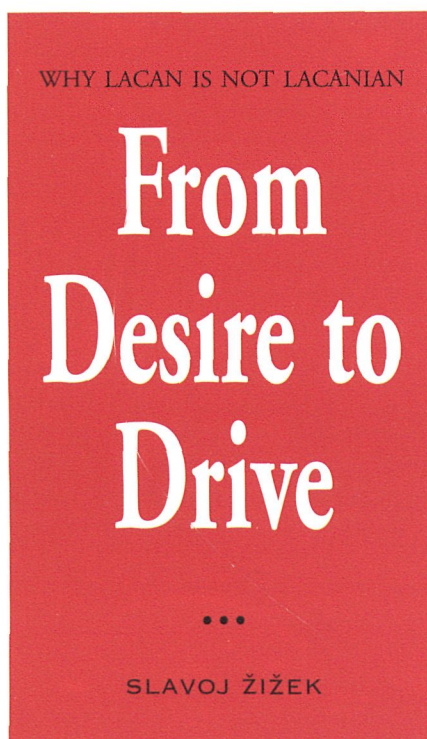


TERRITORIES

1

The predominant reading of Jacques Lacan reduces him to a kind of “philosopher of language” who emphasized the price the subject has to pay in order to gain access to the symbolic order - all the false poetry of “castration,” of some primordial act of sacrifice and renunciation, of *jouissance* as impossible; the notion that, at the end of the psychoanalytic cure, the analysand has to assume symbolic castration, to accept a fundamental, constitutive loss or lack; etc. To such an approach, one has to oppose its obverse, which is usually passed over in silence: the trouble with *jouissance* is not that it is unattainable, that it always eludes our grasp, but rather that *one can never get rid of it*, that its stain forever drags along - therein resides the point of Lacan’s concept of surplus-enjoyment: the very renunciation to *jouissance* brings about a remainder/surplus of *jouissance*. This surplus-enjoyment complicates the problem of responsibility. The subject can exonerate himself of responsibility with regard to the symbolic network of tradition which *overdetermines his speech*; he is justified in claiming that “I am not the true author of my statements, since I merely repeat the performative patterns I grew into - it is the big Other which effectively speaks through me” (say, the author of a racist injury can always



evoke the network of historical sedimentations in which his speech act is embedded). However, *the subject is fully responsible for the little bit of enjoyment he finds in his aggressive racist outburst*.

This predominant reading of Lacan is not a simple misreading, external to what Lacan effectively accomplished: there certainly is an entire stratum of Lacanian theory which corresponds to this reading; the easiest way to isolate this stratum is to focus on the shifts in Lacan’s formulas of the conclusion of the psychoanalytic cure. *Crucial here is the shift from subjectivization to subjective destitution*. Insofar as the status of the subject as such involves a certain guilt and/or indebtedness - the philosophical topos from Kierkegaard to Heidegger readily accepted by the Lacan of the '50s - the

gesture of “subjectivization” at the conclusion of the cure means that the subject has to fully assume his constitutive guilt and/or debt, which is obfuscated in his “inauthentic” everyday existence; inversely, “subjective destitution” at the conclusion of the cure means that the subject has to do away with his guilt and/or debt. We thus arrive at two opposed readings of Freud’s *wo es war, soll ich werden*. “Subjectivization” *qua* the assuming of guilt implies that the analysand “subjectivizes,” fully assumes, “internalizes,” his contingent fate, i.e. it points towards a tragic/heroic gesture of *amor fati*, whose exemplary case in literature is provided by Oedipus: although Oedipus was not guilty of his crime - his acts were predetermined by the contingency of fate well before his birth - he nonetheless heroically assumed full responsibility for his horrible deeds, i.e. he took upon himself his fate, “internalized” it and lived it to its bitter end.... “Subjectivization” thus consists in the purely formal gesture of symbolic conversion, by means of which the subject integrates into his symbolic universe - turns into part and parcel of his life-narrative, provides with meaning - the meaningless contingency of his destiny. In clear contrast to “subjectivization,” “subjective destitution” involves the opposite gesture: at the end of the psychoanalytic

cure, the analysand has to suspend the urge to symbolize/internalize, to interpret, to search for a “deeper meaning;” he has to accept that the traumatic encounters which traced out the itinerary of his life were utterly contingent and indifferent, that they bear no “deeper message.”

What, then, are the basic contours of this false (mis)reading of Lacan? The moment we enter the symbolic order, the immediacy of the pre-symbolic Real is lost forever, the true object of desire (“mother”) becomes impossible-unattainable. Every positive object we encounter in reality is already a substitute for this lost original, the incestuous *Ding* rendered inaccessible by the very fact of language - therein resides “symbolic castration.” The very existence of man *qua* being-of-language thus stands under the sign of an irreducible and constitutive lack: we are submerged in the universe of signs which forever prevents us from attaining the Thing; the so-called “external reality” itself is already “structured like a language,” i.e. its meaning is always-already overdetermined by the symbolic framework which structures our perception of reality. The symbolic agency of the paternal prohibition (the “Name of the Father”) merely personifies, gives body to, the impossibility which is co-substantial with the very fact of the symbolic order - “*jouissance* is forbidden to him who speaks as such.”

This gap that forever separates the lost Thing from symbolic semblances which are never “*that*,” defines the contours of the ethics of desire: “do not

give way as to your desire” can only mean “do not put up with any of the substitutes of the Thing, keep open the gap of desire.” The homology with Kant’s philosophy is crucial here: in Kant, one has to avoid two traps, not only the simple utilitarian-pragmatic limitation of our interest to the object of phenomenal experience, but also the obscurantist *Schwaermerei*, i.e. the dream of a direct contact with the Thing beyond phenomenal reality; in a homologous way, the ethics of pure desire compels us to avoid not only debilitating contentment with the pleasures provided by the objects of phenomenal reality, but also the danger of yielding to fascination with the Thing and of being drawn into its lethal vortex, which can only end in psychosis or suicidal *passage a l’acte*. In our everyday lives, we constantly fall prey to imaginary lures which promise the healing of the original/constitutive wound of symbolization, from Woman with whom full sexual relationship will be possible to the totalitarian political ideal of a fully realized community. In contrast, the fundamental maxim of the ethics of desire is simply desire as such: one has to maintain desire in its dissatisfaction. What we have here is a kind of heroism of the lack: the aim of psychoanalytic cure is to induce the subject to heroically assume his constitutive lack, to endure the splitting which propels desire. A productive way out of this deadlock is provided by the possibility of *sublimation*: when one picks out an empirical, positive, object and “elevates it to the dignity of the Thing,” i.e. turns it into a kind of stand-in for the impossible Thing, one thereby

remains faithful to one’s desire, without getting drawn into the deadly vortex of the Thing...

This reading of Lacan also involves a precise political attitude. The field of the political is characterized by the radically ambiguous relationship of the subjects towards the public Thing (*res publica*), the kernel of the Real around which the life of a community turns. The subject, *qua* member of a community, is split not only between his “pathological” urges and his relationship to the Thing; his relationship to the Thing is also split: on the one hand, the law of desire orders us to neglect our pathological interests and to follow our Thing; on the other hand, an even higher law (Baas writes it with a capital L) enjoins us to maintain a minimum of distance towards our Thing, i.e. to bear in mind, apropos of every political action which purports to realize our Cause, that “this is not that / *ce n’est pas ca*.” The Thing can only appear in its retreat, as the obscure Ground which motivates our activity, but which dissipates in the moment that we endeavor to grasp it in its positive ontological consistency: if we neglect this Law, sooner or later we get caught in the “totalitarian” self-destructive vicious cycle.... What lurks in the background, of course, is the Kantian distinction between the constitutive and the regulative aspect: the Thing (freedom, for example) has to remain a regulative ideal - any attempt at its full realization can only lead to the most terrifying tyranny. (It is easy to discern here, the contours of Kant’s criticism of the perversion of the French Revolution in

the revolutionary terror of the Jacobins.) And how can we avoid recognizing reference to the contemporary political landscape here, with its two extremes of unprincipled liberal pragmatism and fundamentalist fanaticism?

In a first approach, this reading of Lacan cannot but appear convincing, almost a matter of course - yet it is the very ease of this translation of Lacanian concepts into the modern structuralist and/or existentialist philosophemes of constitutive lack, etc., which should render it suspect. To put it somewhat bluntly, we are dealing here with an "idealist" distortion of Lacan; to this "idealist" problematic of desire, its constitutive lack, etc., one has to oppose the "materialist" problematic of the Real of drives. That is to say, for Lacan, the "Real" is *not*, in the Kantian mode, a purely negative category, a designation of a limit without any specification of what lies beyond: the Real *qua* drive is, on the contrary, the *agens*, the "driving force," of desiring. In short, Lacan's point here is that the passage from the radically "impossible" Real (the maternal Thing-Body which can be apprehended only in a negative way) to the reign of the symbolic Law, to desire which is regulated by Law, sustained by the fundamental Prohibition, is not direct: something happens *between* the "pure," "pre-human" nature and the order of symbolic exchanges, and this "something" is precisely the Real of drives - *no longer* the "closed circuit" of instincts and of their innate rhythm of satisfaction (drives are already "derailed nature"), but *not yet* the symbolic desire sustained by Prohibition. The Lacanian

Thing is not simply the "impossible" Real which withdraws into the dim recesses of the Unattainable with the entry of the symbolic order; it is the very universe of drives.

2

Against this standard (mis)reading of Lacan, the first thing one should do is to focus on the paradoxical achievement of Lacan, which usually passes unnoticed even amongst his advocates: that is, on the very behalf of psychoanalysis, Lacan returns a "decontextualized" rationalist notion of the subject to the Modern Age. That is to say, one of the commonplaces of today's American appropriation of Heidegger is to emphasize how he, along with Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, and others, elaborated the conceptual framework which enables us to get rid of the rationalist notion of the subject as an autonomous agent who, excluded from the world, in a computer-like way processes data provided by the senses. Heidegger's notion of "being-in-the-world" points towards our irreducible and unsurpassable "embeddedness" in a concrete and ultimately contingent life-world: we are always-already *in* the world, engaged in an existential project within a background which eludes our grasp and forever remains the opaque horizon into which we are "thrown" as finite beings. And it is customary to interpret the opposition between consciousness and the unconscious along the same lines: the disembodied Ego stands for rational consciousness, whereas the "unconscious" is synonymous with the opaque

background which we cannot ever fully master, since we are always-already part of it, caught in it.... Lacan, however, in an unheard-of gesture, claims the exact opposite: the Freudian "unconscious" has nothing whatsoever to do with the structurally necessary and irreducible opaqueness of the background, of the life-context in which we, the always-already engaged agents, are embedded; the "unconscious" is, rather, the *disembodied rational machine* which follows its path irrespective of the demands of the subject's life-world. It stands for the rational subject insofar as it is originally "out of joint," in discord with its contextualized situation: the "unconscious" is the crack on account of which the subject's primordial stance is not that of "being-in-the-world." This way, one can also provide a new, unexpected solution to the old phenomenological problem of how it is possible for the subject to disengage itself from its concrete life-world and (mis)perceive itself as a disembodied rational agent: this disengagement can only occur because there is - from the very outset - something in the subject which resists its full inclusion into its life-world context, and this "something," of course, is the unconscious, as the psychic machine which disregards the requirements of the "reality-principle."

One of the names for this disengagement is "madness," and we know that the prospect of madness haunts the entirety of modern philosophy from Descartes onwards. When Hegel defines madness as withdrawal from the actual world, the

closing of the soul into itself, its “contraction,” the cutting-off of its links with external reality, he all too quickly conceives this withdrawal as a “regression” to the level of the “animal soul” still embedded in its natural environs and determined by the rhythm of nature (night and day, etc.). Does this withdrawal, on the contrary, not designate the severing of the links with the *Umwelt*, the end of the subject’s immersion into its immediate natural surroundings, and is it, as such, not the founding gesture of “humanization”? Was this withdrawal-into-self not accomplished by Descartes in his universal doubt and reduction to *cogito*, which, as Derrida points out in his “Cogito and the history of madness,” [1] also involves a passage through the moment of radical madness? Are we thus not back at the well-known passage from *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, where Hegel characterizes the experience of pure Self *qua* “abstract negativity,” the “eclipse of (constituted) reality,” the contraction-into-self of the subject, as the “night of the world:”

“The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity - an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none belongs to him - or which are not present. This night, the inner of nature, that exists here - pure self - in phantasmagorical representations, is night all around it, in which here shoots a bloody head - there another white ghastly apparition, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks

human beings in the eye - into a night that becomes awful” [2].

And the symbolic order, the universe of the Word, *logos*, can only emerge from the experience of this abyss. As Hegel puts it, this inwardness of the pure self “must enter also into existence, become an object, oppose itself to this innerness to be external; return to being. This is language as name-giving power.... Through the name the object as individual entity is born out of the I.” [3] - What we must be careful not to miss here is how Hegel’s break with the Enlightenment tradition can be discerned in the reversal of the very metaphor for the subject: the subject is no longer the Light of Reason opposed to the non-transparent, impenetrable Stuff (of Nature, Tradition...); his very kernel, the gesture which opens up the space for the Light of Logos, is absolute negativity *qua* “night of the world,” the point of utter madness in which fantasmatic apparitions of “partial objects” err all around. Consequently, there is no subjectivity without this gesture of withdrawal; which is why Hegel is fully justified in inverting the standard question of how the fall-regression into madness is possible: the true question is, rather, how the subject is able to climb out of madness and to reach “normalcy.” That is to say, the withdrawal-into-self, the cutting-off of the links to the *Umwelt*, is followed by the construction of a symbolic universe which the subject projects onto reality as a kind of substitute-formation destined to recompense us for the loss of the immediate, pre-symbolic real. However,

as Freud himself asserted apropos of Schreber, is not the manufacturing of a substitute-formation that recompenses the subject for the loss of reality the most succinct definition of paranoiac construction as an attempt to cure the subject of the disintegration of his universe? In short, the ontological necessity of “madness” resides in the fact that it is not possible to pass directly from the purely “animal soul” immersed in its natural life-world to “normal” subjectivity dwelling in its symbolic universe: the “vanishing mediator” between the two is the “mad” gesture of radical withdrawal from reality which opens up the space for its symbolic (re)constitution. It was Hegel, already, who emphasized the radical ambiguity of the statement “What I think, the product of my thought, is objectively true” - this statement is a speculative proposition that simultaneously renders the “lowest,” the erratic attitude of the madman caught in his self-enclosed universe, unable to relate to reality, and the “highest,” the truth of speculative idealism, the identity of thought and being. If, therefore, in this precise sense, as Lacan put it, normalcy itself is a mode, a sub-species of psychosis, i.e. if the difference between “normalcy” and madness is inherent to madness, in what does the difference between the “mad” (paranoiac) construction and the “normal” (social construction of) reality then consist? Is “normalcy” ultimately not merely a more “mediated” form of madness? Or, as Schelling put it, is normal Reason not merely “regulated madness”?

The Lacanian name for this “regulation of madness” is the symbolization of the real by means of which the formless, “ugly,” real is (trans)formed into reality. Contrary to the standard idealist argument which conceives ugliness as the defective mode of beauty, as its distortion, one should assert the *ontological primacy of ugliness*: it is beauty which is a kind of defense against the Ugly in its repulsive existence or, rather, existence *tout court*, since, as we shall see, what is ugly is ultimately the brutal fact of existence (of the real) as such [4]. The ugly object is an object which is in the wrong place, which “shouldn’t be there.” This does not mean simply that the ugly object is no longer ugly the moment that we relocate it to its proper place; the point is rather that an ugly object is “in itself” out of place, on account of the distorted balance between its “representation” (the symbolic features we perceive) and “existence” - ugly, out of place, is the excess of existence over representation. Ugliness is thus a *topological* category; it designates an object which is in a way “larger than itself,” whose existence is larger than its representation. The ontological presupposition of ugliness is therefore a gap between an object and the space it occupies, or - to make the same point in a different way - between the outside (surface) of an object (captured by its representation) and its inside (formless stuff). In the case of beauty, we have a perfect isomorphism in both respects, while in the case of ugliness, the inside of an object

somehow is (appears) larger than the outside of its surface-representation (like the uncanny buildings in Kafka’s novels which, once we enter them, appear much more voluminous than what they seemed when viewed from the outside).

Another way to put it is to say that what makes an object “out of place” is that it is too close *to me*, like the Statue of Liberty in Hitchcock’s *Foreign Correspondent*: seen from the extreme proximity, it loses its dignity and acquires disgusting, obscene features. In courtly love, the figure of *die Frau-Welt* obeys the same logic: she appears beautiful from the proper distance, but the moment the poet or the knight serving her approaches her too closely (or when she asks him to come close to her so that she can repay him for his faithful service), she turns her other, reverse side to him, and what was previously the semblance of a fascinating beauty, is suddenly revealed as putrefied flesh, crawling with snakes and worms, the disgusting substance of life, as in the films of David Lynch, where an object turns into the disgusting substance of Life as soon as the camera gets too close to it. The gap that separates beauty from ugliness is thus the very gap that separates reality from the Real: the kernel of reality is horror, horror of the Real, and that which constitutes reality is the *minimum* of idealization which the subject needs in order to be able to sustain the Real. Another way to make the same point is to define ugliness as the excess of stuff which penetrates through the pores in the surface, from science-fiction aliens whose liquid materiality overwhelms

their surfaces (see the evil alien in *Terminator 2* or, of course, the alien from *Alien* itself), to the films of David Lynch (especially *Dune*), in which the raw flesh beneath the surface constantly threatens to emerge on the surface. In our standard phenomenological attitude towards the body of another person, we conceive the surface (of a face, for example) as directly expressing the “soul” - we suspend the knowledge of what actually exists beneath the skin surface (glands, flesh...). The shock of ugliness occurs when the surface is actually cut, opened up, so that the direct insight into the actual depth of the skinless flesh dispels the spiritual, immaterial, pseudo-depth.

In the case of beauty, the outside of a thing - its surface - encloses and overcoats its interior, whereas in the case of ugliness, this proportionality is perturbed by the excess of the interior stuff which threatens to overwhelm and engulf the subject. This opens up the space for the opposite excess, that of something which is not there and should be, like the missing nose which makes the “phantom of the opera” so ugly. Here, we have the case of a lack which also functions as an excess, the excess of a ghostly, spectral materiality in search of a “proper,” “real” body. Ghosts and vampires are shadowy forms in desperate search for the life-substance (blood) in us, actually existing humans. The excess of stuff is thus strictly correlative to the excess of spectral form: Deleuze has already pointed out how the “place without an object” is sustained by an “object lacking its proper place” - it is not possible for the

two lacks to cancel each other. What we have here are the two aspects of the real, existence without properties and an object with properties without existence. Suffice it to recall the well-known scene from Terry Gilliam's *Brasil*, in which the waiter in a high-class restaurant recommends the best offers from the daily menu to his customers ("Today, our *tournedos* is really special!" etc.), yet, what the customers are given on making their choice is a dazzling color photo of the meal on a stand above the plate, and, on the plate itself, a loathsome excremental paste-like lump: this split between the image of the food and the real of its formless, excremental remainder perfectly exemplifies the two modes of ugliness, the ghost-like substanceless appearance ("representation without existence") and the raw stuff of the real ("existence without appearance").

One should not underestimate the weight of this gap, which separates the "ugly" Real from the fully-formed objects in "reality:" Lacan's fundamental thesis is that a minimum of "idealization," of the interposition of a fantasmatic frame by means of which the subject assumes a distance from the Real, is constitutive of our "sense of reality" - "reality" occurs insofar as it is not (it does not come) "too close." Today, one likes to evoke the manner in which we are - more and more - losing contact with the authentic reality of the external, as well as with our internal nature - say, apropos of milk, we are so accustomed to aseptic, pasteurized milk, that contact with milk directly milked from a cow is unpleasant - this "true

milk" necessarily strikes us as too dense, disgusting, undrinkable....

This gap between the bodily depth of the Real and the pseudo-depth of Meaning produced by the Surface, is crucial for any materialist ontology. It is also easy to see the connection with Freud, who defined reality as that which functions as an obstacle to desire: "ugliness" ultimately stands for existence itself, for the resistance of reality on account of which the material reality is never simply an ethereal medium which lends itself effortlessly to our molding. Reality is ugly, it "shouldn't be there" and hinder our desire. However, the situation is more complicated here, since this obstacle to desire is at the same time the site of the unbearable, filthy, excessive pleasure - of *jouissance*. What shouldn't be there is thus ultimately *jouissance* itself: the inert stuff is the materialization of *jouissance*. In short, the key point not to be missed is that in the opposition between desire and the hard reality opposing its realization (bringing pain, unpleasure, preventing us from achieving the balance of pleasure), *jouissance* is on the side of "hard reality." *Jouissance* as "real," is that which resists (symbolic integration), it is dense and impenetrable - in this precise sense, *jouissance* is "beyond the pleasure-principle." *Jouissance* emerges when the very reality which is the source of unpleasure, of pain, is experienced as a source of traumatic-excessive pleasure. Or, to put it in yet another way: desire is in itself "pure," it endeavors to avoid any "pathological" fixation. The "purity" of desire is guaranteed by the

fact that desire resides in the very gap between any positive object of desire and desire itself - the fundamental experience of desire is "ce n'est pas ça," this is not THAT. In clear contrast to it, *jouissance* (or libido, or drive) is by definition "dirty" and/or ugly, it is always "too close:" desire is absence, while libido-drive is presence.

4

All this is absolutely crucial for the functioning of ideology in the case of our "everyday" sexism or racism: the problem of both is precisely how to "contain" the threatening inside from "spilling out" and overwhelming us. Are women's periods not the exemplary case of such an ugly inside spilling out? Is the presence of African-Americans not felt as threatening precisely insofar as it is experienced as too massive, too close? Suffice it to recall the racist caricatural cliché of black heads and faces: with eyes bulging out, too-large mouths, as if the outside surface is barely able to contain the inside which is threatening to break through. (In this sense, the racist fantasmatic duality of blacks and whites coincides with the duality of formless stuff and shadowy-spectral-impotent form without stuff.) Is the concern with how to dispose of shit (which, according to Lacan, is one of the crucial features differentiating man from animals) not also a case of how to get rid of the inside which emerges out? The ultimate problem in intersubjectivity is precisely the extent to which we are ready to accept the other, our (sexual) partner, in the real of his or her

existence - do we still love him when she or he defecates, makes unpleasant sounds? (Think of the incredible extent to which James Joyce was ready to accept his wife Nora in the "ugly" *jouissance* of her existence.) The problem, of course, is that, in a sense, life itself is "ugly:" if we truly want to get rid of the ugliness, we are sooner or later forced to adopt the attitude of a cathar for whom terrestrial life itself is a hell, and God - who created this world - is Satan himself, the Master of the World. So, in order to survive, we do need a *minimum of the real* - in a contained, gentrified condition.

The Lacanian proof of the Other's existence lies in the *jouissance* of the Other (in contrast to Christianity, for example, where Love provides this proof). In order to render this notion palpable, suffice it to imagine an intersubjective encounter: when do I effectively encounter the Other "beyond the wall of language," in the real of his or her being? Not when I am able to describe her, not even when I learn her values, dreams, etc., but, only when I encounter the Other in her moment of *jouissance*: when I discern in her a tiny detail - a compulsive gesture, an excessive facial expression, a tic - which signals the intensity of the real of *jouissance*. This encounter of the real is always traumatic, there is something at least minimally obscene about it. I cannot simply integrate it into my universe; there is always a gap separating me from it. This, then, is what "intersubjectivity" is actually about, not the Habermasian "ideal speech situation" of a multitude of

academics smoking pipes at a round table and arguing about some point by means of undistorted communication: without the element of the real of *jouissance*. for here the Other ultimately remains a fiction, a purely symbolic subject of strategic reasoning, as exemplified in the "rational choice theory." For that reason, one is even tempted to replace the term "multiculturalism" with "multiracism:" multiculturalism suspends the traumatic kernel of the Other, reducing it to an aseptized, folklorist entity. What we are dealing with here is - in Lacanese - the distance between S and *a*, between the symbolic features and the unfathomable surplus, the "indivisible remainder" of the real: at a somewhat different level. Walter Benn Michaels made the same point in claiming that:

"The accounts of cultural identity that do any cultural work require a racial component. For insofar as our culture remains nothing more than what we do and believe, it is impotently descriptive.... It is only if we think that our culture is not whatever beliefs and practices we actually happen to have but is instead the beliefs and practices that should properly go with the sort of people we happen to be, that the fact of something belonging to our culture can count as a reason for doing it. But to think this is to appeal to something that must be beyond culture and that cannot be derived from culture precisely because our sense of which culture is properly ours must be derived from it. This has been the function of race.... Our sense of culture is characteristically meant to displace race, but ... culture

has turned out to be a way of continuing rather than repudiating racial thought. It is only the appeal to race that makes culture an object of affect and that gives notions like losing our culture, preserving it, stealing someone else's culture, restoring people's culture to them, and so on, their pathos.... Race transforms people who learn to do what we do into the thieves of our culture and people who teach us to do what they do into the destroyers of our culture: it makes assimilation into a kind of betrayal and the refusal to assimilate into a form of heroism" [5].

The historicist/culturalist account of ethnic identity, insofar as it functions as performatively binding for the group accounted for and not merely as a distanced ethnological description, thus has to involve "something more," some trans-cultural "kernel of the real." (The postmodern multiculturalist only displaces this pathos onto the allegedly more "authentic" Other: Stars and Stripes give him no thrill; what *does* give him a thrill is listening to some ritual of native Americans, of African-Americans.... What we are dealing with here is clearly the inverted form of racism.) Without this kernel, we remain caught in the vicious cycle of the symbolic performativity which, in an "idealistic" way, retroactively grounds itself. It is Lacan who - in a Hegelian way - enables us to resolve this deadlock: the kernel of the real is the retroactive product, the "fall-out," of the very process of symbolization. The "Real" is the unfathomable remainder of the ethnic substance whose predicates are the different cultural features which

constitute our identity; in this precise sense, race relates to culture like real relates to symbolic. The “Real” is the unfathomable X which is at stake in our cultural struggles; it is that on account of which, when somebody learns too much of our culture, he “steals” it from us; it is that on account of which, when somebody shifts allegiance to another culture, he “betrays” us; etc. Such experiences prove that there must be some X which is “expressed” in the cultural set of values, attitudes, rituals... which materialize our way of life. What is stolen, betrayed... is always *objet petit a*, the little piece of the Real.

Jacques Ranciere [6] gave a poignant expression to the “bad surprise” which awaits today’s postmodern ideologues of the “end of politics:” it is as if we are witnessing the ultimate confirmation of Freud’s thesis, from *Civilization and its Discontents*, on how, after every assertion of Eros, Thanatos reasserts itself with a vengeance. At the very moment when, according to the official ideology, we are finally leaving behind “immature” political passions (the regime of the “political:” class struggle and other “outdated” divisive antagonisms) for the post-ideological and “mature” pragmatic universe of rational administration and negotiated consensus, for the universe free of utopian impulses in which the dispassionate administration of social affairs goes hand in hand with aestheticized hedonism (the pluralism of “ways of life”); at this very moment, the foreclosed political is celebrating a triumphant comeback in its most archaic form as a pure, undistilled racist

hatred of the Other, which renders the rational tolerant attitude utterly impotent. In this precise sense, the contemporary “postmodern” racism is the *symptom* of the multiculturalist late capitalism, bringing to light the inherent contradiction of the liberal-democratic ideological project. Liberal “tolerance” condones the folklorist Other which is deprived of its substance (like the multitude of “ethnic cuisine” in a contemporary megalopolis); however, any “real” Other is instantly denounced for its “fundamentalism,” since the kernel of Otherness resides in the regulation of its *jouissance*, i.e. the “real Other” is by definition “patriarchal,” “violent,” never the Other of ethereal wisdom and charming customs. One is tempted to reactualize the old Marcusean notion of “repressive tolerance” here, reconceiving it as the tolerance of the Other in its asepticized, benign form, which forecloses the dimension of the Real of the Other’s *jouissance*, the excess of this *jouissance* which, in our everyday racist attitude, appears as the specific feature of the Other which “bothers us.” Let me recall a rather personal experience, that of my own mother. Her best friend, as the saying goes, is an old Jewish lady; after some financial transaction with her, my mother said to me: “What a nice lady, but did you notice the strange way she counted the money?” - in my mother’s eyes, this feature, the way the Jewish lady handled the money, functioned exactly like the mysterious feature in science-fiction novels and films which enables us to identify aliens who are otherwise indistinguishable from

ourselves (a thin layer of transparent skin between the third finger and the little finger, or a strange gleam in the eye...).

5

This feature serves as the “material support” of the *fantasies* about the Other. What, then, is fantasy? One should always bear in mind that the desire “realized” (staged) in fantasy is not the subject’s own, but the *other’s* desire. That is to say, fantasy, fantasmatic formation, is an answer to the enigma of “*Che vuoi?*” (“What do you want?”), which renders the subject’s primordial, constitutive position. The original question of desire is not directly “What do I want?”, but “What do *others* want from me? What do they see in me? What am I for others?” A small child is embedded in a complex network of relations; he serves as a kind of catalyst and battle-field for the desires of those around him; his father, mother, brothers and sisters fight their battles around him, the mother sending a message to the father through her care for the son, etc. While being well aware of this role, the child cannot fathom what it is precisely, he cannot grasp the exact nature of the games they are playing with him... and fantasy provides an answer to this enigma. At its most fundamental, fantasy tells me what I am for my others. It is, again, anti-Semitism, the anti-Semitic paranoia, which exemplarily renders visible this radically *intersubjective* character of fantasy: fantasy (the social fantasy of the Jewish plot) is an attempt

to provide an answer to "What does society want from me?" i.e. to unearth the meaning of the murky events in which I am forced to participate. For that reason, the standard theory of "projection," according to which the anti-Semite "projects" the disavowed part of himself onto the figure of the Jew, is not sufficient: the figure of the "conceptual Jew" cannot be reduced to the externalization of my (the anti-Semite's) "inner conflict;" on the contrary, it bears witness to (and tries to cope with) the fact that I am originally decentered, part of an opaque network whose meaning and logic elude my control.

The crucial point here is that *fantasy does not dissimulate reality*: rather, fantasy serves as the screen which enables us to confront the Real - as such, fantasy is on the side of reality, it guarantees the distance between (symbolically structured) reality and the horrifying Real. The main Freudian name for this Real is the "death drive." For Freud, the death drive is not merely a decadent reactive formation - a secondary self-denial of the originally assertive Will to Power, the weakness of the Will, its escape from life, disguised as heroism - but the innermost radical possibility of a human being. Let us take the case of Wagner. When one says "death drive and Wagner," the first association is, of course, Schopenhauer, Wagner's principal reference concerning the redemptive quality of the longing for death. Our thesis, however, is that the way the longing for death effectively functions within Wagner's universe is much closer to the Freudian notion of

the "death drive." The death drive is not to be confused with the "Nirvana-principle," the striving to escape the life-cycle of generation and corruption and to achieve the ultimate equilibrium, the release from tensions: what the death drive strives to annihilate is not the biological cycle of generation and corruption, but rather the symbolic order, the order of the symbolic pact which regulates social exchange and sustains debts, honors, obligations [7]. The death drive is thus to be conceived against the background of the opposition between "Day" and "Night" as it is formulated in *Tristan*: the opposition between the "daily" social life of symbolic obligations, honors, contracts, debts, and its "nightly" obverse, an immortal, indestructible passion which threatens to dissolve this network of symbolic obligations. One should bear in mind how sensitive Wagner was to the borderline that separates the realm of the Symbolic from what is excluded from it: the deadly passion defines itself against the everyday public universe of symbolic obligations. Therein resides the effect of the love-potion in *Tristan*: it is in its capacity as the "drink of death" that it acts as the "drink of love" - the two lovers mistake it for the drink of death and, thinking that they are now on the brink of death, delivered from ordinary social obligations, feel free to acknowledge their passion. This immortal passion does not stand for biological life beyond the socio-symbolic universe: in it, carnal passion and pure spirituality paradoxically coincide, i.e. we are dealing with a kind of "denaturalization" of the natural instinct

which inflates it into an immortal passion raised to the level of the Absolute, so that no actual, real object can ever fully satisfy it.

More precisely, there is a dimension of life which the death-drive would annihilate, but this life is not the simple biological life: it must be located, rather, in the uncanny domain of what Lacan called "between the two deaths." In order to elucidate this notion, let us recall the other big enigma of *The Ring*: since the gold - the ring - is finally returned to the Rhine, why do the gods nonetheless perish? We are obviously dealing with *two* deaths: the biologically necessary demise and the "second death," the fact that the subject died in peace, with his accounts settled, with no symbolic debt haunting his memory. Wagner himself changed the text concerning this crucial point: in the first version of Erda's warning in the final scene of *Rheingold*, gods will perish if gold is not returned to the Rhine, whereas in the final version, they will perish anyway; the point is merely that prior to their demise, the gold should be returned to the Rhine, so that they will die properly and avoid the "irretrievable dark perdition".... What we encounter in this uncanny space between the two deaths is the palpitation of a life-substance which cannot ever perish, like Amfortas' wound in *Parsifal*. Suffice it to recall Leni Riefenstahl who, in her unending search for the ultimate life-substance, focused her attention first on the Nazis, then on an African tribe whose male members allegedly display true masculine vitality, and finally on deep-sea animals - as if it was only here,

in this fascinating crawling of primitive life forms, that she could finally encounter her true object. This underwater life seems indestructible, like Leni herself: what we fear when we are following reports on how - well into her nineties - she is diving in order to make a documentary on deep-sea life, is that she will never die - our unconscious fantasy is definitely that she is immortal.... It is crucial to conceive the notion of the death drive against the background of this "second death," as the will to abolish the indestructible palpitation of life beyond death (of the Dutchman, of Kundry and Amfortas), not as the will to negate the immediate biological life cycle. After Parsifal succeeds in annihilating the "pathological" sexual urge in himself, it is this precisely which opens up his eyes to the innocent charm of the immediate natural life cycle (the Magic of the Good Friday). So, back to Wotan; he wants to shed his guilt in order to die properly, in peace, and thus to avoid the fate of an undead monster who, unable to find peace even in death, haunts the common mortals - this is what Bruenhilde has in mind when, at the very end of *The Twilight of Gods*, after returning the ring to the Rhine-maidens, she says: "Rest now, rest now, you god! / *Ruhe, ruhe, du Gott!*"

This notion of the "second death" enables us to properly locate Wagner's claim that Wotan raises to the tragic height of willing his own downfall: "This is everything we have to learn from the history of mankind: to will the inevitable and to carry it out oneself." [8]. Wagner's precise formulation is to be

taken literally in all its paradoxicality - if something is already inevitable in itself, why should we then actively will it and work towards its occurrence, one might ask? This paradox, central to the symbolic order, is the obverse of the paradox of prohibiting something impossible (incest, for example) which can be discerned in Wittgenstein's famous "What one cannot speak about, thereof one should be silent." If it is, in any case, impossible to say anything about it, why add the superfluous prohibition? The fear that one would nevertheless say something about it is strictly homologous to the fear that what is necessary will not occur without our active assistance. The ultimate proof that we are not dealing with futile logical games here is the existential predicament of predestination: the ideological reference which sustained the extraordinary explosion of activity in early capitalism was the Protestant notion of Predestination. That is to say, contrary to the common notion according to which if everything is decided in advance, why bother at all, it was the very awareness that their fate was already sealed up which propelled the subjects into frantic activity. The same goes for Stalinism: the most intense mobilization of the society's productive effort was sustained by its awareness that it was merely realizing an inexorable historical necessity....

6

At a different level, Brecht gave a poignant expression to this predicament

in his "learning plays," exemplarily in *Jasager* in which the young boy is asked to accord freely with what will in any case be his fate (that is, to be thrown into the valley). As his teacher explains to him, it is customary to ask the victim if he agrees with his fate, but it is also customary for the victim to say yes.... All these examples are far from exceptional: every belonging to a society involves a paradoxical point at which the subject is ordered to embrace freely, as the result of his choice, what is anyway imposed on him (*we must all love our country, our parents...*), i.e. at a certain point, each of us was ordered to choose freely what was already imposed on her or him. Our point, however, is that all these paradoxes can only occur within the space of symbolization. The gap on account of which the demand to embrace the inevitable freely is not a meaningless tautology can only be the gap that forever separates an event in the immediacy of its raw reality from its inscription into the symbolic network.... To freely embrace an imposed state of things simply means to integrate this state of things into one's symbolic universe. In this precise sense, the gesture of freely willing one's own death also signals the readiness to come to terms with one's death on the symbolic level, to abandon the mirage of symbolic immortality.

This paradox of "willing (choosing freely) what is necessary," of pretending (maintaining the appearance) that there is a free choice (although effectively there isn't) is closely connected to the splitting of the law into Ego-Ideal (the public-written law) and superego (the

obscene-unwritten-secret law). Since, at the level of Ego-Ideal, the subject wants the semblance of a free choice, the superego injunction has to be delivered "between the lines." The superego articulates the paradoxical injunction of what the subject, its addressee, has to choose freely; as such, this injunction has to remain invisible to the public eye if the Power is to remain operative. In short, what the subject effectively wants is a command in the guise of freedom, of a free choice: he wants to obey, but simultaneously to maintain the semblance of freedom and thus to save face. If the command is delivered directly, bypassing the semblance of freedom, the public humiliation hurts the subject and can induce him to rebel: if there is no order discernible in the Master's discourse, this lack of a command is experienced as suffocating and gives rise to the demand for a new Master who is capable of providing a clear injunction.

We can see, now, how the notion of freely choosing what is inevitable anyway is strictly codependent with the notion of an empty symbolic gesture, a gesture - an offer - which is meant to be rejected: the one is the obverse of the other, i.e. what the empty gesture offers is the possibility to choose the impossible, that which inevitably will *not* happen (in Brecht's case, think of the impossibility of the expedition turning around with the sick boy, instead of getting rid of him by throwing him into the valley). Another exemplary case of such an empty gesture is found in John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany*: after the little boy Owen

accidentally kills John's - his best friend's, the narrator's - mother, he is, of course, terribly upset, so, to show how sorry he is, he discretely delivers a gift of his complete collection of color photos of baseball stars (his most precious possession) to John; however, Dan, John's delicate stepfather, tells him that the proper thing to do is to return the gift.

What we have here is symbolic exchange at its purest: a gesture made to be rejected. The point, the "magic" of symbolic exchange, is that, although at the end we are where we were at the beginning, the overall result of the operation is *not zero*, but a distinct gain for both parties, the pact of solidarity. And is not something similar part of our everyday mores? When, after being engaged in fierce competition for a job promotion with my closest friend, I win, the proper thing to do is suggest to him that I will retract, so that he will get the promotion, and the proper thing for him to do, is to reject my offer - this way, perhaps, our friendship can be saved...

On a more global level, suffice it to recall the current relationship between the great Western powers and Russia: in accordance with the silent pact regulating this relationship, Western states treat Russia as a great power on the condition that Russia doesn't (effectively) act as one. One can see how the logic of the offer which is made to be rejected (Russia is offered the chance to act as a great power, on the condition that it politely rejects this offer) is connected with a possibility which has to remain a mere possibility: in principle, it is possible for Russia to act effectively as

a great power. but, if Russia is to maintain the symbolic status of a great power, it must not take advantage of this possibility... (Of course, the problem is: what if the other to whom the offer being made to be rejected, actually accepts it? What if, in Brecht's *Jasager*, the boy would have said "No" and refused to be thrown into the valley? What if, upon being beaten in the competition, I were to accept my friend's offer to get the promotion instead of him?

A situation like this is properly catastrophic: it causes the disintegration of the semblance (of freedom) that pertains to social order - however, since, at this level, things are - in a way - what they seem to be, this disintegration of the semblance equals the disintegration of the social substance itself, the dissolution of the social link. Ex-Communist societies present an extreme case of such a forced free choice: in them, the subjects were incessantly bombarded with the request to express freely their attitude towards Power, yet everybody was well aware that this freedom was strictly limited to the freedom to say "Yes" to the Communist regime itself.

For that very reason, Communist societies were extremely sensitive to the status of semblance: the ruling party wanted to maintain the appearance (of the broad popular support to the regime) undisturbed at any cost whatsoever. In short, far from standing for an empty Romantic hyperbole, Wagner's notion of freely embracing the inevitable points towards a feature constitutive of the symbolic order.

In order not to miss the paradoxical status of the death drive, it is crucial not to confound drive with desire. Insofar as, according to Lacan, at the conclusion of the psychoanalytic cure, the subject assumes drive beyond fantasy and beyond (the Law of) desire, this compels us to confront the question of the conclusion of the cure in all its urgency. If we discard the discredited standard formulas ("reintegration into the socio-symbolic space," etc.), only two options remain open: *desire or drive*. That is to say, either we conceive the conclusion of the cure as the assertion of the subject's radical openness to the enigma of the Other's desire, now no longer veiled by fantasmatic formations, or, we risk the step beyond desire itself and adopt the position of the saint who is no longer bothered by the Other's desire as its decentered cause. In the case of the saint, the subject, in an unheard-of way, "causes itself," becomes its own cause: its cause is no longer decentered, i.e. the enigma of the Other's desire no longer has any hold over it. How are we to understand this strange reversal? In principle, things are clear enough: by way of positing itself as its own cause, the subject fully assumes the fact that the object-cause of its desire is not a cause which precedes its effects but is retroactively posited by the network of its effects: an event is never simply in itself traumatic, it only becomes a trauma retroactively, by being "secreted" from the subject's symbolic space as its inassimilable point of reference. In this precise sense, the

subject "causes itself" by way of retroactively positing that X which acts as the object-cause of its desire.... This loop is constitutive of the subject, i.e. an entity which does not "cause itself" is precisely not a subject but an object. However, one should avoid conceiving of this assumption as a kind of symbolic integration of the decentered Real, whereby the subject "symbolizes," assumes the imposed trauma of the contingent encounter of the Real, as an act of its free choice. One should always bear in mind that the status of the subject as such is hysterical: the subject "is" only through its confrontation with the enigma of "*Che vuoi?*", "What do you want?", insofar as the Other's desire remains impenetrable, insofar as the subject doesn't know what object it is for the Other. Suspending this *decentration* of the cause is thus strictly equivalent to what Lacan called "subjective destitution," to the de-hystericization by means of which the subject loses its status as subject.

The most elementary matrix of fantasy, of its temporal loop, is that of the "impossible" gaze by means of which the subject is present at the act of his/her own conception. What is at stake in it, is the enigma of the Other's desire: by means of the fantasy-formation, the subject provides an answer to "What am I for my parents, for their desire?" and thus endeavors to arrive at the "deeper meaning" of his or her existence, to discern the Fate involved in it. The reassuring lesson of fantasy is that "I was brought about with a special purpose." Consequently, when, at the end of the psychoanalytic cure, I

"traverse my fundamental fantasy," the point of it is not that, instead of being bothered by the enigma of the Other's desire, of what I am for the others, I now "subjectivize" my fate in the sense of its symbolization, of recognizing myself in a symbolic network or narrative for which I am fully responsible. Rather, the point is that I *fully assume the uttermost contingency of my being*. The subject becomes the "cause of itself" in the sense of no longer looking for a guarantee of his or her existence in another's desire. One cannot overestimate the radical character of this move of Lacan: here, Lacan abandons what is usually considered the very hard core of his teaching, the notion of the irreducibly "decentered" subject, the subject whose very emergence is grounded in its relationship to a constitutive alterity.

Another way to put it is to say that "subjective destitution" changes the register from *desire* to *drive*. *Desire* is historical and subjectivized, always and by definition unsatisfied, metonymical, shifting from one object to another, since I do not actually desire what I want - what I actually desire is to sustain desire itself, to postpone the dreaded moment of its satisfaction. *Drive*, on the other hand, involves a kind of inert satisfaction which always finds its way; drive is non-subjectivized ("acephal") - perhaps, its paradigmatic expressions are the repulsive private rituals (sniffing at one's own sweat, sticking one's finger into one's nose...) which bring us intense satisfaction without us being aware of it, or, insofar as we are aware of it, without us being able to do anything about it, to

prevent it. In Andersen's fairy-tale "The Red Shoes," an impoverished young woman puts on a pair of magical shoes and almost dies when her feet won't stop dancing; she is only saved when an executioner cuts off her feet with his ax. Her still-shod feet dance on, whereas she is given wooden feet and finds peace in religion.... These shoes stand for drive at its purest: an "undead," partial object which functions as a kind of impersonal willing - "it wants," it persists in its repetitive movement (of dancing), it follows its path and exacts its satisfaction at any price, irrespective of the subject's well-being. This drive is that which is "in the subject more than herself:" although the subject cannot ever "subjectivize" it, assume it as "her own" by way of saying "It is *me* who wants to do this!"; it nonetheless operates in her very kernel. Lacan's wager is that it is possible to *sublimate* this dull satisfaction: this is ultimately what art and religion are about.

Although there is no intersubjectivity proper in drive, drive nonetheless involves its own mode of relating to otherness: desire addresses itself to the symbolic big Other, it seeks active recognition from it, while drive addresses itself to the *silence* in the Other - the Other is here reduced to a silent witness, to a mute presence which endorses the subject's *jouissance* by way of emitting a silent sign of acknowledgment, a "Yes!" to drive. In order to exemplify this status of the Other in drive, let's not be afraid to reach for the lowest of the low - *Lassie Comes Back*. At the very end of the film, the dog, though wounded and tired,

nonetheless proceeds along the streets of the small town towards the school, in order to be there when her master's (the young boy's) classes end. On her way, she passes the workshop of the local blacksmith; when the blacksmith, an old, bearded man, catches sight of the blood-stained animal approaching the school exactly on time, he nods silently, in agreement.... This silent nod is a Yes! to the Real of the drive, to the dog's uncompromising drive to "always return to her place" (see Lacan's definition of the Real as "that which always returns to its place"). And, perhaps, therein resides also the last gesture of the psychoanalyst recognizing the conclusion of the cure: in such a silent Yes!, in the pure gesture of acknowledging that the analysand has traversed her/his fantasy, that she/he has reached beyond the enigma of *Che vuoi?*, and turned into a being of drive....

Or, to put it in yet another way: desire as the desire of the Other remains within the domain of transference and the (big) Other; the ultimate experience here is that of anxiety, i.e. the experience of the opaque trauma of the Other's desire, of what does the Other want from me (*Che vuoi?*). Drive, on the contrary, is outside transference and the reference to the Other (for that reason, the dissolution of transference is tantamount to the passage from *desire* to *drive*: there is no desire without transference). At the level of desire, the encounter with the Real occurs as the encounter of the Other's desire; at the level of drive, the Real is directly drive itself. Or, to put it in yet another way: desire is the desire of the Other, while

drive is never the drive of the Other. With respect to literary references, this move "beyond desire" (to drive) is also a move *beyond Kafka*: the work of Kafka probably gives body to the experience of *Che vuoi?*, to the enigma of the impenetrable desire of the Other, at its most extreme, while drive involves the suspension of the dimension of the Other's desire - the Other who says "Yes!" to drive is not the Other of *Che vuoi?*.

Another way to formulate the opposition between desire and drive is to say that desire stands in relation to interpretation as drive does in relation to sublimation: the fact that sublimation is, as a rule, mentioned apropos of drive, not of desire (Freud himself never speaks of the "sublimation of desire"), while, on the other hand, one also never speaks of the "interpretation of drive" but always links interpretation to desire, bears witness to a profound theoretical necessity. The title of Lacan's seminar from 1958-59 ("*Desire and its interpretation*") is to be taken as a direct assertion of their ultimate identity: desire *coincides* with its own interpretation, i.e. when the subject endeavors to interpret (*its* or, originally, *the Other's*) desire and never finds the ultimate point of reference, when it forever slides from one reading to another, this very desperate attempt to arrive at "what one really wants," is desire itself. (Or, to elaborate: insofar as the coordinates of desire are provided by the "fundamental fantasy," and insofar as this fantasy emerges as an attempt to provide an answer to the enigma of *Che vuoi?*, of the Other's

desire, in short: as the interpretation of this desire, of what the Other “effectively wants from me,” desire as such is sustained by interpretation.) In a strictly homologous way, drive *is* its sublimation: there is no “direct” drive which is afterwards sublimated, since the “nonsublimated drive” is simply the biological instinct: “drive” designates the moment when an instinct is “sublimated” - cut off from its natural point of satisfaction and attached to an object which acts as the stand-in for the impossible Thing - and, as such, is condemned to the repetitive movement of encircling - never directly “swallowing” - its object. (This difference between instinct and drive also overlaps with the difference between the two French terms for knowledge, *connaissance* and *savoir*: instinct is an innate knowledge which tells the animal organism how to act (how to copulate, where to fly in winter, etc.), while humans lack such a knowledge and therefore have to rely on symbolic tradition - see, for example, Longinus’ *Daphnis and Chloe*, in which the two lovers must resort to the knowledge of older, experienced people so as to learn how to copulate: relying

on their instinct, or imitating animals, doesn’t help much....)

We can see, now, how we are to conceive the opposition between desire and drive. Insofar as desire remains our horizon, our position ultimately amounts to a kind of Levinasian openness to the enigma of the Other, to the imponderable mystery of the Other’s desire. In clear contrast to this attitude of respect for the Other in its transcendence, drive introduces radical immanence: desire is open to the transcendence of the Other, while drive is “closed,” absolutely immanent. Or, to put it in a slightly different way, desire and drive are to be contrasted as are subject and object: there is a *subject of desire* and an *object of drive*. In desire, the subject longs for the (lost) object, whereas in drive, the subject makes herself an object (the scopoc drive, for example, involves an attitude of *se faire voire*, of “making-oneself-seen,” not simply of wanting to see). Perhaps this is how we are to read Schelling’s notion of the highest freedom as the state in which activity and passivity, being-active and being-acted-upon, harmoniously overlap: man reaches his acme when he turns his very subjectivity

into the Predicate of an ever higher Power (in the mathematical sense of the term), i.e. when he, as it were, yields to the Other, “depersonalizes” his most intense activity and performs it as if some other, higher Power is acting through him, using him as its medium - like the mystical experience of Love, or like an artist who, in the highest frenzy of creativity, experiences himself as a medium through which some more substantial, impersonal Power expresses itself. The crucial point is to distinguish this position from that of the pervert, who also undergoes a kind of “subjective destitution” and posits himself as the object-cause of the Other’s desire (see the case of the Stalinist Communist who conceives himself as the pure object-instrument of the realization of the Necessity of History). For the pervert, the big Other exists, while the subject at the end of the psychoanalytic process assumes the *nonexistence* of the big Other. In short, the Other for whom the subject “makes herself... (seen, heard, active)” has no independent existence and ultimately relies on the subject herself - in this precise sense, the subject who makes herself the Other’s object-cause becomes her own cause.

[1] See Jacques Derrida, “Cogito and the history of madness,” in *Writing and Difference*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.)

[2] Quoted from Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel’s Recollection*. (Albany: Suny Press, 1985.) pp. 7-8.

[3] Verene, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

[4] We rely here on Mark Cousins, “The Ugly,” *AA Files* Nos. 28 and 29, London, 1994.

[5] Walter Benn Michaels, “Race and Culture,” in *Critical Inquiry*. (Summer 1992, pp. 682-685.)

[6] See Jacques Ranciere, *On the Shores of Politics*. (London: Verso, 1995.) p. 22.

[7] See Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1992.) pp. 210-214.

[8] Quoted from William O. Cord, *An Introduction to Richard Wagner’s “Der Ring des Nibelungen.”* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983.) p. 125.