

The identity of the same is an equivocation, a place without place. The “I am” is an assertion of allegiance before it attains any sort of meaningful substance, and this allegiance to the same name in the face of the other is the second term of meaning, the same/other dyad being exceeded by their connectivity, which erases their separate identity— and resolves an irreducible separation by re-inscribing this self-difference *already in the name of the Other*.

Your name declares your genealogy, arrives as the for-what and for-whom you stand; your name stands *for you*, it already effaces your identification as any separate, autonomous being. A name is a confession to belonging, inclusion into a community of speakers, who at the least acknowledge your awareness. The name is the essence of symbolism. Thus the name presents us with a *triple* reflection towards/away from/towards the subject: my awareness of the others’ consciousness of my presence *already* convokes the declaration of my name, albeit by the voice, or even the slightest movement of the others’ hand, at last, merely her gaze accomplishes the same reflection which is sanctified, or rather purged of sanctity, in a name.

But the name only refers to the break within identity; it is the first material, or rather vocal illusion, which in hiding a deeper separation and mystery from itself, refers back to the ultimate illusion. This being the faith in appearances, images, letters, the religious illusion, if you like— though this is confounded still more by cross-currents from the premodern, modern and postmodern re-crises of faith— but what all of this amounts to a sort of status quo, not progress but exactly a deadlock.

Faithlessness, whether in divinity, in institutions, in religions, in society, or in culture, is here to be read as that symptom of a heartbreaking disappointment, “yet another defective situation.” It is a resistance— to the other in whom trust is not to be placed, leaders who fail at their post and take us not into the promised safety but rather deeper into danger than we were before. The death of God is neither ontological nor religious—it occurs in the loss of faith in the Other, when we observe that justification and responsibility are no longer the criteria of political economy.

Or worse, they never could be: power is not fairly distributed, even so the distribution is irrational, “up for grabs,” as it were; the world seems bent on continuing a destructive spiral of violence and war... Even though boredom is counter-revolutionary, it is not hard to see that apathy is intelligent psychological self-defense in the midst of this perfectly reasonable, terrifyingly irrational society we’ve become. Alienation, disillusionment, discontent—all this speaks to a mass abreaction, to a steadily quickening pace of Events, and to the failure of static institutions to adequately respond, to represent, to keep count, as it were.

The fact is that many if not most of the institutions we are supposed to have faith in have long been exposed as a sham, whose main accomplishment was accomplished at its founding—and it seems as though these institutions have continued existing as if in mourning for the ecstatic heyday of its inauguration. But reactionary behavior patterns, acting only insofar as a spectator, affirms the spectacle of the culture industry, interacting with others through an interference pattern of images.

Belonging to modern society is a non-participation, a relation without relation— Our identities have only a derivative existence, mediated through the mass market, which was the historical

moment in which the production of identical lives was made possible. So there is a sort of inevitable, irreducible gap within identity itself, not just in its relation with the Other; but there is another kind of break with time which currently prevails, a dangerous amnesia or alienation of identity from its own future, which with respect to the individual is equivalent to the void (uncounted) place of the individual in the prevailing political economy, his (social, legal, religious) position of powerlessness and weakness in the face of an absolutely transcendent Other.

This is why much of the discourse on 'respect for the other' is misguided, since it recognizes only an apologetic stance towards the approach of the other. But what if the other comes to me with war and hate in his heart? Should I both to attempt a face to face resolution? Or, rather, should I protect what is mine, protect myself from the machinations of his evil intent? The resistance towards the repressive other is also an unavoidable ethical stance. But a society without peace is a non-society, and mercy towards the other cannot exist without love.

Freedom is not merely our birthright; it must also be exercised, demanded, that is to say, we must produce freedom positively. Negative freedom is slavery; this is the weakness of the doctrines of 'tolerance'. They reflect only the powerlessness of the spectator, or rather the false choice of the spectator (what to watch, not whether to watch,) reducing the gap between cultures to the choice between, say, marlboro and camel lights— it speaks of the disconnected, unsatisfied lack inherent in the cycle of addiction without truth or completion, in which it becomes easier to accept than challenge, and we resign ourselves as spectators of the tragic dramaturgy opened up by this radical separation, this inversion of life into non-life, and thereby we are convinced into giving away our birthright: finally, we accept the prevailing status quo, quite ready to *defend our right to non-freedom* at all costs.

*Against* culture, we must produce freedom constantly if we are to be free; not hectically, at though trying to catch up with it, as though it escaped our grasp: we produce freedom not by exerting our power, but our right to powerlessness— that is, living without paranoia, without the need to grasp and conquer and destroy, without allergies to the differences of others, without this primitive, aggressive culture of dominance, acquisition and nihilism.

Freedom is the constant demand of this right, the right to peace, without which there can be no society at all. Else we are merely spectators, devourers of the perverse, apathetic images which mediate our entire existence— without peace, there is only non-life, a closed life without life, as a defective, uncounted, exploited appendage of some incomprehensibly colossal, terrifying war machine and its endlessly entertaining, fantastically profitable culture industry, which together invade, colonize and dominate our entire existence.

Thus freedom is a wager on peace, on the possibility (however slim) of a non-repressive society which lives and breathes freely, which has maturely accepted a limitation of its spontaneity. Culture as it currently exists is a spectacle of images which interpose and mediate our relation with the Other; it is *anti-ethical*. Thus culture is the socio-political surgery of separating Being into beings, infinity from itself, a reduction of the subject to the pure form of the void. We belong to a culture to the same degree we are de-formed by it—that is, how deeply we believe in its truth. The "truth" of such a violent, permissive culture is the moment in a falsehood in which

it is expressed, for this culture will tell you whatever you want to hear, as long as you're paying up. Thus the political consequence of not resisting such a monological and destructive modality of culture is the revenge of the same violent logic of subtraction: the sudden reduction of every infinite multiplicity– to the same empty image reproduced forever.

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