sup>

Accordingly, the indeterminate *es* and the impersonal *einem* of the utterance ‘es ist einem langweilig’ are exposed as two sides of the same Möbius strip, belonging together neither in their unity nor in their difference but only in their profound indifference.<sup>813</sup>

Despite the abandonment of oneself in this abysmally superficial boredom, Heidegger nevertheless maintains that it is still boring to *someone*. Someone remains *there* who encounters the yawning surface of profound boredom and to whom boredom still appears to have some kind of appeal or calling (*Anspruch*) concerning its *being there*. Yet, one cannot help wondering how an appeal could even stand out and make itself heard as such when everything and everyone have become entirely absorbed in the utter insignificance of boredom? How can something shine through the density of indifference in order to summon an indifferent nobody when “nicht einmal mehr etwas am Seienden lockt”?<sup>814</sup>

Perhaps it is more comprehensible that the anxious one would be sensitive or attuned towards an appeal concerning its being or being as such, if nothing else, then at least because the experience of anxiety is so unbearable that it cries out for something, anything, to happen. Yet, boredom is not unbearable to the bored one, it is rather indifferent and insignificant. Can one who has become utterly unconcerned with everything including one’s own being, still be said to be attuned at all—fundamentally or otherwise? Is boredom not

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<sup>811</sup> I am here thinking of Nancy’s interpretation of the *unum quid* who, in the Cartesian articulation *ego cogito existo*, makes an *I* take place where there was no *I* before through the hollow of an open mouth with nothing or no one ‘behind’ it: “Imagine une bouche sans visage (c’est-à-dire à nouveau la structure du *masque*: l’ouverture des trous, et la bouche qui s’ouvre au milieu de l’œil; le lieu de la vision, de la théorie, traversé, ouvert et clos simultanément, diaphragmé d’une profération)—une bouche sans visage, donc, faisant l’anneau de sa contracture autour du bruit: *je*. ‘Tu’ fais cette expérience tous les jours, chaque fois que tu prononces ou que tu conçois dans ton esprit *ego*, chaque fois—cela t’arrive tous les jours—que tu formes l’*o* de la première (*première*, avant de elle il n’y a rien) personne: *ego cogito existo*” (ES, 157/107).

<sup>812</sup> KSA 2, 138.

<sup>813</sup> As Lacan has shown, it is only by way of cutting the Möbius strip that an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside,’ a ‘subject’ and an ‘object’ become discernible. However, such a cut will leave the trace of an inaccessible exteriority at the innermost interiority of the subject which it constitutes. Cf. Sem X, 97ff./114ff.

<sup>814</sup> GA 29/30, 221.

‘unattunement’ *par excellence*? How and towards what might boredom still be able to attune the bored one, who is not only left indifferent to everything but who has also been abandoned by itself?

According to Heidegger, boredom can and does attune the bored one, for it is precisely *there*, where it appears as though *there were nothing* more to be experienced, seen, or comprehended (*gerade da, wo es so aussieht, als gäbe es nichts mehr zu sehen und zu fassen*)<sup>815</sup> that the *there* first appears as such, or rather, it appears that ‘*there is a there there*’ where there is nothing.<sup>816</sup> Therefore, it would be mistaken to ask *what* boredom gives the bored one to understand or to hear in its attuning appeal, for, like anxiety, boredom does not have some specific message or content to deliver. Instead, boredom *says nothing* inasmuch as it only makes its announcement (*Ansagen*) in its silent renouncement (*Versagen*) of everything. Hence, the self-renouncing withdrawal of beings as a whole (*das Sichversagen des Seienden im Ganzen*) in profound boredom might leave the bored one entirely empty (*Leergelassenheit*), but this emptiness is also where the openness of being there (*Offensein*) becomes remarkable.<sup>817</sup>

On the one hand, then, profound boredom makes a referral (*Hinweis*) to the possibilities left fallow and idle (*brachliegenden Möglichkeiten*) in the indifference and insignificance of everything and, on the other hand, it makes an appeal to the bored one concerning the possibility of repeating these wasted possibilities *as possibilities of its own*.<sup>818</sup> As such, the abandonment of everything in boredom is also a deliverance of the bored one to the unbounded freedom of its being there.

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<sup>815</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 213.

<sup>816</sup> I write this formulation in italics to emphasize its contrast to Gertrude Stein’s famous sentence from *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937) that “there is no there there” (Stein 1993, 298). In my view, this contrast could open up the entire discussion concerning whether or not Heidegger still privileges a ‘metaphysics of presence,’ that is, a thinking that is oriented by a philosophical desire for authenticity, interiority, propriety, originality, transparency, and truth. However, seeing as this discussion is far too extensive to engage with here, we will restrict ourselves to noting that this contrast points to a significant risk, which, in my view, more or less permeates Heidegger’s thinking. That is, the risk of closing the openness of the ‘there’ by determining the indeterminable and deciding the undecidable.

<sup>817</sup> According to Heidegger, this openness is the very characteristic of the relation to beings of the human being, which, in contrast to the relation of animals, is one of freedom (*Freisein*). Heidegger therefore argues that the relation to the dis-closedness (*Erschlossenheit*) of beings implies an appeal of decisiveness (*Entschlossenheit*) to the free human being, or, as Heidegger alternatively formulates it near the end of the lecture course: “diese vorprädikative Offenbarkeit muß selbst ein solches Geschehen sein, darin ein bestimmtes Sich-bindelassen geschieht” (GA 29/30, 496).

<sup>818</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 212.



In profound boredom, the ‘it is’ (*es ist*) boring brings the bored ‘one’ (*einem*) before the naked and open ‘there’ of its existence in such a way that the ‘it is’—already pointing ahead to the ‘it gives’ (*es gibt*) of time and being in Heidegger’s later writings—is no longer a mere affidavit, no longer the initiation of a statement or a declaration of something. Rather *it is* a trembling of freedom, a caesura in successive time, a shaking of the grounds of being pointing to the fact that *there is* nothing preestablished, which also means that *nothing is* without ground.<sup>819</sup> Thus, the silent fog (*schweigender Nebel*)<sup>820</sup> of profound boredom hovers over the withdrawing foundation of Dasein, which prevents existence from ever becoming established on firm grounds, and exposes the bored one to the unfoundedness that keeps the abyss of freedom yawning in order for there to be anything, rather than nothing, in the first place.

Heidegger’s reason for electing profound boredom as one of our time’s privileged attunements of ground appears to be that in the most suppressive, stifling, and suffocating of times, as when in the quotidian treadmill one thing seems to follow another with an indifferent necessity, time also has the potential of revealing itself as the most freeing, liberating, and opening. This is because when we are stuck in the heaviness of the stagnated time of boredom that seems to be dragging itself along in an endless duration, it is only an instant of time itself that has the power to interrupt its own stagnation and thereby provide us with a way out of the mud into which we have sunken. As Heidegger stresses, time is the only remedy against time: “Der Zeitbann, der offenbar wird in diesem ‘es ist einem langweilig,’ kann nur gebrochen werden durch die Zeit.”<sup>821</sup>

Boredom is a temporality of Dasein which, in its exhausting duration, makes everything seem im-possible because indifferently necessary and insignificantly unavoidable, but which in the midst of this utter lack of

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<sup>819</sup> I am here referring on the one hand to Heidegger’s reading of the Leibnizian principle of ground *nihil est sine ratione*, which, according to Heidegger, may be read *both* as saying that *nothing*, that is no being (*Seinde*), is without ground *and* as saying that nothing, that is no beings but being, *is* without ground meaning that the being of beings is groundless: “‘Nichts’, d. h. kein irgendwie Seiendes ‘ist—ohne Grund’ (GA 10, 73). On the other hand, I am referring to Nancy’s reading of Heidegger’s conception of freedom in the phrase *es gibt (il y a)*, about which he writes “(ce n’est plus un constat, c’est un saisissement)—la libre dissémination de l’existence” (EL, 16/13). According to Nancy, the groundlessness of being (freedom), which is the ground of beings, means the *nothing is preestablished* since: “il n’y a rien d’autre qu’une indéterminable *chorâ* (non pas lieu indéterminé, mais possibilité de lieux, ou plutôt pure matière-à-lieux) *là où* la foundation a lieu. Celle-ci est plutôt ce *rien* lui-même” (EL, 112-113/84).

<sup>820</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 115.

<sup>821</sup> GA 29/30, 226.

possibility might also signal silently towards the possibility of the impossible. In the seemingly closed and paralyzed time of boredom, the bored one may in the blink of an eye (*Augenblick*) catch a glimpse of something other, something unknown, which dis-closes (*Entschlossen*) the horizons of a rigidly chronological time towards an ecstatic, yet fundamentally abyssal, time for a singular possibility of being *there*.<sup>822</sup>

That something completely unexpected can happen in the suddenness of an instant, that something or someone can come, to borrow the words of Lévinas, “à partir du *secret* qui interrompt la continuité du temps historique”<sup>823</sup> is the possibility of impossibility that frees Dasein from the oppressive necessity of chronology, but, at the same time, is also the greatest cause of anxiety. That time can instantaneously interrupt itself, and incessantly does so, is what makes accidents, coincidences, surprises, and wonders possible, but at the same time also risks, threats, and terrors.

Accordingly, we seem to have yet another instance of the (hyperbo)logic of the ‘saving’ or the ‘freeing’ in the ‘dangerous,’ by which Heidegger risks deciding the undecidable and closing the disclosed, when the exhausted time of profound boredom somehow interrupts itself and forces the bored one to listen to what its silence gives to be heard. Still, one cannot help but be a little suspicious about this Heideggerian resolution, which seems to have something of a Baron von Münchhausen logic about it, for, after all, we still need to know how the one abandoned by herself and left indifferent in boredom can be summoned to pull herself back out of these muddy waters of indifferent insignificance.

On my reading, one of the most problematic aspects of this gesture in Heidegger’s thinking is its redemptive tone, which still seems to be conducted by some kind of ‘axiomatic certainty’<sup>824</sup> hinging on some privileged idea of propriety or authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) despite the apparent disappearance of any grounds of certainty. In other words, even in the dissolution of all orientational markers or signposts some ‘call from nowhere’ seems to prevail, which somehow still manages to direct the one who, in the case of profound boredom, has been abandoned by itself in anonymous indifference towards an exit that would lead the lost one back to itself. But how does one distinguish between a proper and an improper way of relating to the abyssal opening existence? Where is the measure for judging when one has managed to respond properly or profoundly enough to

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<sup>822</sup> Heidegger writes: “Der Augenblick ist nichts anderes als der *Blick der Entschlossenheit*, in der sich die volle Situation eines Handelns öffnet und offenhält” (GA 29/30, 224).

<sup>823</sup> Lévinas 1971, 58/51.

<sup>824</sup> Cf. H, 419.

an appeal that demands nothing from one? Where are the markers of orientation to orient oneself in the groundlessness of all ground?

As we shall come to question in the later section on the solitude of responsibility, perhaps the most urgent question to be posed in situations of such radical exposure is rather how we are to respond to the impossibility of responding, that is, how we are to ‘take’ responsibility and make decisions in the withdrawal of all axiomatic grounds of certainty and in the dissolution of all orientational benchmarks to provide us with guidance, that is, how to be responsible to the originary irresponsibility of an existence without exit signs. For now, however, we will stay with the 1929/1930 lectures, and ask: what is it that boredom gives one to understand provided that the bored one knows how to listen? What is this curious and strange yet properly distinctive knowledge (*eigenartiges Wissen*) towards which we are vaguely attuned in boredom?<sup>825</sup> What is it that we somehow already know when we are bored without, however, clearly knowing that we know it (*ohne es deutlich zu wissen*)?<sup>826</sup> And to exactly what possibility is the bored one referred by profound boredom? Heidegger clarifies this as follows:

Diese eigentümliche Verarmung, die mit diesem ‘es ist einem langweilig’ bezüglich unserer Person einsetzt, *bringt* das *Selbst* erst in aller Nacktheit *zu ihm selbst* als das Selbst, das *da ist* und sein Da-sein übernommen hat. Wozu? *Es zu sein*. Nicht mir als mir, sondern dem Dasein in mir versagt sich das Seiende im Ganzen, wenn ich weiß: es ist einem langweilig.<sup>827</sup>

So, this is the answer Heidegger leaves us with: the self is first brought to itself in all its nakedness in the impersonal experience of boredom. Moreover, in profound boredom the abandoned self of the one to whom *it* is boring is called, not by my personal self, but literally *to be it*. Yet, how can a self come to itself in the nakedness of its own proper Da-sein as someone who is no one in particular? No passage appears passable here; rather, it seems we will have to persist in an impasse from which Heidegger himself is perhaps too eager to exit. The impasse here, has to do with a certain passage from the anonymous and indistinguishable ‘someone’ (*einem*) to the distinguished and singular being *there* of a self, which appears to take place via the appeal (*Anspruch*) of an impersonal *it* calling from nowhere.

Following this less restrained discussion of Heidegger’s boredom, we now seem to have reached a point at which we can no longer keep a certain growing suspicion silent. Namely, the suspicion that not only do the two

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<sup>825</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 239.

<sup>826</sup> Cf. GA 29/30, 180.

<sup>827</sup> GA 29/30, 215. Italics in original.

fundamental attunements of profound boredom and anxiety appear to stand in some sort of relation with one another, but also that Heidegger's thinking and linking of the two impersonal indexes *es* and *einem* both in profound boredom and in anxiety might resonate somehow with the indexes of *Es* and *Ich* of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Why this growing suspicion? *First*, because in this increasingly profound boredom, which is also an increasing depersonalization finally plunging us into the depths of the 'es ist einem langweilig,' it is difficult not to hear reminisces of a certain *Es*, *id*, or *it*, brought to our attention by Freud in his writings of the late 1910s to the early 1920s. It is almost as though Heidegger, in his in-depth analysis of boredom, strips the quotidian 'I' of all its more or less conscious attributes right down, not to some authentic or original core, but to the abyssal and anonymous *it*, spreading like a fog across the grounds of *Dasein*, which must be ignored if one is to act as a unified 'ego' or 'subject,' that is, as someone believing itself to be identical with itself. This encourages us to consider once more how close Heidegger, in his critical destruction of the 'metaphysical egology'<sup>828</sup> of modern philosophy elevating the subjectivity of consciousness to be the principal underlying substance of everything, at times comes to the discourse on the unconscious, which Freud called "das erste Schibboleth der Psychoanalyse."<sup>829</sup> *Second*, because we suspect that the elusive relation between two of the fundamental attunements of our time, boredom and anxiety, which Heidegger leaves us to ponder in abeyance of any explanatory guidance, might gain some elucidation from an encounter with psychoanalysis.

To be more specific, the question to be pursued in what follows is whether or not the Freudian leitmotif the 'wo *Es* war soll *Ich* werden,' first pronounced in Freud's 1933 lecture "Die Zerlegung der psychischen Persönlichkeit,"<sup>830</sup> might not be of some significance to us in our reading, on

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<sup>828</sup> According to Heidegger, modern metaphysics beginning with Descartes is characterised by its making the human being into the fundamental *υποκείμενον* or *subiectum* of everything, thus turning everything else into objects for this privileged subject. Or, as Heidegger writes in his lectures on *Die Frage Nach dem Ding* from 1935/1936: "So wurde das 'Ich', die menschliche Subjektivität, zum Mittelpunkt des Denkens erklärt" (GA 41, 99).

<sup>829</sup> GW XIII, 239.

<sup>830</sup> Cf. XV, 62–86. Despite the fact that Freud does not subscribe to "die Illusion der freien Willens" (GW XII, 248), or to the illusion of self-mastery, he nevertheless does not give up this psychoanalytic imperative of an attempted, even if interminable, domestication and reappropriation of the unbounded forces of the *It* by the *I*. Accordingly, Freud describes the teleological aim of analysis as follows: "Ihre Absicht ist ja, das Ich zu stärken, es vom Überich unabhängiger zu machen, sein Wahrnehmungsfeld zu erweitern

the one hand, of Heidegger's statement of profound boredom '*es ist einem Langweilig*,' which we have already concerned ourselves with in the previous section, and, on the other hand, Heidegger's statement of anxiety '*ist es einem unheimlich*,'<sup>831</sup> with which we will engage in the following section before proceeding to the *Auseindersetzung* with psychoanalysis.

### III.5 AN INTERMEZZO OF ANXIETY AND BOREDOM

In his inaugural lecture *Was ist Metaphysik?*, delivered in Freiburg earlier in 1929, Heidegger mentions several attunements that may be considered fundamental insofar as they provoke occurrences *of* and *in* the grounds of our being (*Grundgeschehen unseres Da-seins*).<sup>832</sup> Both anxiety and boredom are mentioned as such fundamental attunements, but also love, or rather the presence of a beloved one, and as their common trait, Heidegger suggests that they all somehow make manifest beings as a whole (*das Seiende im Ganzen*).<sup>833</sup> Furthermore, Heidegger maintains that even if we can never fathom beings as a whole as though they constituted an observable object, we are nevertheless situated in the midst of such a wholeness and the fundamental attunements can make us aware of this. Heidegger then proceeds with an account of the 'proper' (*eigentlichen*) and 'profound' (*tiefe*) attunement of boredom similar to the one that will follow in the 1929/1930 lectures, albeit in a much abbreviated version.

In *Was ist Metaphysik?*, both anxiety and boredom are said to obliterate all differences and nuances, pulling everything and everyone, including the anxious or bored ones themselves, together into the dense totality of a strange and remarkable indifference (*merkwürdige Gleichgültigkeit*). Yet, as Haar has underlined, "[t]he emptiness of boredom is not the nothingness of anxiety."<sup>834</sup> According to Heidegger, then, anxiety stands out from the other fundamental attunements because it is the only one which attunes us, not only toward beings as whole, but also toward the nothingness of this whole.

Hence, even if boredom is regarded as a fundamental attunement insofar as it (dis)places us at a distance from beings as a whole by remarking their total indifference, it does not yet confront us with their nothingness *as such*.

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und seine Organisation auszuabuen, so dass es sich neue Stücke des Es aneignen kann. Wo Es war, soll Ich werden" (GW XV, 86).

<sup>831</sup> GA 9, 111. My italics.

<sup>832</sup> Cf. GA 9, 110.

<sup>833</sup> Cf. GA 9, 110. Think for example of how the mere proximity of a loved one can illuminate the entire world for the lover, or how, inversely, the loss of a loved one can mean the ruin of a whole world.

<sup>834</sup> Haar 1999, 306.

Only anxiety exposes us to the vertiginous openness of the vain (*nichtiges*) grounds of being, making beings as a whole, including our own existence, appear uncannily unhomely. For, as Heidegger says, in anxiety “ist es einem unheimlich.”<sup>835</sup> Thus, Heidegger leaves us with two instances of an impersonal sentence construction—in boredom ‘it is boring for one,’ whereas in anxiety ‘it is unhomely for one’—but barely tells us anything about how these two different experiences of impersonality might relate to one another.

Nevertheless, if this difference still holds for the 1929/30 lecture course, we might in a preliminary manner ask whether or not the indifference of boredom could perhaps be understood as a last barrier against the terrible unhomeliness of anxiety, and whether or not the fundamental attunement which Heidegger is trying to awaken in ‘our’ contemporary Dasein is therefore not boredom after all but rather anxiety. Is Heidegger in fact trying to attune his listeners and readers through boredom towards the perhaps more unrelenting attunement of anxiety? Could the indifference towards beings as a whole be conceived as a last defense against the extreme confrontation with the nothingness of being, so that boredom could be seen as a final attempt to protect ourselves against what hides beneath its obfuscating mists? Could boredom be hovering over the grounds of our being like a fog preventing us from staring straight into its anxious groundlessness? Could it be the case that in our epoch one fundamental attunement is working as a defense mechanism against another?

Let us take a step back and look again at some of the findings from our reading of Heidegger’s analysis of boredom in order to compare them with what we have now encountered in the face of anxiety. As we saw, Heidegger emphasized a slippage from the second to the third and most profound moment of boredom, in which the bored ones also appeared to slip away from themselves: “In diesem nichts weiter dabei Suchen, das für uns selbstverständlich ist, *entgleiten* wir uns in gewisser Weise selbst.”<sup>836</sup>

Detained in the arrested time of boredom, the bored one is abandoned both by its past and by its future, and exposed to the abyssal superficiality of an expanded yet exhausted present without presence wherein the ecstasies of time appear to have collapsed in “something like an inverted ecstasy.”<sup>837</sup> Moreover, in this silent implosion of existence, another inversion seems to take place wherein a boring event (such as an evening dining out) turns into pure eventlessness. This pure eventlessness is perhaps the reason why

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<sup>835</sup> GA 9, 111.

<sup>836</sup> GA 29/39, 180.

<sup>837</sup> Haar 1999, 296.

Heidegger has such difficulties in coming up with an appropriate example of the third and most profound form of boredom, insofar as this strange experience in which there is nothing to experience also concerns a phenomenological limit. This phenomenological limit has to do with a certain placelessness or ‘atopic’ threshold where the experience of non-experience or the event of eventlessness somehow comes to appear. It is the threshold where absence becomes present and *nothing happens to appear*, or, in the words of Blanchot, echoing Mallarmé, it is the “apparition du ‘tout a disparu.’”<sup>838</sup>

This is not to say that we have simply crossed a clearly demarcated line so that we are now situated somewhere ‘beyond’ phenomenology. As we know from Heidegger, the liminal is never that easy to delimit just as crossing lines is never a simple procedure.<sup>839</sup> Rather, the phenomenological limit concerns an exposure of phenomenology to its own limit and to certain ‘off-limits’ within itself. What is at stake here—at this limit exposed or turned back on itself, as it were—is an experience of that which cannot be experienced within experience, or of that which can only be given to experience in its turning away from experience; it is the experience of that which remains ‘outside’ within experience.

Consequently, the phenomenological limit does not delimit the ‘inside’ of that which can be experienced phenomenologically and that would thereby be circumscribed and protected against its ‘outside.’ Instead, the phenomenological is itself affected by the exposure to its own limit in such a way that the delimitation between phenomenology and its other begin to vacillate. In the appearance of disappearance, then, we are no longer moving safely within the domain of phenomenology, that is, the domain where something appears *as* something or *as such* (*als solche*)—whether this ‘as’ is understood apophantically or hermeneutically. Instead, we have passed on to the what Blanchot calls ‘the space of literature,’ which is a space of apparitions, doubles, phantasms, and phantoms, where the fundamental

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<sup>838</sup> Cf. EL, 169/163. In this regard, Froment-Meurice has coined the word *disparêtre*, which can be read both as the ‘disappearance of being’ and as the ‘being of disappearance,’ a difference of meaning that in a similar way to Derrida’s *différance* is only discernible in writing. In reading Heidegger, Froment-Meurice comments: “the nothing (*Nichts*) ‘is’ the pronoun (or first name, *pro-nom*) of Being’s veil, that is to say, its only name, for lack of a proper name. It is the effaced Name—and its Face: Being can only *disparêtre*” (Froment 1995, 85). We could add here, I think, that the *es* is the pronoun of *einem*, that is, of the one who dis-appears in boredom or anxiety.

<sup>839</sup> On the difficult matter of crossing a line, see Heidegger’s essay *Zur Seinsfrage* first published in 1955 in commemoration of the sixtieth birthday of Ernst Jünger and partly as a response to Jünger’s own contribution entitled “Über die Linie.” The line under discussion in both texts, whether crossable or not, is the line of nihilism.

ontology of Dasein turns into the abyssal hauntology of the same and where the ‘as such’ (*als solche*) is only given in the shadow of the ‘as if’ (*als ob*). It is a space where nothing happens for the first time, freshly, innocently, purely, but always only as its own double, and as such a as haunted by the absent presence of reflections, repetitions, and returns. This is the experience of ‘the other night’ (*l’autre nuit*), which, according to Blanchot, is a night that no longer serves the day but rather exposes its unending madness. But for now a whole series of questions regarding the intermezzo of boredom and anxiety has arisen.

Is this phenomenological limit not *nothing* being disclosed in boredom, or rather, is this not the disclosure that *there is* nothing to disclose? Is this not anxiety provoking? Does boredom not brush up against anxiety here? Is the indifference of boredom not bordering on, yet still obfuscating the anxious secret that there is no secret to be revealed? No hidden ground of being or secret kernel of truth to be revealed as belonging to Dasein, only the secret that there is no secret. And inversely, is such disclosure of non-disclosure not in turn exceedingly boring? Might we not at this appearance of the disappearance of everything discern a point of conflation between boredom and anxiety, at which boredom becomes anxious and anxiety becomes boring? Is there not a sort of tipping point where the eventless repetitions of the everyday turn into the anxiety-ridden compulsion to repeat also known as the ‘death drive’? Perhaps, but Heidegger tries to strengthen our nerves and to encourage us not to despair in the search for distractions but to confront the challenge to which such an anxiety of boredom exposes us:

[D]as Beunruhigende dieser Inhaltslosigkeit, das zu diesem ‘es ist einem langweilig’ gehört, dürfen wir nicht beseitigen, wenn wir überhaupt imstande sind, diese Stimmung ‘es ist einem langweilig’ in ihrer ganzen Schwingungsweite in uns ausschwingen zu lassen.<sup>840</sup>

Why should we stop trying to overcome the unnerving attunement of boredom and instead try to let ourselves be gripped and attuned towards its entire range of vibration? Because, Heidegger answers, in the radical emptiness of the exhausted time of boredom there is also the instantaneous possibility of a sheer openness and as such of a “*Hingezwungenheit an die ursprüngliche Ermöglichung des Daseins*.”<sup>841</sup> Yet, again we must ask ourselves if the oscillations of boredom might not at some point come to interfere with the wavelengths of anxiety and whether this point is perhaps what Heidegger calls freedom or, later on, releasement (*Gelassenheit*)? The

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<sup>840</sup> GA 29/30, 216.

<sup>841</sup> GA 29/30, 216.



question remains, then, as to when the nebulous fog of boredom dissipates enough to let the bored one encounter the abyss of freedom in anxiety; when does the 'es ist einem langweilig' turn into the 'ist es einem unheimlich'?<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>842</sup> Cf. GA 9, 111.



## EXCURSUS IV

### A SCENE FROM RILKE CONCERNING A REVERSAL OF THE MIRROR STAGE

Embarking on this ocean of (his)stories, we encounter a scene from Rainer Maria Rilke's novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* from 1910, in which something like a reversal of the mirror stage, akin to the one we have tried to outline above, appears to take place. In what follows, we shall therefore attend at some length to this scene because it might elucidate something that remains very obscure in our reading of Lacan's seminar on anxiety. Hence, what Lacan says in regard to Hoffmann's tales and their depictions of the uncanny could in this context be said about Rilke's novel with regard to the reversal of the mirror stage, namely that: "Dans la réalité, celle-ci [i.e. notre expérience de l'*unheimlich*] est trop fugitive. La fiction la démontre bien mieux."<sup>843</sup>

The relevant scene takes place when Rilke's protagonist Malte is still a young boy, recovering from a fever in his childhood home. Roaming the rooms of the attic that are normally secluded from sight, Malte discovers an old chest filled with clothes and costumes of different kinds. He begins to try on the costumes and look at himself in a tall trumeau mirror (*Pfeilerspiegel*) constructed out of dissimilar greenish pieces of glass. *Suddenly*, however, as Malte gazes at in the mirror—almost as if the mirror itself does not believe its own reflection (*der Spiegel glaubte es gleichsam nicht*)—he no longer sees his own reflection but something foreign (*Fremdes*) and independent (*Selbständiges*), which gradually takes Malte into its possession (*in seine Macht bekam*). The reflection of the mirror now begins to dictate Malte's movements, his facial expressions, and even the thoughts and ideas that befall him (*Einfälle*). At first, however, these dissimulations (*Verstellungen*) of Malte's reflection do not go so far as to entirely alienate or estrange (*entfremden*) him from himself; rather, they enforce his conviction in himself as a great actor and a master of disguise. In other words, a distance still remains to separate Malte from his strange image such that he does not yet feel anxious or threatened by it, but instead exhilarated by his playful mirroring.

The catastrophe (*Verhängnis*), however, by which the mirror overturns the position of power between the Malte and his reflection, occurs when Malte unlocks the final chest, which harbor a plethora of masks and accessories (*Maskenzeug*). Discarding the too-conventional and obvious costumes, like the Dominos and Pierrots, Malte is drawn to and almost intoxicated (*eine Art*

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<sup>843</sup> Sem X, 61/49.

von Rausch) by the more mysterious, subtle, and secretive ones; the large coats, cloths, scarves, and not least the veils (*Schleier*) in whose wonderful materials he imagines endless possibilities of disguise (*freie und unendlich bewegliche Möglichkeiten*), liberated from the figures with predetermined associations.

Malte soon decides on a mask, places his face in its cavity, wraps some of the cloths around it as a kind of turban so that the edge of the mask is entirely covered, and then heads to the mirror to contemplate this new creation. Yet, the image returned to Malte in the mirror exceeds all of his expectations, and is so magnificent (*großartig*) and complete (*vollkommen*) that it almost becomes too convincing (*zu überzeugend*). In order to find out what or who he has become, Malte begins to make grandiose and enthralling (*beschwörende*) movements, which are the only movements that seem proper to this apparition in the mirror. Unfortunately, these monumental movements cause Malte to knock over a table, upon which a flacon of perfume and some other items are placed. The flacon breaks and the fluid begins to color the light flooring with dark stains. Malte tries to mop up the spill but the stains only grow darker and more discomfiting (*unangenehm*).

Agitated and in despair, Malte tries to free himself from his costume in order to be able to better move around and see what he is doing, but he only succeeds in drawing the layers of clothes closer together, making it more and more difficult for him to breath. Finding it increasingly hard to draw breath, Malte rushes to the mirror for assistance in his self-liberation, yet the moment of revenge (*Vergeltung*) has arrived and the mirror returns only an image, which is no longer a reassuring reflection of himself but a foreign and unbelievably monstrous reality (*eine fremde, unbegreifliche monströse Wirklichkeit*) that has become more powerful than his own. This monstrously real image leaves the horrified Malte with no other choice but to surrender to the fact of his experience that “jetzt war er der Stärkere, und Ich was der Spiegel.”<sup>844</sup> A catastrophe has occurred and Malte no longer possesses but is instead possessed by his creation, which has become utterly unfamiliar (*unbekannt*) to him and which causes him to lose his senses and to literally fall out of himself (*ich fiel einfach aus*).

For an instant, Malte experiences a profound longing for himself, a longing to regain himself, but retrieves nothing but the inner foreigner that has usurped him. So he decides to make a run for it in order to escape the unfamiliar and mesmerizing gaze staring at him from the mirror with his own eyes, to try to save whatever is left of himself and recover himself somewhere else in the familiar surroundings of his home. To his regret,

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<sup>844</sup> Rilke 1979, 101–102.

however, Malte discovers that it is no longer himself who is running through the house, but instead the anonymous stranger who he is trying to escape but into whose possession Malte has now fallen, which causes him to no longer know his way around his own house. The disguised child, whose authority can only improperly be named Malte, stumbles down to the bottom of the stairs where the servants of the household are passing by. Instead of helping Malte in his distress, however, the servants merely laugh at him, since they observe only a playful child in his disguise and not a child possessed by his disguise. Malte tries to cry out, to plead, to scream, but he finds that he no longer has a voice of his own (*Ich hatte keine Stimme mehr*). Finally, Malte faints and collapses on the floor, and, at the sound of his silence the servants begin to uncover him from his possessive disguise to find him lying there unconscious “wie ein Stück in allen den Tüchern, rein wie ein Stück.”<sup>845</sup>

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<sup>845</sup> Rilke 1979, 103.



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