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***"I Doubt, Therefore I am", or, the
Precipitous Identification***

From doubt . . .

Lacan's achievement with regard to the cogito and doubt could be summed up in the elementary, but nonetheless far-reaching operation of perceiving (and then drawing theoretical consequences from) the affinity between Cartesian doubt and the doubt that dwells at the very heart of compulsive (obsessive) neurosis. This step in no way amounts to a "psychiatrization of philosophy"--the reduction of philosophical attitudes to an expression of pathological states of mind--but rather to its exact contrary, the "philosophicization" of clinical categories. With Lacan, compulsive neurosis, perversion, hysteria, etc., cease to function as simple clinical designations and become names for existential-ontological positions, for what Hegel, in the Introduction to his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, called *Stellungen des Gedankens zur Objektivität*, "attitudes of thought towards objectivity". In short, Lacan as it were supplements Descartes' *I doubt, therefore I am*--the absolute certainty provided by the fact that my most radical doubt implies my existence *qua* thinking subject--with another turn of the screw, reversing its logic: I am only insofar as I doubt. This way, we obtain the elementary formula of the compulsive neurotic's attitude: the neurotic clings to his doubt, to his indeterminate status, as the only firm support of his being, and is extremely apprehensive of the prospect of being compelled to make a decision which would cut short his oscillation, his neither-nor status. Far from undermining the subject's composure or even threatening to disintegrate his self-identity, this uncertainty provides his minimal ontological consistency--suffice it to recall Lina, the heroine of Hitchcock's *Suspicion*. Tormented by suspicions that her husband is about to kill her, she persists in her indecision, putting off indefinitely the act which would instantly enable her to dissolve the unbearable tension. In

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the famous final scene, her gaze becomes transfixed upon the white glass of milk containing the answer to the doubts and suspicions that are tormenting her, yet she is totally immobilized, unable to act--why? Since, by finding an answer to her suspicions, she would thereby lose her status as a subject.¹ It is this inherent dialectical inversion that characterizes the subject of doubt and suspicion: "officially", he strives desperately for certainty, for an unambiguous answer that would provide the remedy against the worm of doubt that is consuming him; actually, the true catastrophe he is trying to evade at any price is this very solution, the emergence of a final, unambiguous answer; which is why he endlessly sticks to his uncertain, indeterminate, oscillating status . . . There is a kind of reflective reversal at work here: the subject persists in his indecision and puts off the choice not because he is afraid that, by choosing one pole of the alternative, he would lose the other pole (that, in the case of Lina, by opting for innocence, she would have to accept the fact that her husband is a mere small-time crook, devoid of any inner strength, even in the direction of Evil). What he truly fears to lose is doubt as such, the uncertainty, the open state where everything is still possible, where none of the options are precluded . . . It is for that reason that Lacan confers on the act the status of object: far from designating the very dimension of subjectivity ("subjects act, objects are acted upon"), the act cuts short the indeterminacy which provides the distance that separates the subject from the world of objects.

These considerations enable us to approach the motif of "Kant avec Sade" from a new perspective. Today, it is a commonplace to characterize Kant as a compulsive neurotic: the uncertain status of the subject is inscribed into the very heart of the Kantian ethics, i.e., the Kantian subject is by definition never "at the height of his task." He is forever tortured by the possibility that his ethical act, although *in accordance with duty*, was not accomplished for the sake of duty itself, but was motivated by some hidden "pathological" considerations (that, by accomplishing my duty, I will arouse respect and veneration in others, for example . . .). What remains hidden to Kant, what he renders invisible by way of his logic of the Ought (*Sollen*), i.e., of the infinite, asymptotic, process of realizing the moral Ideal, is that it is this very stain of uncertainty which sustains the dimension of ethical universality. The Kantian subject desperately clings to his doubt, to his uncertainty, in order to retain his ethical status. What we have in mind here is not the commonplace according to which, once the Ideal is realized, all life-tension

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is lost and there is nothing but lethargic boredom in store for us. Something far more precise is at stake: *once the "pathological" stain is missing, the universal collapses into the particular*. This, precisely is what occurs in Sadeian perversion which, for that very reason, reverses the Kantian compulsive uncertainty into absolute certainty: a pervert knows perfectly what he is doing, what the Other wants from him, since he conceives of himself as an instrument-object of the Other's Will-to-Enjoy. In this precise sense Sade stages the truth of Kant: you want an ethical act free of any compulsive doubt? Here you have Sadeian perversion!²

In what, more exactly, does this ontological uncertainty of the subject consist? The key to it is provided by the link between anxiety and the desire of the Other: anxiety is aroused by the desire of the Other in the sense that "I do not know what object *a* I am for the desire of the Other." What does the Other want from me, what is there "in me more than myself" on account of which I am an object of the Other's desire--or, in philosophical terms, which is my place in the substance, in the "great chain of being"? The core of anxiety is this absolute uncertainty as to what I am: "I do not know what I am (for the Other, since I am what I am only for the Other)". This uncertainty *defines* the subject: the subject "is" only as a "crack in the substance", only insofar as his status in the Other oscillates. And the position of the masochist pervert is ultimately an attempt to elude this uncertainty, which is why it involves the loss of the status of the subject, i.e., a radical self-objectivization: the pervert *knows what he is for the Other*, since he posits himself as the object-instrument of the Other's *jouissance*.³

In this regard, the position of the pervert is uncannily close to that of the analyst: they are separated only by a thin, almost invisible line. It is by no accident that the upper lever of Lacan's *matheme* of the discourse of the Analyst reproduces the formula of perversion ($a \diamond \S$). On account of his or her passivity, the analyst functions as *objet a* for the analysand, as the latter's fantasy-frame, as a kind of blank screen onto which the analysand projects his or her fantasies. This is also why the formula of perversion inverts that of the fantasy ($\S \diamond a$): the pervert's ultimate fantasy is to be a perfect servant of his other's (partner's) fantasies, to offer himself as an instrument of the *other's* Will-to-Enjoy (like Don Giovanni, for example, who seduces women by enacting one by one the specific fantasy of each of them: Lacan was quite right in pointing out that Don Giovanni is a feminine myth). The entire difference between the pervert and the analyst hinges on a certain invisible limit, on a

certain "nothing" that separates them: the pervert confirms the subject's fantasy, whereas the analyst induces him or her to "traverse" it, to gain a minimal distance towards it, by way of rendering visible the void (the lack in the Other) covered up by the fantasy scenario.

For that reason, it is quite legitimate to associate perversion, in its fundamental dimension, to the "masochism" of the anal phase. In his Seminar on transference,⁴ Lacan made it clear how the passage from the oral into the anal phase has nothing whatsoever to do with the process of biological maturation, but is entirely founded in a certain dialectical shift in the intersubjective symbolic economy. The anal phase is defined by the adaptation of the subject's desire to the demand of the Other, i.e., the object-cause of the subject's desire (*a*) coincides with the Other's demand, which is why Lacan's *matheme* for the "anal" compulsive neurosis is that of drive, $S \diamond D$. True, the oral phase does imply an attitude of wanting to "devour it all" and thereby satisfy all needs; however, due to the child's dependency, caused by the premature birth of the human animal, satisfying its needs, from the very beginning, is "mediated" by, hinges upon, the *demand addressed to the Other* (primarily mother) to provide the objects which meet the child's needs. What then occurs in the anal phase is a dialectical reversal in this relationship between need and demand: *the satisfaction of a need is subordinated to the demand of the Other*, i.e., the subject (child) can only satisfy his need on condition that he thereby complies with the Other's demand. Let us recall the notorious case of defecation: the child enters the "anal phase" when he strives to satisfy his need to defecate in a way that complies with the mother's demand to do it regularly, into the chamber-pot and not into his pants, etc. The same holds for food: the child eats in order to demonstrate how well-behaved he is, ready to fulfill his mother's demand to finish the plate and to do it properly, without dirtying his hands and the table . . . In short, we satisfy our needs in order to earn our place in the social order. Therein lies the fundamental impediment of the anal phase: pleasure is "barred", prohibited, in its immediacy, i.e., insofar as it involves taking a direct satisfaction in the object; pleasure is permitted only in the function of complying with the Other's demand. In this precise sense, the anal phase provides the basic matrix for the obsessional, compulsive attitude.

It would be easy to quote here further examples from adult life. Suffice it to recall what is perhaps its clearest case in "postmodern" theory, namely its obsession with Hitchcock, the endless flow of

books and conferences which endeavour to discern theoretical finesses even in his minor films (the "save-the-failures" movement). Can't we account, at least partially, for this obsession by way of a compulsive "bad conscience" on the part of intellectuals who, prevented from simply yielding to the pleasures of Hitchcock's films, feel obliged to prove that they actually watch Hitchcock in order to demonstrate some theoretical point (the mechanism of the spectator's identification, the vicissitudes of male voyeurism, etc.)? I am allowed to enjoy something only insofar as it serves Theory *qua* my big Other.⁵ The Hegelian character of this reversal of oral into anal economy cannot but strike the eye: the satisfaction of our need, by means of the Other who answers our demand "attains its truth" when complying with the Other's demand, is directly posited as the *sine qua non*, the "transcendental frame", the condition of possibility, of satisfying our

needs. And the function of the third, "phallic", phase, of course, is precisely to disengage the subject from this enslavement to the demand of the Other.

. . . *to identification*

The Althusserian "ideological interpellation"⁶ designates the retroactive illusion of "always-already". The reverse of ideological recognition is the misrecognition of the performative dimension, i.e., when the subject recognizes himself in an ideological call, he automatically overlooks the fact that this very formal act of recognition creates the content in which one recognizes oneself. Suffice it to evoke the classical case of the Stalinist Communist: when he recognizes himself as the instrument of the "objective necessity of the historical progress towards communism", he misrecognizes the fact that this "objective necessity" exists only insofar as it is created by the Communist discourse, only insofar as Communists invoke it as the legitimization of their activity. What is missing from the Althusserian account of this gesture of symbolic identification, of recognizing oneself in a symbolic mandate, is that it is a move aimed at resolving the deadlock of the subject's radical uncertainty as to its status (what am I *qua* object for the Other?). The first thing to do apropos of interpellation in a Lacanian approach is, therefore, to reverse Althusser's formula of ideology which "interpellates individuals into subjects". It is never the individual which is interpellated as subject, *into* subject--it is on the contrary the subject itself which is interpellated as *x* (some specific subject-position, symbolic identity or mandate), thereby eluding the abyss of $\$$. In classical liberal ideology, the subject is interpellated

precisely as "individual". The often quoted Marx-brothers joke on Ravelli ("You look like Ravelli.--But I am Ravelli!--No wonder then that you look like him!") ends with Ravelli jubilantly concluding "So I do look alike!" This joyful assumption of a mandate, this triumphant ascertaining that I am like my own symbolic figure, gives expression to the relief that I succeeded in avoiding the uncertainty of "Che vuoi?"⁷

For that reason, the subject's symbolic identification always has an *anticipatory*, hastening character (similar to, yet not to be confused with, the anticipatory recognition of "myself" in the mirror-image). As pointed out by Lacan already in the 40s, in his famous paper on logical time,⁸ the fundamental form of symbolic identification, i.e., of assuming a symbolic mandate, is for me to "recognize myself as X", to proclaim, to promulgate myself as X, in order to overtake others who might expel me from the community of those who "belong to X". Here is the somewhat simplified and abbreviated version of the logical puzzle of three prisoners apropos of which Lacan develops the three modalities of logical time. The head of a prison can, on the basis of an amnesty, release one of the three prisoners. In order to decide which one, he makes them pass a logical test. The prisoners know that there are five hats, three of them white and two black. Three of these hats are distributed to the prisoners who then sit down in a triangle, so that each of them can see the color of the hats of the two others, but not the color of the hat on his own head. The winner is the one who first guesses the color of his own hat, which he signifies by standing up and leaving the room. We have three possible situations:

--If one prisoner has a white hat and the other two black hats, the one with the white hat can immediately "see" that his is white by way of a simple reasoning: "There are only two black hats; I see them on the others' heads, so mine is white." So there is no time involved here, only an "instant of the gaze".

--The second possibility is that there are two white and one black hat. If mine is white, I will reason this way: "I see one black and one white hat, so mine is either white or black. However, if mine is black, then the prisoner with the white hat would see two black hats and immediately conclude that his is white--since he does not do it, mine is also white." Here, some time had to elapse, i.e., we already need a certain "time for understanding." I, as it were, "transpose" myself into the reasoning of the other; I arrive at my conclusion on the basis of the fact that the other does not act.

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--The third possibility--three white hats--is the most complex. The reasoning goes here like this: "I see two white hats, so mine is either white or black. If mine is black, than any of the two remaining prisoners would reason the following way: 'I see a black and a white hat. So if mine is black, the prisoner with the white hat would see two black hats and would stand and leave immediately. However, he does not do it. So mine is white--I shall stand up and leave.' But since none of the other two prisoners stands up, mine is also white."

Here, however, Lacan points out how this solution requires a double delay and a hindered, interrupted gesture. That is to say, if all three prisoners are of equal intelligence, then, after the first delay, i.e., upon noticing that none of the others is making any move, they will all rise at the same moment--and then stiffen, exchanging perplexed glances. The problem is that they will not know the meaning of the other's gesture (each of them will ask himself: "Did the others rise for the same reason as me, or did they do it because they saw on my' head a *black* hat?"). Only now, upon noticing that they all share the same hesitation, will they be able to jump to the final conclusion: the very fact of the shared hesitation is a proof that they are all in the same situation, i.e., that they all have white hats on their heads. At this precise moment, delay shifts into haste, with each of the prisoners saying to himself "Let me rush to the door before the others overtake me!"⁹

It is easy to recognize how a specific mode of subjectivity corresponds to each of the three moments of the logical time. The "instant of gaze" implies the impersonal "one" ("one sees"), the neutral subject of logical reasoning without any intersubjective dialectic. The "time for understanding" already involves intersubjectivity, i.e., in order for me to arrive at the conclusion that my hat is white, I have to "transpose" myself into the other's reasoning (if the other with the white hat were to see on my head a black hat, he would immediately know that his must be black and stand up--since he does not do it, mine is also white). However, this intersubjectivity remains that of the "indefinite reciprocal subject", as Lacan puts it: a simple reciprocal capability of taking into account the other's reasoning. It is only the third moment, the "moment of conclusion", which provides the true "genesis of the I". What takes place in it is the shift from $\$$ to S_1 , from the void of the subject epitomized by the radical uncertainty as to what I am (i.e., by the

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utter undecidability of my status) to the conclusion that I am white: to the assumption of the symbolic identity--"That's me!".

We must bear in mind here the anti-Lévi-Straussian thrust of these Lacanian ruminations. Claude Lévi-Strauss conceived the symbolic order as an asubjective structure, an objective field in which every individual occupies, fits in, his or her preordained place. What Lacan invokes is the "genesis" of this objective socio-symbolic identity. If we simply wait for a symbolic place to be allotted to us, we will never live to see it, i.e., in the case of a symbolic mandate, we never simply ascertain what we are, we "become what we are" by means of a precipitous subjective gesture. This precipitous identification involves the shift from object to signifier: the (white or black) hat is the object I am, and its invisibility to me pinpoints the fact that I can never get an insight into "what I am as an object" (i.e., $\$$ and a are topologically incompatible). When I say "I am white", I assume a symbolic identity which fills out the void of the uncertainty as to my being. What accounts for this anticipatory overtaking is the *inconclusive* character of the causal chain. The symbolic order is ruled by the "principle of insufficient reason": within the space of symbolic intersubjectivity, I can never simply ascertain what I am, which is why my "objective" social identity is established by means of "subjective" anticipation. The significant detail usually passed over in silence is that Lacan, in his text on logical time, quotes as the exemplary political case of such collective identification the Stalinist Communist's affirmation of orthodoxy: I hasten to promulgate my true Communist credentials out of fear that others will expel me as a revisionist traitor . . . ¹⁰

Therein resides the ambiguous link between the Symbolic and death. By assuming a symbolic identity, i.e., by identifying myself with a symbol which is potentially my epitaph, I as it were "outpass myself into death". However, this precipitation towards death at the same time functions as its opposite; it is designed to forestall death, to assure my posthumous life in the symbolic tradition which will outlive my death--an obsessive strategy, if there ever was one: in an act of precipitous identification *I hasten to assume death in order to avoid it*.

Anticipatory identification is therefore a kind of preemptive strike, an attempt to provide in advance an answer to "what I am for the Other" and thus to assuage the anxiety that pertains to the desire of the Other. The *signifier* which represents me in the Other resolves the impasse of *what object I am for the Other*. What I actually

overtake by way of symbolic identification is therefore *objet a* in myself: as to its formal structure, symbolic identification is always a "flight forward" from the object that I am. By way of saying "You are my wife", for example, I elude and obliterate my radical uncertainty as to what you are in the very kernel of your being, *qua* Thing . . . ¹¹ This is what is missing from Althusser's account of interpellation: it does justice to the moment of retroactivity, to the illusion of the "always-already", yet it leaves out of consideration the anticipatory overtaking *qua* inherent reverse of this retroactivity.

One of the ways to make this crucial point clear is *via* a detour, a foray into one of the finest achievements of analytical philosophy, Grice's elaboration of the structure of (intentional) meaning. ¹² According to Grice, when we mean to say something in the full sense of the term, this involves an intricate four-level structure: (1) we say X; (2) the addressee must perceive that we intentionally said X, i.e., that the enunciation of X was an intentional act on our part; (3) we must intend that the addressee must perceive not only our saying X, but that we want him to perceive that we intentionally wanted to say X; (4) the addressee must perceive (must be aware of) (3), i.e., our intention that we want him to perceive our saying X, as an intentional act. In short,

our saying "This room is bright" is a case of successful communication only if the addressee is aware that, by saying "This room is bright", we not only wanted to say that the room is bright, but also wanted him to be aware that we wanted him to perceive our saying "This room is bright" as an intentional act. If this seems a hair-splitting, contrived, useless analysis, suffice it to recall a situation when, lost in a foreign city, we listen to one of its inhabitants desperately trying to make us understand something in his native language. What we encounter here is level (4) in its pure, as it were, distilled form. That is to say, although we do not know what, precisely, the inhabitant wants to tell us, we are well aware not only of the fact that he wants to tell us *something*, but also of the fact that *he wants us to notice his very endeavour to tell us something . . .* Our point is that the structure of a hysterical symptom is exactly homologous to Grice's level 4: what is at stake in a symptom is not only the hysteric's attempt to deliver a message (the meaning of the symptom that waits to be deciphered), but, at a more fundamental level, his desperate endeavour to affirm himself, to be accepted as a partner in communication. What he ultimately wants to tell us is that his symptom is not a meaningless physiological disturbance, i.e., that we have to lend him an ear since he has something to tell us. In short, the ultimate meaning of

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the symptom is that the Other should take notice of the fact that it has a meaning.

Perhaps, it is with regard to this feature that a computer message differs from human intersubjectivity: what the computer lacks is precisely this self-referentiality (in Hegelese: reflectivity) of meaning. And, again, it is not difficult to discern in this self-referentiality the contours of a logical temporality. By means of the signifier of this reflective meaning, i.e., of the signifier which "means" only the presence of meaning, we are able as it were to "overtake" ourselves and, in an anticipatory move, establish our identity not in some positive content but in a pure self-referential signifying form alluding to a meaning-to-come.¹³ Such is, in the last resort, the logic of every ideological Master-Signifier in the name of which we fight our battles: Fatherland, America, Socialism, etc. Do they not all designate an identification not with a clearly defined positive content but with the very gesture of identification? When we say "I believe in X (America, Socialism . . .)", the ultimate meaning of it is pure intersubjectivity: it means that I believe that I am not alone, that I believe that there are also others who believe in X. The ideological Cause is *stricto sensu* an effect of the belief poured into it from the side of its subjects.¹⁴

This paradox of the "precipitated" identification with the unknown is what Lacan has in mind when he determines the phallic (paternal) signifier as the signifier of the lack of the signifier. If this reflective reversal of the lack of the signifier into the signifier of the lack seems contrived, suffice it to recall the story of Malcolm X, the legendary African-American leader. Here are some excerpts from a *New York Times* article apropos of Spike Lee's film *Malcolm X* --and *The New York Times* for sure cannot be accused of a Lacanian bias:

"X stands for the unknown. The unknown language, religion, ancestors and cultures of the African American. X is a replacement for the last name given to the slaves by the slave master. . . . "X" can denote experimentation, danger, poison, obscenity and the drug extasy. It is also the signature of a person who cannot write his or her name . . . The irony is that Malcolm X, like many of the Nation of Islam and other blacks in the 60's, assumed the letter--now held to represent his identity--as an expression of a lack of identity."¹⁵

The gesture of *Malcolm X*, i. e., his act of replacing the imposed family-name, the Name-of-the-Father, with the symbol of the un-

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known, is far more complex than it may seem. What we must avoid is getting lured into the "search for the lost origins": we totally miss the point if we reduce the gesture of Malcolm X to a simple case of longing for the lost Origins (for the "true" African ethnic identity, lost when blacks were torn out of their original environs by slave-traders). The point is rather that this reference to the lost Origins enables the subject to elude the grasp of the imposed symbolic identity and to "choose freedom", the lack of fixed identity. *X qua* void exceeds every positive symbolic identity: the moment its gap emerges, we find ourselves in the fantasy-domain of "experimentation, danger, poison, obscenity and the drug extasy" that no new symbolic identity can fill out.

The further point to be made, however, is that this identification with the unknown, far from being an exception, *brings to light the feature constitutive of symbolic identification as such*. Every symbolic identification is ultimately identification with an X, with an "empty" signifier which stands for the unknown content, i.e., it makes us identify with the very symbol of a lack of identity. The Name-of-the-Father, the signifier of symbolic identity par excellence, is, as Lacan emphasizes again and again, the "signifier without a signified". What this means with regard to Malcolm X is that although X is meant to stand for the lost African Origins, at the same time it stands for their irrevocable *loss*: by way of identifying ourselves with X, we "consummate" the loss of Origins. The irony therefore is that in the very act of returning to "maternal" Origins, of marking our commitment to them, we irrevocably renounce them. Or, to put it in Lacanian terms, Malcolm X's gesture is the Oedipal gesture in its purest: the gesture of substituting Name-of-the-Father for the desire of the mother:¹⁶

Name-of-the-Father
the desire of the mother

What is crucial here is the virtual character of the Name-of-the-Father. The paternal metaphor is an "X" in the sense that it opens up the space of virtual meaning, it stands for all possible future meanings. As to this virtual character that pertains to the symbolic order, the parallel to the capitalist financial system is most instructive. As we know from Keynes onwards, the capitalist economy is "virtual" in a very precise sense. Keynes' favorite maxim was that in the long-term we are all dead--the paradox of the capitalist economics is that our borrowing from the (virtual) future, i. e., our

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printing of money "uncovered" in "real" values, can bring about real effects (growth). Herein lies the crucial difference between Keynes and economic "fundamentalists" who favor the actual "settling of accounts" (reimbursing the credits, abolishing the "borrowing from the future"). Keynes' point is not simply that "unnatural" crediting by way of "uncovered" money, inflation, or state spending, can provide the impulse which results in actual economic growth and thus enables us eventually to achieve a balance whereby we settle accounts at a much higher level of economic prosperity. Keynes concedes that the moment of some final "settling of accounts"

would be a catastrophe, that the entire system would collapse. Yet the art of economic politics is precisely to prolong the virtual game and thus to postpone *ad infinitum* the moment of final settlement. In this precise sense capitalism is a "virtual" system: it is sustained by a purely virtual keeping of accounts, debts are incurred which will never be cleared. However, although purely fictitious, this "balancing" must be preserved as a kind of Kantian "regulative Idea" if the system is to survive. What Marx as well as strict monetarists commonly hold against Keynes is the conviction that sometimes, sooner or later, the moment will arrive when we actually shall have to "settle accounts", reimburse debts and thus place the system on its proper, "natural", foundations.¹⁷ Lacan's notion of the debt that pertains to the very notion of the symbolic order is strictly homologous to this capitalist debt: sense as such is never "proper", it is always advanced, "borrowed from the future." It lives on the account of the virtual future Sense. The Stalinist Communist who gets caught in a vicious circle by justifying his present acts, including the sacrifice of millions of lives, with reference to a future Communist paradise brought about by these acts, i.e., who cites beneficial future consequences as what will retroactively redeem present atrocities, simply renders visible the underlying temporal structure of sense as such.

Notes

1. See Mladen Dolar, "The Father Who Was Not Quite Dead", in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)* (London: Verso, 1992).

2. Patricia Highsmith's masterpiece *The Cry of the Owl* stages perfectly the delicate balance that defines the perverse position. A woman living alone in a country house suddenly becomes aware that she is observed by a shy voyeur hidden in the bushes behind the house; taking pity on him, she

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invites him into the house, offers him her friendship and finally falls in love with him--thereby inadvertently trespassing the invisible barrier that sustained his desire and thus provoking his repulsion. Therein consists the kernel of the perverse economy: a proper distance has to be maintained which prevents the subject from engaging in a "normal" sexual relationship--its transgression changes the love-object into a repulsive excrement. What we have here is the zero-level of the logic of the "partial object" which, under the guise of obstructing the sexual relationship, actually conceals its inherent impossibility: the "partial object" is here reduced to the distance as such, to the invisible barrier which prevents me from consummating the sexual relationship. It is as if we have to do with the form of fetishism without fetish. (Patricia Highsmith is generally at her best when she renders with unmatched sensitivity the point at which compliance turns into intrusiveness: in *Dog's Ransom*, her other masterpiece, the young police-detective who offers his help to the couple whose dog was stolen gradually becomes an embarrassing intruder . . .)

3. The difference between the neurotic and perverse symptom hinges upon this same point (see Colette Soler, "The Real Aims of the Analytic Act", *Lacanian Ink* 5, p. 53-60): a neurotic has nothing but troubles with her symptom, it inconveniences her, she experiences it as an unwelcome burden, as something which perturbs her balance. In short, she *suffers* on account of her symptom (and therefore turns for help to the analyst), whereas a pervert unabashedly enjoys his symptom. Even if he is later ashamed of it or disturbed by it, the symptom as such is a source of profound satisfaction; it provides a firm anchoring point to his psychic economy--for that very reason he has no need of an analyst, i.e., there is no experience of suffering which sustains the demand for an analysis.

4. See Chapter XIV of Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre VIII: Le transfert*, texte établi par Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991).

5. An obsessional neurotic's *ethic* can be further exemplified by a patient who, apropos of every woman he tried to seduce, went to excessive pains to please her (and thus again and again succeeded in organizing his failure). When he endeavoured to seduce a woman who loved deep-sea diving, he immediately enrolled in a diving course (although he was personally repulsed by the very idea of it); even after this woman left him for good and he was devoting his amorous attention to a new woman who was totally indifferent towards diving, he nonetheless out of a sense of duty continued to participate in the diving course!

6. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, (London: Verso, 1991).

7. An exemplary case of how somebody can "look alike" is to be found in Lubitch's *To be or not to be*. The Polish actor who, as part of an intricate plot to deceive the Nazis, personifies a notorious Gestapo-butcher, wildly articulates and laughs, so that we, the spectators, automatically perceive his acting as a caricatural exaggeration; however, when, finally,

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the "original" himself --the true Gestapo-butcher--enters the stage, he behaves in exactly the same way, acting as it were as his *own caricature*--in short, he "looks alike [himself]" . . .

8. See Jacques Lacan, "Logical time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty", in *Newsletter of the Freudian Field*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1988): 4-22.

9. And, perhaps, the (future) Master is simply the one who takes a chance and is the first to make the move, i.e., to say "I am white": he becomes a new Master if his bluff pays off . . .

10. At a different level, Rosa Luxembourg discerned a homologous anticipatory move in the matrix of a revolutionary process: if we wait for the "right moment" of a revolution, it will never occur--the "right moment" only emerges after a series of failed "premature" attempts, i.e., we attain our identity as a revolutionary subject only by way of "overtaking" ourselves and claiming this identity "before its time has arrived". For a more detailed reading of this paradox: see Chapter V of Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1991).

11. See Lacan's crucial remarks in his *Séminaire, livre XX: Encore*, texte établi par Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975), p. 47-48. --In this sense, *hysteria* designates the failure of interpellation: the hysterical question is "Why am I what you are saying that I am?", i.e. I question the symbolic identity imposed on me by the Master, I resist it in the name of what is "in me more than myself", the object small a. Therein consists the anti-Althusserian gist of Lacan: subject *qua* $\$$ is not an effect of interpellation, of the recognition in an ideological call; it rather stands for the very gesture of calling in question the identity conferred on me by way of interpellation.

12. See Paul Crice, "Meaning", in *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989): 377-388.

13. In our everyday experience, this gap separating different levels of intention is at work in what we call "politeness": when, upon engaging in a conversation, we say "How are you today?", we of course "do not mean it seriously", we just offer an empty conversational form which calls for a ritualistic "OK" (the best proof of this emptiness of form is the uneasiness that emerges if our partner takes the question "seriously" and proceeds to offer an elaborate answer). It is nonetheless totally out of place to denounce this question as an insincere feigning of our concern: although its literal, first level of intention is not "meant seriously", i.e., although I am not really interested in how are you today, the question bears witness to my absolutely "sincere" intention to establish a normal, friendly communication with you.

14. In Hitchcock's films, such an element is the notorious "MacGuffin", the secret which sets in motion the narrative, although it is in itself "nothing at all": its meaning is purely self-referential, it amounts to the fact that the subjects involved in the narrative ascribe a meaning to it . . .

15. Phil Patton, "Marketers Battle for the Right To Profit From Malcolm 'X'", *The New York Times*, Monday, November 8, 1992, B1 and 4.

16. Lacan's notion of Qedipus is to be opposed here to the "anti-Qedipal" notion of Oedipus *qua* the "repressive" force which canalizes, domesticates, the polymorphous perversion of partial drives, straining them to the Procrustean triangle of Father-Mother-Child. With Lacan, "Oedipus" (i.e., the imposition of the Name-of-the-Father) stands for a purely negative logical operator of "deterritorialization" (see his pun in French on the homophony between *Nom-du-Père* and *Non-du-Père*): "Name-of-the-Father" is a function which brands every object of desire with the sign of a lack, i.e., which changes every attainable object into the metonymy of lack--apropos of every positive object, we experience how "That's not it!". (And "Mother" *qua* incestuous object is nothing but the reverse of this same operation: the name for that X missed by every given object.) What can be of help here is the reference to the Wittgensteinian motto "the meaning of a word equals its use": "father" *qua* paternal metaphor is used only and simply to introduce this gap which lurks in the background of every object of desire. We should therefore not be fascinated by the imposing *presence* of the father: the positive figure of the father merely gives body to this symbolic function, without ever fully meeting its requirements.

17. As to this virtual character of capitalist economy, see Brian Rotman, *Signifying Nothing* (London: MacMillan, 1987).