The Shortest Shadow

NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY OF THE TWO

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Introduction

The Event "Nietzsche"

At many points, the reading of Nietzsche's texts is—or should be—accompanied by an affect of astonishment. This is all the more true if we are not looking, in his writings, for some extraordinary opinions that could help us to form or support our own *Weltanschauung*—that is to say, precisely, if we do not consider these extraordinary statements as opinions. To read things like "Dante: or the hyena which poetizes on graves," "George Sand: or the milch cow with the 'fine style,'" or to have Kant described as the "typical idiot" (not to mention the even more notorious "idiot on the cross"), can indeed produce an amazement, a kind of jolt—this being one of the fundamental elements that makes Nietzsche Nietzsche. One should stress, however, that Nietzsche knew how to administer such "jolts" selectively and sparingly, in the right amounts; they are not all that numerous.[1] It is amazing, nonetheless, how little amazement shocking statements like these arouse in contemporary academics (and their writings on Nietzsche). At first sight, it might seem that this is because, in our postmodern condition, nothing can shock us any longer: we have either habituated or numbed ourselves to practically everything. Moreover, Nietzsche's "style" is recognized and valued as an essential point of his revolution in philosophy—everybody agrees on that. Therefore, it seems to go without saying that he should be allowed to enjoy the privilege of a certain degree of poetic license. Yet one simple question should be enough to draw our attention to the fact that there is something rather fishy in this attitude: Why is it absolutely unimaginable (among contemporary Nietzscheans themselves) that someone would use this kind of "style" and write, for instance, "XY, the well-known professor of cultural studies, is a fat cow with a fine style"? This is absolutely forbidden, and there is no poetic license that could make it acceptable to present-day academia. If Nietzsche's style is esteemed within academia, it is in no way accepted by it. Its "jolts" are either swept under the carpet or treated as curious, rather exotic objects.

If the jolts of Nietzsche's style are not shocking today, it is because they have been subjected to a definite reduction—in short, they have been reduced to the level of opinions. This allows us to say that

Nietzsche employs his characteristically extravagant style in order to express a low personal opinion of George Sand. Yet this stance completely misses one of the central points that makes Nietzsche Nietzsche, thus betraying the very essence of the "event Nietzsche." One further thing should be said in this context, also concerning the question of Nietzsche's "style": the latter is usually described as rather sophisticated, but also as often pompous and pathetic. However, is it not, rather, that the style of most of Nietzsche's writings is, in fact, extraordinarily direct and—why not use this term—naive? At the level of what Friedrich Schiller describes as the difference between the "naive" and the "sentimental" style (recognizing in the second the style of modernity), is it not, in fact, the case that Nietzsche is a definite example of the "naive" style *within* modernity? And is this not precisely what makes his style so powerful, and gives it its edge?

What accounts for the apparent paradox that leads us to find Nietzsche's statements pompous or bombastic yet, at the same time, already operating on a second register involving ironic self-distance? Does this indeed indicate that the very naive directness of his style is somehow too embarrassing for our delicate and sophisticated postmodern taste? Or, to use Nietzsche's own words, isn't it as if our "conscience were trained to twitch and feel something like a pang at every 'No' and even at a decisive, harsh 'Yes.' Yes! And No!—that goes against [our] morality"? The word "embarrassing" should be taken quite literally here, since this is precisely the point: there is probably no other philosopher who, by virtue of his "style," exposes himself in his work as much as Nietzsche does. And the pathos of his writings springs precisely from this, rather than from the Wagnerian pathos of heroic mythology; it is the pathos of life. This is also the source of the comic component of Nietzsche's style—it arises not from a reflective distance *toward* life (viewed as if from above, where only the Greatest things matter), but from life reflecting upon itself in an entirely immanent way. Another, related point concerns the question of irony. Of course, Nietzsche sometimes uses irony. Yet, on the whole, he is far from being an ironic writer. He is, rather, as he

himself likes to stress from time to time, a "buffoon" of a writer; and in this respect his admiration for Aristophanes is no coincidence. Rather than being a sophisticated ironist (or "knave"), he is an honest clown (or "fool"), in the most positive sense of this term.

The astonishment that accompanies (or should accompany) the reading of Nietzsche's texts is not confined solely to statements of the kind quoted above. It is also (and perhaps above all) related to another refrain of Nietzsche's "bombastic" statements: he, Nietzsche, will break the history of mankind in two; he is no man, but "dynamite"; he is "destiny"; with *Zarathustra*, he has given mankind the profoundest book it possesses.

Instead of immediately embracing facile diagnoses concerning the ironic intentions of these statements, or the megalomania associated with Nietzsche's delirious states, we should, on the contrary, take them seriously and quite literally, and proceed to ask a simple question: what, exactly, is going on in this discourse, and what is it comparable to? Is there not a striking parallel between this aspect of Nietzschean discourse and the discourse that takes place in the break introduced by modern art or, more precisely, by the avant-garde movement in art? Even though this kind of suggestion would probably make Nietzsche turn over in his grave, it might nevertheless be illuminating to consider for a moment movements such as Futurism, Cubism, and, perhaps above all, Suprematism. Do we not find in all these movements a "megalomania" of a very similar kind to that of Nietzsche? They certainly launch a very "hammering" criticism of classical art,[2] accompanied by a belief in the possibility of a radical break whose actors are precisely those who proclaim its advent as well as its (aesthetic or ethical) necessity. Considering Nietzsche's explicitly stated attitude toward modern art, which had just started to appear in his time (and in which Nietzsche saw nothing more than yet another expression of decadence), the above comparisons may, in fact, sound somewhat absurd. Nietzsche's taste in art is generally rather conservative,[3] although, as Matthew Ramply has shown, his analysis of Wagner is surprisingly close to the analysis of the great modernist Adorno.[4] Still, if we leave aside the question of

Nietzsche's aesthetic preferences (without trying to deny this question's pertinence), and consider the style of his texts, this style certainly tends to strike us as quite modernistic or, rather, as quite avant-garde. It would not be hard to find a lot of "philosophical traditionalists" who would gladly characterize Nietzsche's texts as "decadent" and philosophically "atonal." Moreover, there is also a noticeable manifesto-style ring to numerous Nietzschean passages.

One analogy that seems particularly striking could be drawn between Nietzsche and Kazimir Malevich. Indeed, I am tempted to suggest that, at least to a certain extent, Nietzsche is to philosophy what Malevich is to art. "So far, artists have only been portraying, or representing, the world and its objects in different ways, but the time has come for us to create something in this world"—this is how one could express Malevich's motto. He declares his *Black Square* to be the first new form that was ever created, the first artistic creation in the strong meaning of the word: it is nothing less than the "birth of the painting-surface." A painting-surface or a "plane" is not an object that could be found anywhere in the world (and then reproduced or represented in a painting); it exists only as a painting. This is not to say that the painting represents some imaginary fantasy-object that exists nowhere in reality, only in the fictive domain of the painting. On the contrary, *Black Square* introduces a new object *in reality*, this new object being precisely the painting-surface as object. A painting such as *Black Square* is the very materiality of the painting-surface. Therefore, "any painting-surface is more alive than any face from which a pair of eyes and a grin jut out,"[5] and Suprematism is "the beginning of a new culture."[6] In relation to Malevich, one should stress that his project was far from being simply abstractionist; it was not about purifying the world of images or representations up to the point where nothing is left but its pure form. Rather, his project was to create a form that could count as the first "content" or object created by painting *from within its own practice*—the "painting-surface" or "plane" being, according to Malevich, precisely this: namely, a painterly object *par excellence*.

A very similar conviction, concerning the necessity that an event be immanent to what it revolutionizes or subverts, is one of the essential components of Nietzsche's philosophy. For instance, what Alain Badiou refers to as Nietzsche's "archi-politics" (the conviction that, in philosophy, the event is intrinsic, not external, to the thought itself, as well as the belief in the possibility of a "philosophical act")[7] could be seen as an expression of precisely this point. Another singularity shared by Nietzsche and Malevich is related to their use of the term "life," which should be distinguished from all types of vitalistic obscurantism. In Malevich, we read, for example, "In attempting to reproduce the living form, they reproduced its dead image in the picture. . . . Everything was taken alive and pinned quivering to the canvas, like insects in a collection."[8] In Nietzsche, we find an almost identical metaphor: "All that philosophers have handled for millennia have been conceptual mummies; nothing actual has escaped from their hands alive."[9] If we relate this to Malevich's previous statement concerning the "birth of the painting-surface" (as being more alive than any [human] face with a pair of eyes and a grin), it is clear that the words "life" and "alive" refer here to something very specific: to the *capacity of a given practice to produce its own object* (and not merely to represent, duplicate, or display other, already existing objects).

The parallel I am drawing here between Nietzsche and Malevich, however, does not primarily concern the proximity of their ideas apropos of their content (a proximity that, undoubtedly, can indeed be asserted in various ways). I am interested mainly in what constitutes the affinity between Nietzsche's conception of a possible "philosophical act" (one could also say: of philosophy as act), and Malevich's conception of a possible "artistic act" (of art as act). Admittedly, it is quite possible to say that Nietzsche was an "anti-philosopher,"[10] and Malevich an "anti-painter." However, the prefix "anti" is not to be taken in the sense of an opposition to philosophy (or to painting) in the name of something else. Nietzsche did not oppose himself to philosophy, for instance, in the name of a more

artistic mode of expression; neither did Malevich oppose himself to painting, or to art in general, in the name of philosophy or theory, although he was, in fact, deeply entangled within a highly conceptual domain. Something else is at stake, something that could be formulated in these terms: to locate the point of the inner limit, or inherent impossibility, of a given discourse (philosophical or artistic), and to activate this precise point as the potential locus of creation. It is essential in this regard that the limit in question is an inherent, inner limit, and this is what clearly distinguishes both Nietzsche and Malevich. We are dealing not so much with an expansion of a discourse as with its implosion. Where and how is this visible? It is, perhaps, never more striking than in the paradoxical link they both establish between the explosion (the "event") and *silence*, as well as between the radically new and the *nuance*. It seems that the role of dynamite is violently to blast open, within a given practice, a kind of vacuum, which is considered to be the only possible site of the event. This vacuum is the privileged place from which it becomes possible to create, as well as to see or perceive what has been created.

Can we imagine Malevich's famous *White Square on White Background* without this kind of implosion? Furthermore, why does Nietzsche propose, as the emblem and the "time" of the event, the figure of *midday*, which he describes as "the stillest hour" (this does not imply some sort of "lull before the storm," since midday is defined by Nietzsche as the moment when "One turns to Two," namely, as the very moment of a break or a split)? Why is he so insistent that "it is the stillest words that bring on the storm," and that "thoughts that come on doves' feet guide the world"? Why does he not identify with the boisterous, with the masters of big and pompous words, but writes instead: "*We immoralists!*—This word which concerns *us*, in which *we* are called upon to fear and to love, this nearly invisible, inaudible word . . . a 'not quite' word in every respect, prickly, insidious, jeering, tender"?[11] Why does he not attribute the source of his contemporaries' ignorance regarding the "event Nietzsche" to the fear they might have of a spectacular, apocalyptic explosion? Why

does Nietzsche attribute it, rather, to their inability to recognize a "nuance" ("I cannot endure this race among whom one is always in bad company, that has no fingers for nuances—alas, I am a nuance . . ."[12])? If Nietzsche considers himself to be dynamite, he does not identify this dynamite with some kind of "big bang." In reading Nietzsche, we must never lose sight of this irreducible obverse of his bombastic expressions (silence, solitude, playfulness, lightness, nuance, minimal difference). Yet, as I suggested above, the silence is not something that takes place before or after the explosion—it is the silence at the very heart of the "explosion," the stillness of the event. Conversely, we must also not lose sight of the fact that the complementary and correlative inversion of Nietzsche's praise of nuances, of dance, of perspectivity, of fictions, of the layering of appearances and differences, is precisely the "bomb" of the event. This emphasis is especially important, since Nietzsche is often regarded as postmodernist *avant la lettre,* the first to have announced the end of "grand narratives," and paved the way for a multitude of different fictions and virtualities to be considered as being of equal value. In other words, it is worth emphasizing that, for Nietzsche, the "nuance" is nothing other than the expression or, more precisely, the articulation of a grand narrative, of an event.

Nietzsche refuses to think the event as the (external) cause or inaugurating point of thought and its (subsequent) generic procedure of truth. Instead, he posits it as something that philosophy carries within itself as the event/act of thought itself. The event is part of the "process of truth"—not only as the truth process's innate driving force, but also as something that takes place only within this very process of truth. In other words, the event (or the act) is, as Badiou puts it, immanent to the "speculative principle of declaration." Consequently, the (Nietzschean) statement "I am preparing the event" is indistinguishable from the event itself. This statement will break the world in two, while simultaneously stating or declaring precisely this: namely, that it will break the world in two. The declaration lacks the Real, and this is why "Nietzsche will have to make himself appear on the point of this Real which is lacking and in relation to

which it is impossible to distinguish between its presence and its announcement. This is precisely what will be called Nietzsche's madness."[13] But does this undoubtedly central point of Nietzsche's philosophy truly constitute its radical impasse, for which Nietzsche will have to pay with his "madness"? Is this conclusion not somehow too hasty?

The circularity or loop that Badiou detects in Nietzsche certainly exists. The Nietzschean declaration is not exactly a "declaration of the Real," or a "declaration of the event," but functions against the background of the presumption that it is, in and of itself, already the event per se. More precisely, the presumption at stake concerns the fact that the event is not external to the declaration, but is, rather, something that the declaration carries within itself (without simply and immediately coinciding with it). Nietzschean declaration does not have so much the structure of the declaration of the event as it has the structure of the "declaration of declaration." This does *not* imply, however, that we are already in the domain of the (potentially) endless reflection of semblances—representations of representations *ad infinitum*—that lack any tangible Real in merely reflecting each other. On the contrary, the duality or redoubling that we are dealing with here is precisely an articulation of the Real.

The Nietzschean declaration—and here we come back to a point made above—has a very similar structure to that of avant-garde manifestos. What is a manifesto? And, above all, what is a manifesto in relation, for instance, to the art to which it belongs? It is not a theory of art or a conceptual rendering of art. A manifesto is an integral part of works of art; it belongs to the (new) process of artistic practice. It is an artistic *act*. One cannot easily separate or oppose art and its manifesto. Without simply coinciding, they are bound together in an inherent and essential way. Perhaps the most concise formula for their relationship would stipulate that the manifesto is the "speech of art." Manifestos constitute and introduce a singular point of enunciation. In them, art speaks in the first person; their form of enunciation is always something like "I, the (new) art, am speaking." The manifesto does not usually declare: "This or that happened in art,

and art will never be the same again. This is an event." It says: "I (or *we*) happened (are happening, will happen)."

The "I" involved in this declaration, however, is not the "ego" of the artist—this is the declaration of an impersonal, inhuman "I." What seems like a megalomaniac aspect of most manifestos should in no way be read as a shameless (subjective) arrogance on the part of the artists themselves as individuals. Yet this does not mean that such statements are meant ironically; they are subversive precisely because they are meant very seriously. Fundamentally, irony is simply an assertion of the ego, and of its (often spiteful) supremacy. Most avant-garde manifestos go to great lengths to abolish the notion of the Artist (as the *ego* who "makes art"): they accomplish this not by means of irony, but by substituting the subject-work in place of the ego. In other words, the subjectivity that so vehemently affirms itself in manifestos is the art-object itself. Megalomania (or, rather, its effect) is strictly correlative to the withdrawal of the ego. We are dealing with a reversal of the Freudian formula "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*": "*Wo Ich war, soll Es werden.*" Does the declaration in which art is declaring *itself* (in the form of a manifesto) lack the Real? One would be hard pressed to answer in the affirmative. The point is that the declaration is part of the Real it declares. This is why it cannot declare the event as if speaking from the outside, but, rather, takes the form of "I, the event, am speaking."

Something very similar could be said about the relationship between Nietzschean "declaration" and Nietzschean "event." The event is inherent to declaration. As we have seen, Badiou infers from this that the declaration lacks the Real (or its object), that it is caught in the impossibility of distinguishing between its presence and its announcement. But could we not say that this impossibility *is* the very presence of the Real, the very indication of the Real at work (that it is not a relation *to* the Real, but a relation *of* the Real)? For Nietzsche, the Real is not something that could merely be declared. Yet this is not because the declaration lacks the Real, but because it is itself contaminated by it, because it itself belongs to it. Take the example of the "event love," of an encounter that makes us fall in love

and, in this process, declare our amorous state. What is the Real here? Is it something that happened in this encounter, and that we now have to declare as such?—Not exactly. The Real here is the very ground on which we stand *when* we are declaring it, and this is what redoubles the declaration of love at its core. A declaration of love (like any "declaration of the event") is always a precipitated statement. It involves a leap in causality not only in relation to the preexisting situation which it interrupts, but also in regard to its own begetting. A declaration of love is an excellent example of those precipitated statements that literally create the conditions of their own enunciation, and, with them, the conditions of the very Real that they declare.

What is at stake in Nietzsche's conception of the event is not a conceptual decision to dismiss the notion of the Real in order to replace it with the notion of the multitude of representations that only reflect one another, but a new and different conceptualization of the Real. This Real, however, is not conceived along the lines of something extradiscursive situated *beyond* the world of representations and/or declarations. Here we come to a crucial point which constitutes the thesis, as well as the "Ariadne's thread," of this study: *There exists something else* besides the couple formed by, on the one hand, the classical or metaphysical position, which exempts the Real from speech (positing the former as a material basis or a touchstone of the latter), and, on the other hand, the so-called "sophistic" position, which tries to undermine the very notion of the Real (claiming that "speech is all," that the Real does not exist, that it all comes down to a question of conventions, different language games, different perspectives and interpretations). The "something else" that exists besides this alternative is precisely a *duality*, a duality that has nothing to do with the dichotomies between complementary oppositional terms (which are ultimately always two sides of the One): this duality is not (yet) multiplicity either. It is perhaps best articulated in the topology of the edge as the thing whose sole substantiality consists in its simultaneously separating and linking two surfaces. This specific duality aims at the Real, and makes it take place through the very

split that gives structure to this duality. It is a duality that simultaneously constitutes the cause, the advent, and the consequence of the Real—but also a duality that thereby captures or expresses the Real.

A very good example of this kind of doubleness would be the famous "play scene" (or "mousetrap") in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Obviously, the "play-within-the-play" does not have the same structure, logic, and impact as it would have, for instance, as a play-within-the-play-within-the-play-within-the-play. . . . Not only is it the case that "two are enough," but further multiplication or mirroring would clearly lead to an entirely different configuration—that of an endless metonymic illusion. In *Hamlet*, the redoubling of fiction, far from avoiding or lacking the Real, functions as the very "trap" (the "mousetrap") of the Real. One could also say that the "mousetrap" in *Hamlet* has exactly the status of the "declaration of declaration." Through the staging of the "Murder of Gonzago," Hamlet declares what was declared to him by his father's Ghost. At the same time, this "declaration of declaration," taking the form of a stage performance, succeeds precisely because it produces a dimension of: "I, the Real, am speaking." This is what throws the murderous king off balance.

Nietzsche is often praised for his insistence on multiplicity against the ontology of the One. Yet his real invention is not multiplicity, but a certain figure of the Two. The logic of the "two" that we will pursue in different contexts, and in diverse conceptual formations, implies a specific temporal structure, a kind of "time loop" that introduces a singular temporality into the (Nietzschean) notion of truth. For Nietzsche, truth is bound up with a certain notion of temporality, rather than being atemporal. The temporality at stake here, however, is not the one usually opposed to eternal truths. The fact that the truth has its temporality does not simply mean that truths are transient "children of their Time"; it means that the very core of truth involves a temporal paradox in which the truth only "becomes what it is." The temporal mode of truth is that of existing as its own antecedent. Or, to use Lacan's formula (which is quite Nietzschean in this respect), "the truth, in this sense, is that which runs after truth."[14] This temporal mode of antecedence is correlative

to the temporal mode of the (notion of) subject, caught in a "loop" wherein the subject will have to appear at the point of the Real which inaugurated her in some "other time." Or, to put it slightly differently, the subject will have to appear at the point of the Real where she is inaugurated as if "from elsewhere."

The Nietzschean theory of the event (or of the philosophical act) actually implies that, in the event, the subject encounters herself. This, however, does not entail a scene where a claustrophobic ego sees only itself. Quite the contrary: this encounter is not the moment of recognition. We could compare it to the "encounter with himself" that Freud describes in his essay "The Uncanny."[15] He was sitting in his train compartment when a violent jolt swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabin, and out came an elderly gentleman wearing a dressing gown and a traveling cap. Freud assumed that, in leaving the washing-cabin situated between the two compartments, the gentleman had taken a wrong turn, and accidentally come into his compartment. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, Freud was startled to realize that the intruder was his own reflection displayed in the mirror hanging on the open door. Freud emphasizes that he thoroughly disliked the appearance of this man in front of him, and that, rather than being frightened by this "double," he failed to recognize it as such. And if he finally realized that he was looking at himself, it was *not* on account of the image he saw in front of him, on account of noticing the resemblance and recognizing it; he identified the elderly man as himself only because he realized that there was a mirror attached to the door.

We could say that a similar instance of confusion, perplexity, and radical nonrecognition is at work in the Nietzschean theory of the event. With Nietzsche, the moment of the event implies or provokes something like "this cannot be so," "this is not happening," "this is not me." It is not about recentering the subject (via the effect of recognition), but about decentering her radically, producing a subjective split in its purest form. The temporal dimension proper to subjectivity comes into play at this very juncture. The subject is not called upon to recognize herself in this Other thing; instead,

she must travel a certain distance in order to "take place" as this Other thing, that is, in order for the subject to "happen" at the point of this Other thing. *Zarathustra* is the epic of such travel. It is—to borrow the expression used by Lacan apropos of the myth of Oedipus—Nietzsche's "attempt to give an epic form to what is operative through the structure." The following passage from *Zarathustra* emphasizes precisely the nonrecognition involved in the encounter with the "Thing":

> This I say to you as a parable. Yesterday, in the stillest hour, the ground gave under me, the dream began. The hand moved, the clock of my life drew a breath; never had I heard such stillness around me; my heart took fright.
>
> Then it spoke to me without voice: "You know it, Zarathustra, but you do not say it!" And I cried with fright at this whispering, and the blood left my face; but I remained silent.
>
> . . .
>
> Then it spoke to me again without voice: "What do you matter, Zarathustra? Speak your word and break!"
>
> And I answered: "Alas, is it *my* word? Who am I?"[16]

In this same chapter, we find the formulation of the time loop involved in the Nietzschean constitution of subjectivity, when the same voiceless voice says to Zarathustra: "you shall go as a shadow of that which must come."

Thus, what is at stake in this configuration is not an act of domesticating a traumatic and enigmatic "call" by positing that it indeed comes from us; it is precisely the fact that it comes from us that makes this call so traumatic and enigmatic, so utterly unrecognizable. To put it differently: the "coming from us" is what requires domestication; the self-emanation of this call accounts for its unsettling, uncanny nature. Recognizing oneself in the call would seemingly serve to tame and domesticate it, to reduce its eerie effect. Yet what Nietzsche proposes is something different: it is not recognizing oneself in the Other thing, but *becoming it*. A crucial, essential caveat here, however, is that what is at stake in this "becoming the Other thing" is not a kind of (mystical) *transformation* of subjectivity:

the Other thing is the subject itself. And the moment of this becoming is the moment when the event coincides with the declaration (*Verkündigung*). The one who declares, *der Verkündiger* (the "proclaimer," in the standard English translation), "is broken by the word he utters," and "goes under": "*Ich sprach mein Wort, ich zerbreche an meinem Wort, . . . als Verkündiger gehe ich zugrunde*" ("I spoke my word, I break at my word, . . . as a proclaimer I perish").[17] To perish as a proclaimer, to break at one's word, is to become the thing one proclaims (or declares). This is not to say, however, that in order to become something else, one *first* has to break. The break itself is the "something else," the "Other thing." The something else is the One becoming Two.

When Nietzsche begins his preface to *Ecce homo* with the question "*Who am I?,*" this question is to be situated alongside Zarathustra's words: "Alas, is it *my* word? Who am I?" from the passage quoted above. At this point in his work, however, Nietzsche feels ready to answer this question in the following, perhaps surprising, way: "I am . . . a *decadent* and a *beginning*, . . . I know both, I am both,"[18] or, in the alternative version of the third paragraph, quite directly: "*Ich bin ein Doppelgänger*" ("I am a double"). Freud's story mentioned above, which is supposed to illustrate precisely the phenomenon of the *Doppelgänger,* rings an even louder bell here. This insistence on doubleness, on the fact that "Nietzsche" is "two," marks with its irreducible seal the first chapters of *Ecce homo*: I am two, I am a split, I am the event, Nietzsche keeps repeating—"Dionysus and the Crucified," *at the same time,* as the edge between the two.

The edge of this doubleness or duplicity is what Nietzsche will ultimately hold to be his greatest invention or Creation. Until then, there was Dionysus and there was the Crucified; they existed, together with everything that these two names connote or "name" in Nietzsche's philosophy (as well as outside it). The word broken in two is broken along the fault line of what these two names mark. But at the same time—and this is what Nietzsche considers to be his achievement—they emerge as two, as a doubleness, only from within this very break which takes place with and because of Nietz-

sche's declaring it. Nietzsche will transform the "two ones" into a twofold face (which is his image of the break) merged or combined as the shortest distance between the two names, and what they connote. And the shortest distance between the two is precisely the edge; as we shall see, this edge is the only possible "location" for what is designated as "beyond good and evil"—a beyond that is not really a realm, and is thus not a "beyond" in the common sense of this term, but, rather, has the structure of an edge. The "event 'Nietzsche'" is precisely this edge.

This is the "measure" of truth that Nietzsche claims to possess, sometimes going so far as to claim that he *is* this measure. "Nietzsche" is the right measure of Dionysus and the Crucified. He is the *right measure* not in the sense of a happy medium or a golden mean, in which everything is reduced to the balance of a placid equilibrium, but, rather, in the sense of a linking or a holding that maintains two things together at their *extreme* point: at the extreme point of their (in)commensurability, at the point where they can only just be perceived as two that are distinguished-yet-indistinguishable. This is precisely the import of the following passage, which has already been quoted: "*We immoralists!*—This word which concerns *us*, in which *we* are called upon to fear and to love, this nearly invisible, inaudible word . . . , a 'not quite' word in every respect. . . ." The "not quite" or "nearly" (Nietzsche substantivizes *beinahe* into *das Beinahe*) is not here in order to indicate something approximate (although it could be said to mark something approximate, in the sense of being situated side by side); it is a signifier of something that continually reiterates itself with a very specific sense in Nietzsche's philosophy. This "not quite" is the minimal difference between two things, the exact measure or the shortest path between two things; it is the very articulation of a doubleness, of the figure of the two. (We will encounter it also in the form of the "shortest shadow" by which Nietzsche characterizes midday or noon.)

To say that "Nietzsche" is the right measure between Dionysus and the Crucified is not to say that he is a kind of synthesis of the two, or that the two find some kind of organic unity in (the event)

"Nietzsche." It means that "Nietzsche" is both, insofar as "Nietzsche" is the name of the point where they *nearly* coincide. In this sense, "Nietzsche" is the very name of the nonrelationship between Dionysus and the Crucified (this "nonrelationship" must be taken in the Lacanian sense of the term—it does not simply imply that two things are not related, or have no relationship, but, rather, that the very impossibility of a fixed relationship *constitutes* the nature of the relationship between, in Lacan's case, the two sexes). The same logic is at work in the Nietzschean notion of life. That which, in a decadent way, turns against life (the "ascetic ideal") is itself something that springs from life. This is the first premise, the premise of leveling. From there on, the opposition of life and death, the tension between them, becomes the very definition of life. Life is two things: it is life and it is death; it is the *living* edge between them. Therefore, death, in the emphatic sense of the word, is the death of this edge, the end of this tension, the fall into the one or the other . . . which is always the fall into One.

The Nietzschean event could be encapsulated by the declaration "*Eins wurde zu Zwei*" ("One became Two").[19] The exact formula of Nietzsche's declaration is not "I am the event," nor "I will break the world in two," nor "I am dynamite," but "'I' am two," or "'Nietzsche' is two." This is what Nietzsche declares with such zeal in *Ecce homo*, and this is what, beyond the explicit formulations to that effect, gives his work its "edge."

This specific redoubling (as the co-positing of a two in the topology of the minimal difference), which is the very name of the event, is to be distinguished from another redoubling that concerns the relationship between the event and the subject who declares it (which we took as our starting point). This latter redoubling presents us with the Nietzschean theory of the event, whereas the former names a specific event, the "event 'Nietzsche'." Of course, this does not mean that we can simply separate the two, since Nietzsche's theory of the event constitutes a part of the event called "Nietzsche." Yet we can at least temporarily take them apart, in order to see more clearly what each of them implies.

What, then, is the Nietzschean theory of the event? And what is the nature of the circularity implied in it? The singular time loop involved in the relationship between the subject and the event—the subject announces the event, yet the event is immanent to the announcement itself—is articulated by Nietzsche in different ways and on different levels. One of these levels is the relationship between the subject as the author of a certain work, and the subject as that which is, so to speak, at work within this very work itself. The paradox consists in the fact that the subject-as-author, (temporally) situated at the beginning of the process/labor of authoring, is entirely dependent upon the subject who is subsequently going to become the subject of the work-yet-to-be-completed. Along these lines, Nietzsche writes: "I live on my own credit; it is perhaps a mere prejudice that I live. I only need to speak with one of the 'educated' who come to the Upper Engadine for the summer, and I am convinced that I do *not* live."[20] "To live on one's own credit," to pawn something which one does not yet have, and which will only become what it is: this is a poignant expression of the time loop referred to above, as well as a concise formula of what is involved in Nietzsche's theory of the event. It implies that the relationship between the subject and the event should be written as follows: subject–event–subject. "Subject" names the something inaugurated by the event, as well as the something that makes a place (and time) for the event (although this place is subjectivized exclusively in a retroactive manner, after the event). In this perspective, the event is precisely the "crystal" of this duality; it is the moment when the subject, encountering herself, splits. In other words, the event exists only in this montage of these two subjects. This is why it is not possible to declare the event directly, but only through a double declaration.

For a vivid illustration of this configuration, there is probably no need to look further than Chris Marker's masterpiece *La jetée*. *La jetée* is a "photo-novel," telling the story of a man who is profoundly marked by an image from his childhood. As a child, he once found himself on an airport walkway, where parents would bring their

children to watch the planes. While he was there, he saw a woman standing at the edge of the walkway, leaning against the fence, her gentle face suddenly filled with terror. This image engraved itself vividly in his memory. He also vaguely saw a man stagger, then fall in the middle of the walkway. Only with the passage of time would he eventually come to understand that he had witnessed the man's death. The story continues many years later, focusing on the love encounter between the child (who is now a grown man) and the woman he once saw on the walkway. Their encounters presuppose time travel (but this involves another component of the story that I shall leave aside here—let me simply stress that time travel is possible for the hero precisely on account of the extremely strong "mental image" of the woman he saw on the walkway). At the story's conclusion, we are once again on the walkway, where the hero has come to meet his beloved; she is waiting for him there, at the edge, leaning against the fence. He runs toward her. Suddenly, the woman's face fills with terror, while a bullet hits him from behind. He staggers and falls. The narrator's voice tells us that, at this exact moment, the man suddenly realizes that what he had witnessed years ago, that distant day on the walkway, was his own death.

We find articulated here all the crucial elements of the "time loop" involved in the relationship between the subject and the event. The event is "declared" by the child (as an adult), declared by his fidelity to the woman whose face marked him so profoundly. And we should not forget that what struck him so deeply about her face was its expressive reaction to himself as he was seen by her in this doubled moment (split into a witnessed time and a lived time)—namely, himself as she saw him fall and die, himself who came there precisely in order to "declare" the event (i.e., his love). The event, of course, is what takes place on the walkway; more precisely, it is nothing but the change of expression on the woman's face. What takes place in this scene is that the hero *encounters himself* via the literal "interface" of the event (a woman's face and its change of expression). This encounter with himself produces, simultaneously, the effect of nonrecognition and the Love around which his whole life is struc-

tured. It would be difficult to find a better *mise en scène* for the Nietzschean midday or noon (as the time of the event) than this. Here it is tempting to quote a passage from the chapter "At Noon" from *Zarathustra:*

> Precisely the least, the softest, lightest, a lizard's rustling, a breath, a breeze, a moment's glance—it is *little* that makes the *best* happiness. Still!
>
> What happened to me? Listen! Did time perhaps fly away? Do I not fall? Did I not fall—listen!—into the well of eternity? What is happening to me? Still! I have been stung, alas—in the heart? In the heart! Oh break, break, heart, after such happiness, after such a sting. How? Did not the world become perfect just now? Round and ripe? Oh, the golden ring—where may it fly? Shall I run after it?[21]

The first sentence links the "event" to the smallest, *nearly* imperceptible thing (I have already emphasized the conceptual importance of the term "nearly" in Nietzsche), and we could easily add "a change of expression" to Nietzsche's sequence ("a breath, a breeze, a moment's glance . . ."). The second part introduces the notion of the eternal, and of time forming a circle ("the golden ring") *as the result* of the "sting in the heart" that defines the event here. Because of what happened, time might fly in either direction. It is very important not simply to identify the eternal with the circle of time: Nietzsche's "eternity" refers not to the endless circling of time, but to those rare moments when this circularity *appears,* becomes tangible for us in the encounter of two temporalities—the encounter that distinguishes the event as such. In other words (and articulated in a fashion that deviates from the standard, traditional logic of time as the "future" imperceptibly passing into "past"), the event is always an encounter of the future and the past, something that affects the past as well as the future. This is why Nietzsche likes to present it as a "hole in time" (the "well of eternity"). Nietzsche's notion of eternity, as well as of infinity, is not that of an endless-albeit-circular stretching of time, but that of a "timeless *moment.*" In order to depict it, he persistently draws on the same metaphors: he talks about the "well" and the

"abyss" of eternity. He compares the "moment of eternity" to the feeling we experience when we are falling asleep, and have the impression that the ground is giving way beneath us. It is as if time itself gave way beneath us, launching us on a long trip, although, according to the "linear" measurement of time, only a moment has passed. ("The hand [of the clock] moved, the clock of my life drew breath.") In his poems and aphorisms, as well as in his "prose," Nietzsche also persistently portrays eternity and/or infinity with the figure of the gaze (*Blick*) and of the eye/s (*Auge/n*). Here is one example from the "Songs of Prince Vogelfrei" that combines both:

> Mittag schläft auf Raum und Zeit—:
> Nur *dein* Auge—ungeheuer
> Blickt mich's an, Unendlichkeit!
>
> [Upon space and time sleeps midday—:
> Only *your* eye—monstrously,
> Gazes at me, infinity!][22]

Here (and in conformity with a long poetic tradition) the abyss of infinity is contained in the eye that gazes at us (Hegel called this "the night of the world"). But, of course, there is one instance where the two terms, *Auge* and *Blick*, are even more happily united: precisely the notion of *Augenblick* (moment). When, in *Zarathustra*, the theme of eternal recurrence appears for the first time (in the chapter "On the Vision and the Riddle"), Nietzsche talks about a "gateway" called "Moment" (*Augenblick*), a point at which two paths meet (as if "offending each other face to face")—two paths that seem to contradict each other, and to stretch for an eternity in opposite directions.[23] (The scene on the walkway in *La jetée* could be conceived precisely as such "gateway" called "*Augenblick*," where two paths—one leading to the "past," one leading to the "future"—coincide or meet.) Thus, the Nietzschean "moment" is not simply a point on the line of time, stretching "from here to eternity" in two opposite directions. It is the very "crystal" of time (to borrow Deleuze's term), the crystal of the future and of the past—as such, it *is* eternity. The

last important thing to note before returning to *La jetée* is the relationship between this "hole in time" and the Nietzschean theme of perspectivity. The "great midday" (which becomes the predominant figure of this "crack in time") is conceived by Nietzsche as a kind of ultimate perspective. Its singularity resides in the fact that it is not a point of view, but the point of the *gaze*.

I said above that what marks the child so profoundly in the face of the woman he sees on the walkway is the way this face expresses or gives body to what happens to *him* (in another time). This configuration implies that, in terms of our schema subject–event–subject, the grown-up man (falling down) is the "first" subject. The fact that, in this scene, we see him only via the "interface" of the event (whereas, in the last shot, we are seeing the scene simultaneously from his perspective) is a good reminder of the fact that the place of subjectivity as involved in the event (one could even say the "subjective condition" of the event) gets subjectivized only subsequently or retroactively in and by the event. The transformation we are dealing with on this level of the story is the transformation of the configuration "X–event–subject" into "subject–event–subject," this being precisely what is involved in the Nietzschean formula "to become what one is." It is of the utmost importance here, however, not to "linearize" this movement of becoming what one is. Nietzsche is not referring to a teleological progress toward an end, aim, or goal. One does not, so to speak, embark upon a straight pathway aiming to "become what one is," a pathway that terminates in a "mission accomplished" where the subject now finally becomes what she is. One does not, at the end, become what one is. If one can talk about an "end" here, it is an end that takes place in *the middle*. The "end" is not conclusive but inaugural; it inaugurates the very split that leads to it. The "end" is nothing other than the joint or hinge of two ends that seem to point in opposite directions. This is quite clear in *La jetée:* its "end," the last scene, is also its initial opening; in this sense, they both, combined together, constitute the middle of the story (or what the story presents). The final scene cannot be identified as the conclusive moment of the movement it portrays. It is not that the hero

"becomes what he is" when he is "himself" shot on the walkway. Not only could one easily claim the opposite (that this shooting is the inaugural moment of him becoming what he is in the figure of love)—there is, strictly speaking, no point in trying to determine what comes first, the reason being that eternity is portrayed here precisely as the *Augenblick* when the two meet. The *Augenblick* (or the scene on the walkway) is not a "happy reunion," or a fusion of the two ends, but their *joint*. In relation to midday as the figure of the event, Nietzsche uses the term *Wendepunkt*, the "turning point" (of two ways), which is to be understood precisely as a joint (and not as a reversal). Furthermore, we should not forget that the point where the two meet is perfectly identical with the point where "One becomes Two."

The event itself is precisely the conceptual name of the something that simultaneously separates and links the two subjects. It names the "in-between" or the "border's edge" between the two subjects. The event is the tension that propels or drives the subject. The subject exists, so to speak, along the two edges of the event. In this sense, the only "proof" of the event is the coexistence of this double subjectivity.

Another way of putting this, which will lead to another aspect of our inquiry, would be to say that the subject is, at one and the same time, that which makes a place and time for the event as well as that which (only) arises from the event. The flip side of this is that the first subject becomes a subject only if and when the second subject emerges. In other words, the relationship involved here is not that of causality, implying that the "first" subject is the Author of the event leading to the emergence of "second" subject. What is at stake is the theoretical presupposition that the possibility of an event *as contingent* falls under certain (subjective) conditions. In other words, contingency can be "activated" without losing the character of contingency. The presupposition here is that the contingency is always-already discursive, and that there are discourses excluding contingency (implying that, in these discourses, we will wait for it

in vain). This thesis, according to which contingency (the event, the real) can be activated, could be understood in the same sense as when we talk about "detonating a bomb." Although we do not produce the actual bomb ourselves (the event, the real), we are capable of activating it by "setting it off."[24]

Nietzsche articulates the difference between the discursivity in which an event is possible and the discursivity where such a possibility is a priori excluded. He expresses it in terms of the difference between the discourse of affirmation and the discourse of negation, or, alternatively, in terms of the difference between "active" and "reactive" forces. If we were to express the distinction between the discourse of affirmation and the discourse of negation in one formula, we could say that affirmation embraces the event at the level of the contingency through which the latter appears, whereas negation (or "reaction") qualifies the event through the necessity to which it tries to reduce this event. However—and we will return to this—in order for the affirmation to have this effect of "activating the contingency," it must be a double affirmation.

I have already suggested that the moment when "one becomes what one is" is not a moment of unification but, on the contrary, the moment of a pure split. One of the articulations of this split is the division between the principle of decadence or negation and the principle of the beginning or affirmation. The "conceptual names" for this split in Nietzsche are the Crucified and Dionysus. However—and this is a crucial point—the difference between the two is that Dionysus is himself this very split (between the Crucified and Dionysus). Dionysus does not come *after* the Crucified, as something completely different. Dionysus is not simply the equivalent of new, different values; Dionysus is not the beginning of a new era, the morning of a new epoch after the fall of the old one. Dionysus is the beginning as *midday,* the moment when "one turns to two," namely, the moment of the very split or "becoming two" *as that which is new.*

Although it is absolutely crucial, this point is also quite delicate, since Nietzsche himself oscillates between two logics delineating the

beginning of the new. He alternates between the notion of the Beginning as what *will* come (only) after a cataclysmic Event inaugurating a new era, and the Beginning as what starts at midday, in the "midst of life." Although both logics are indeed present in Nietzsche's work, the second one is clearly the more prevalent of the two. As a matter of fact, the first logic only really acquires an explicit shape with the onset of Nietzsche's "madness." In December 1888, he writes to Brandes: "We have just entered the great politics, even very great . . . I am preparing an event that will probably break the history in two parts, so that a new calendar will be needed, where the year 1888 will be the year I." Such claims are to be found in Nietzsche's letters only after some point between December 1888 and January 1889—that is to say, at the time when, to borrow Deleuze's formulation, the illness which, as a figure, was constantly present in Nietzsche's work, steps out of this work, interrupts it, prevents its continuation. Before this, and all through Nietzsche's work, we are dealing with some other figure of the break, of the event and of the time of the event, namely, the figure of midday (as the *stillest hour*).

What is so extraordinary about this figure or theme of midday? Nietzsche invents and uses this theme in order to provide a figure for the idea of a new beginning, the idea of an event after which nothing will be as before. Is this idea not something that we usually and spontaneously associate with the metaphor or theme of the morning? For instance, after the night of nihilism (the proverbial "dark night of the soul"), a new day will arise, a fresh start. And yet, in relation to this idea, Nietzsche keeps insisting upon another metaphor, that of midday, of "great midday." *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* which traces the path for this New, actually ends in the morning; but the morning is here only as the prelude to midday: "This is my morning, my day is breaking: rise now, rise, thou great noon!" are Zarathustra's last words. If Zarathustra does not hesitate to suggest to his last companions, the "higher men," that they might just as well drown in their passion for the Nothing, their death or disappearance is in no way the condition of a "new beginning." Just before the end, Zarathustra *separates* from them, leaving them in his cave.

Thus, the time of the event is neither the time of birth nor the time of death but, so to speak, the time of the "middle." Why does Nietzsche keep insisting on this?

Let us briefly sketch the crucial points of the figure of midday that will interest us throughout this study. There are three closely connected points. The first is the dimension of separation, whose logic is not that of the end, of achieving or finishing (off), but the logic of subtraction, withdrawal, or split. The second point concerns the singular temporality of the event, implying a curving of time as something like a temporal loop coiling in upon itself—midday is a "time-within-time" (in the same sense that the "mousetrap" in *Hamlet* is a play-within-the-play). It exists in time, it has its time, but it further "hollows out" time from the inside ("the hand moved, the clock of my life drew a breath"). The third point is what Nietzsche formulates in terms of the "shortest shadow" ("Mid-day; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; zenith of mankind").[25] Midday is *not* the moment when the sun embraces everything, makes all shadows disappear, and constitutes an undivided Unity of the world; it is the moment of the shortest shadow. And what is the shortest shadow of a thing, if not this thing itself? Yet, for Nietzsche, this does not mean that the two become one, but, rather, that one becomes two. Why? The thing (as one) no longer throws its shadow upon another thing; instead, it throws its shadow upon itself, thus becoming, at the same time, the thing and its shadow. When the sun is at its zenith, things are not simply exposed ("naked," as it were); they are, so to speak, dressed in their own shadows. This poetic description should not distract us from the epistemological issue involved here, given that it plays a crucial part in Nietzsche's theory of truth.

All three points evoked above are articulations of a certain figure of the two. And this figure of the two constitutes—such is my claim—the event "Nietzsche." This figure of the two is Nietzsche's fundamental invention. It involves his breaking out of the field determined by the sterile alternative between realism and nominalism. It involves a specific articulation of the relationship between the Real

and representation. This articulation does not place the Real somewhere beyond or outside representation, nor does it abolish the Real in the name of reducing everything to mere representational semblances. It suggests that the Real exists as the internal fracture or split of representation, as its intrinsic edge on account of which representation never fully coincides, not simply with its object, but with itself. This figure of the two, together with what it implies, is the thread we will follow and explore further, especially in Part II (Part I deals primarily with Nietzsche's detecting and analyzing a growing "discontent in civilization").

After his illness broke out, Nietzsche lived for another twelve years. He died in August 1900, at the "break" of the century. He is said to have died at midday.

PART I

Nietzsche the Metapsychologist

It is probably no mere coincidence that, in relation to the so-called "diagnostic" part of Nietzsche's corpus, interpreters sometimes use the Freudian phrase "discontent in civilization," implying that Nietzsche is especially adept at detecting and naming this discontent. Nietzsche is often esteemed (and self-esteemed) as a great psychologist, but perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that he is a great (and perhaps the first) *metapsychologist*—in the precise sense of this term as it is used to designate Freud's metapsychological writings (not only his essays gathered under the title "On Metapsychology," but also writings such as *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, The Future of an Illusion, Totem and Taboo, Moses and Monotheism,* and, of course, *Civilization and Its Discontents* itself).

If we were to search for instances where Nietzsche's metapsychology is most penetrating—and where it succeeds in articulating the Real at the core of the "discontent in civilization"—we could mention at least two. The first is his theory of the ascetic ideal. The second, which Nietzsche usually treats under the title "the extinction of true masters," could perhaps be more appropriately designated Nietzsche's insight into the transformation of the dominant social bond or discourse. At stake here is—to borrow Lacan's terms—the shift from the "master's discourse" to the "university discourse." What these two instances or shifts have in common is that they both deal with a certain social recodification of enjoyment. In this respect, it is important to read them together, since this allows us to perceive the shift they articulate not merely as historical, but also as structural. Moreover, they are actually connected via a third element that gives Nietzsche's philosophy its political weight, namely, his critique of liberalism (which has recently become one of the more important points guiding the "reactivation" of Nietzsche's thought).[1]

From Nietzsche's theory of the ascetic ideal, as he develops it in the *Genealogy of Morals,* one might get the impression that the whole of European history is like a film that unfolds as a consequence of the initial gesture (or "error") introduced by Christianity. In other words, one might surmise that Nietzsche, having detected the

original sin of Christianity, merely describes and derives its consequences, spelling out a kind of "logical evolution" of that initial error. It is also clear, however, that he himself is already writing from the perspective of a rupture that occurred within Christianity itself—a rupture that opens up the possibility for Nietzsche's own perspective on Christianity, and one through which alone the "ascetic ideal," although inaugurated by Christianity, "becomes what it is." The name of this rupture (and one of Nietzsche's most famous "declarations") is the death of God.

“God Is Dead”

Nietzsche's thesis is actually twofold: "God is dead," and "Christianity survived the death of God." As we shall see, the ascetic ideal, in its purest form, concerns precisely the nature of this Christianity without God.

When it comes to the thesis concerning the death of God, we should be careful to distinguish between two claims that are by no means identical. The first was formulated by Hegel, and later explored by Lacan: it is not simply the Son of God who dies on the cross, leaving intact (transcendent) God Himself. God, too, dies on the cross, and this "death of God" is the very condition for the birth of Christianity. To put it simply, the death of God is the condition for the universal bond in which God is born on the level of the Symbolic; it opens up the (symbolic) debt in which we have our place. This is why, in an obvious reference to Nietzsche's "God is dead," Lacan affirms that God has always been dead, that He has necessarily been dead from the very outset of Christianity. This entails, logically, that there is nothing really subversive in the affirmation "God is dead"—or, more precisely, that the statement "God is dead" cannot easily be interpreted as a foundation for atheism. Yet, pertinent as this Hegelian–Lacanian observation might be, it somehow misses Nietzsche's point, a point that is situated on an entirely different level. Nietzsche's affirmation concerns precisely the death of the *symbolic* God, that is, the death of God as the power of the Symbolic, as the name of the Christian symbolic bond. Nietzsche's statement "God is dead" could be said to refer to a new configuration—a configuration which did not escape Lacan's attention, since he also proposes a very poignant formulation of it: "We are no longer guilty just in virtue of a symbolic debt. . . . It is the debt itself in which we have our place that can be taken from us, and it is here that we can feel completely alienated from ourselves."[2] In other words, I should stress that Nietzsche's "God is dead" refers, so to speak, to God's second death: to His symbolic death. This implies, however, that the death of the *symbolic* God can itself be *real*.

We should bear in mind that, throughout the history of Christianity, we are dealing with two Gods, traditionally referred to as "the

God of theologians, philosophers, and scientists" and "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."[3] This difference, often defined in terms of the difference between God as "big Other" and the personal God of faith, should not be accepted too readily as the difference between the Symbolic and the Real. One could, rather, argue that this distinction is inherent to the Symbolic as such. On the one hand, God appears as the logical/grammatical God, as the synonym of the symbolic order (and of its orderliness), namely, as the *structure* of the world/universe/language. On the other, "God" appears as the "Real" of this very symbolic order, as its "light," the point of its generative *power*, of its productivity, of its excess. This, for instance, is the difference between the God of Newton and the God of Pascal. The first is the God of orderly regularity, the God that coincides with the very structure/organization of the universe or nature[4]—in short, the God of the theologians, philosophers, and scientists. The second is the God of excess, but—and this point is crucial—an excess of the *Symbolic itself*. Herein lies the substance of Pascal's deservedly famous insistence upon the purely symbolic ritual as the generator of (the most intimate) faith ("Kneel down, pray, keep repeating the words, and the faith will come . . ."). God as the "excess of life," or simply as the presence of life, is inherent to the Symbolic. "God" is the name through which a personal and singular experience of the "excess of life" is engaged at the level of the universal (for instance, in the Christian community). Formulated through Lacanian concepts, the difference between the two Gods is precisely the difference between S_1 and S_2: the difference between, on the one hand, the master-signifier as the point of the generic and generative (Nietzsche would say creative) power of the Symbolic, and, on the other, the "signifying chain" that structures the field of positive knowledge *and* belief. In this respect, one could say that God as S_1 can "die," that is to say, this God can cease to function as the *agent* of a given symbolic discursivity. On the other hand, God as S_2 is a God in relation to whom it makes no sense to say that He is "dead"—one can only argue whether He exists or does not exist, with both sides of the argument finally amounting to nothing more than claims about the existence

or nonexistence of contingency, as well as about the existence or nonexistence of the world/language as a (consistent) *whole*.

The God referred to in Nietzsche's statement "God is dead" is God as the (generic and generative) *power* of the Symbolic, God as S_1. On the other hand, Nietzsche is much more modest in his statements concerning God as a synonym of the symbolic order or linguistic structure: "I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar."[5]

With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that, for Nietzsche, the "death of God" is consonant with his statements concerning the death of "true masters," that is, with his general diagnosis concerning the extinction of the "master's discourse" and its ensuing replacement by a different, "sterilized" (yet all the more tyrannical)[6] form of mastery. This replacement does not mean that we now get a Symbolic without mastery. Rather, the opposite is the case (and we will return to this shifting of discourse). For the time being, it is sufficient to bear in mind that the God whom Nietzsche proclaims dead is God as the name of the point of excess, and of the generative/creative (one could also say performative) power of the Symbolic itself. The consequence of this is that, with the "death of God," we get a Symbolic deprived of its inherent power, a Symbolic that does not manage to create or produce anything more with its rituals. Nonetheless, the point is not simply that these rituals became empty on account of the "death of God." Instead, the fact that, for instance, believers themselves "all of a sudden" find these rituals empty and meaningless is the same thing as the death of God. One is not the cause of the other; the two phenomena are to be situated on the same level. Nietzsche's statements and arguments concerning the Reformation should be understood from this perspective. In a way, the basic declaration of the Reformation is nothing other than "God is dead," in the precise sense in which we read this statement: God is absent from the Symbolic (from all kinds of church rituals and practices which, in the best case, are considered as "superstitions" or, in the worst case, as direct expressions of the "Antichrist"). In other words, the whole attack against the ritual (or

"performative") dimension of Christianity carried out by the Reformation could be understood as an (early) variation on the statement "God is dead": God is absent from the symbolic rituals in which He was (previously) supposed to be present.

One could define the central project of the Reformation precisely as an attempt to "(re)activate God"—this time not as the power of the Symbolic, but as an immediate power of the Real. God (as real) and our proximity to Him are now explicitly situated *beyond* the Symbolic, namely, beyond the logic of mediation, representation, and hierarchy. God is still "beyond," but not in the same sense as before. Within classical Catholicism, the clear distinction between here and beyond, between this world and the other world, depends largely upon the power of the Symbolic to be the mediator or common ground of the two. Symbolic rituals accompanying certain actions and commitments in this world have the power to transform these actions and commitments into something that simultaneously takes place in the other world. Hence, for example, a marriage performed in church is a marriage performed in heaven; a sin for which we receive absolution in church is a sin forgiven by God Himself. The important point to stress here is that this power of the Symbolic to "transubstantiate" certain things of this world into something else, and to constitute a common ground between two orders of being, is the very factor that sustains the difference between these two orders of being, between here and beyond (as two realms).

In Catholicism, we have a clear distinction between *two realms,* and we have the symbolic functioning as the *point de capiton* ("quilting point") of these two realms. In other words, Catholicism is essentially bound to the notion of the *Other scene,* this "other scene" being the scene of Truth and Sense (or Meaning). In Protestantism, the difference between the two scenes disappears, or—perhaps more precisely—acquires a completely different status. The first (Catholic) configuration implies two things: a well-defined division between two scenes, and the privilege of certain symbolic rituals to constitute a direct link between them. Thus, in certain cases (in certain symbolic rituals), the "scene of our life" *is* (or coincides with)

the "Other scene." Some of our actions (which are symbolically defined as such by the Church) have this particular significance or power of changing something on the Other scene of our life. The rest of our actions are simply indifferent or irrelevant. The second (Protestant) configuration implies that there are no such *privileged* points of coincidence between the two realms (and no particular actions that can change or affect the status of our lives on the Other scene). At the same time, our *whole* life (everything we do or think, in private or in public) constitutes a sign or an expression of the Other scene. There is no such thing as an indifferent or irrelevant action. Every small detail of our lives counts for something. In Catholicism, the Other scene is the scene of Truth, yet this does not mean that it is the Truth of the scene of our innerworldly, everyday life. Most of our quotidian existence (actually, all of it, with the exception of some privileged points mentioned above) is *indifferent* to the notion of Truth. The two scenes are not related in such a way that one would be the truth of the other. In Protestantism, this changes radically. To begin with, the only available truth is to be found within the scene of our life, in the here and now. Second, this truth is the truth of the Other scene (of us being chosen or not).

At the beginning of this chapter, I said that, according to Nietzsche, Christianity has survived the rupture articulated in the statement "God is dead"—and, to a large extent, it has survived this precisely due to the Reformation's rediscovery of God as a "power." This, however, is now a quite different power. No longer the power of the tautological gesture of (self-)affirmation, it operates as a power of the process of (self-)differentiation. More precisely, it is not the power *of* this process, but, rather, a power *generated by* this process, a power that presupposes, as its condition, a certain passion. The basic presupposition of this configuration can be formulated as follows: the Real (for instance, the Real of our salvation) is undeterminable/unnameable/unattainable. Not only is it situated *beyond* the Symbolic, it is also unattainable by any means of the Symbolic. We can be in "touch" with it only through the process of infinite approaching, a process of an endless differentiation of the Real from its

semblance. As subjects, we are engaged in this process of differentiation through and with all our passion. Or, to state this more exactly, we are the subjects of this process precisely *as passion* (passion is the subjective figure involved in the configuration discussed above). This implies that the power of God actually feeds on our passion. This power is not generative or productive, but accumulative—its infinite character derives from its infinite power of accumulation. According to Nietzsche, the name of this new configuration is *ethics*. Protestantism simply invents ethics as we understand it today. Of course, morality and the "interiorization of the man" are present throughout the history of Christianity. What Nietzsche detects in the invention and subsequent rise of Protestant ethics, however, is the fact that moral questions of guilt and punishment are expelled from the field of symbolic exchange (all the rituals of forgiving sins, including the famous "buying of remissions"),[7] and placed in the always uncertain domain of conscience and its direct responsibility before God. Public secular authorities are no longer competent to judge questions of conscience and salvation. But the judging itself remains, and this can develop into undreamed-of dimensions and permutations.

The Reformation movement was undoubtedly responsible for many liberal values that we take for granted today (for instance, "freedom of conscience"). Nietzsche's antiliberalism stems from his conviction that this "immediate freedom" is not necessarily a step forward, since it can very well serve as a mechanism that promotes a universalized form of slavery. There is, arguably, more room for freedom in "etiquette" and ritual than in the depths of personal conviction and conscience.[8] Nietzsche's remarkable thesis is that intimate, "inner" freedom can function as the ultimate prison, that it represents the most subtle and perfidious form of slavery.[9]

I said above that the fundamental gesture of Protestantism was to extirpate the moral-ideological field from the circuits of symbolic exchange, thus giving this field its autonomy. The crucial dimension thereby established is one where, although we can strive toward greater proximity to God in public as well as in private (and we have

to strive for this proximity—this being the reason for the importance of "deeds" in Protestantism), the *criterion* of real proximity to God is not to be found in this sphere of what can be verified. Yet this constitution of the moral-ideological realm beyond the field of symbolic exchange liberates not only the former, but also the latter. They are liberated from the tension-ridden duality that threatens to break the Christian edifice as such. The duality at stake concerns, first of all, the tension between the economic and the ideological sides of life (precisely insofar as they are articulated together). The paradigmatic manifestation of this first tension is the infamous "trade in remissions": the possibility of buying one's ticket to heaven gave rise to an acute sense of social injustice. The other aspect of the duality in question concerns the tension between belief and knowledge (as science). The Reformation succeeds in creating an opening, within the configuration of Christianity, for both secular economic development and the development of science.

The first point could be briefly expressed as follows: the removal of the moral-ideological question of salvation from the field of symbolic exchange frees the self-perpetuating power of the latter. Structurally—I am in no way implying that this was the ideological goal or intention of the Reformation movement—it opens up the space for the development of the "market" in the modern sense of the word. The path toward a "free market" is initiated with what one might call an "ideological deideologization" of trade. As for the more detailed and subtle mechanisms of this complicity, there is, of course, Max Weber's classic study *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*. One of the most interesting points here concerns the question of how the field of economic exchange became reinhabited by "ethics"—that is to say the question of how ethics, although previously expelled from this field as its antagonistic obstacle, returned as its essential inner driving force. The accumulation of wealth, which was banned for centuries by official Christian morality, not only became morally neutral (neither "good" nor "bad" in itself)—it actually came to be seen as "good." It became itself a question of ethics, of duty, and of professional responsibility. Weber links this turn to—

among other things—a specific dimension of Calvinism. The fundamental ideological gesture of Calvinism consists in positing the Last Judgment as something that has already happened. God has already chosen those who will be redeemed, rejecting the others. Whatever we do in our lives, we cannot change this original decision; there is no way for us to "buy" or acquire God's mercy (nor to squander it either). Yet, somewhat surprisingly, the effect of this mechanism of predestination was not faint-heartedness (why bother with anything in this world, if everything has already been decided?), but, on the contrary, an extraordinarily energetic engagement with secular life, and an amazingly intense valorization of one's work and vocation. Why?

The answer is to be found in the notion of "certitudo salutis." Nobody knows whether she or he is chosen or not, whether she or he will be redeemed or damned. This leads to an almost obsessive search for signs that would bear witness to our being chosen or rejected. The crucial question thus becomes how to recognize the grace that was (or was not) bestowed upon us. One of the most important signs of not being chosen is precisely faint-heartedness (nowadays, we would say "depression"), lack of faith or "credit" (in other words, faith that we are among the chosen is one of the principal pieces of "evidence" indicating that we are chosen). The other crucial evidence, related to the former, is successful and efficient professional activity, occupation, and work. The popular expression for an idler that exists in some languages, "one who is stealing time from God," is more than just a figure of speech. Anxiety related to the question of whether we are chosen or not finds its outlet in a hyperactivity that is supposed to answer this question and, consequently, provide some sort of certainty. The essential logic at play here is not that of "rewarding effort," of hoping that our efforts will pay off (if not in this life, then in the next world); this would erroneously imply that we can influence the outcome by our efforts. These efforts, on the contrary, are already an expression of the outcome, namely, of the fact that we are chosen or called upon. Also, idleness (or simply the fact that one does not need to work) is no

longer the expression of a person's social prestige. In the same way, acquired wealth cannot permit us to "unyoke," relax, and give ourselves over to idleness. This is perhaps—to use Nietzsche's terms—one of the major differences between the "old" and the "modern" masters. The former were the masters of wealth, whereas the latter are its employees or slaves. Today, idleness (or unemployment) is the "privilege" of the poorest, of socially marginal individuals; whereas being continually occupied, being constantly and mercilessly subject to one's professional duty, is the sign of social prestige or, in other words, the sign that we *have been called,* that we have been chosen. This undoubtedly plays its part in modern obsessional neurosis (and anxiety), where the critical moments that have to be avoided at any price are precisely the moments of cessation or discontinuity, of pause, of time "not filled," of silence (I should also mention the "ethics of vacation"—our vacation or rest must itself be active, structured, organized, planned, and so on). This is precisely the crucial aspect of what Nietzsche describes as the "ascetic ideal": not so much a negation of worldly life and its pleasures as their transformation into duty.

The second point mentioned above as an important result of the Reformation involves the problem of the relationship between knowledge and belief (and is by no means unrelated to what has just been discussed). Science is acceptable insofar as it becomes a profession, that is, insofar as it is no longer considered as something that is directly competing with religion. Science must restrain itself from issuing certain types of statement. Instead of posing as an alternative to religion (or, we might add, to any kind of official ideology), it survives by renouncing (often with pride) the temptation to formulate any kind of proposition within the ideological field: this is precisely what guarantees its placid, serene autonomy. This lurks in the background of Nietzsche's (very "unfashionable") conviction that the "deideologization" of science is not necessarily its major achievement, but, rather, the mere price of its survival. Hence: "But that one works rigorously in the sciences and that there are contented workers certainly does not prove that science as a whole possesses a goal,

a will, an ideal, or the passion of a great faith. The opposite is the case . . . science . . . is the unrest of the *lack* of ideals, the suffering from the *lack* of any great love, the discontent in the face of involuntary contentment."[10]

Let us return now to Nietzsche's statement "God is dead." I have already indicated that this statement can also be—at least in one of its aspects—related to the occurrence of the shift from one dominating social bond to another. Most of what Nietzsche writes about the difference between the "morality of the masters" and "slave morality" or the "herd instinct," between the "powerful" and the "weak," between "aristocratic" and "democratic" spirits, between "old" and "modern" masters, should, in fact, be read as tirades on the theme of the difference between—to use Lacan's conceptualization—the "discourse of the master" and the "discourse of the university" *as two different forms of mastery.* In other words, what is at stake is not the difference between "masters" and "slaves" as two figures partaking of the same social bond. The depiction of Nietzsche as being fascinated by all that is "powerful," by masters, aristocrats, and exceptional individuals (despising all that is "weak," "democratic," or involving the masses) is far too abstract to be of any conceptual interest. In using the word "slave," Nietzsche is referring not to the "oppressed," and the "subordinated," but to a *different kind of master.* He is referring to masters who are eager to *legitimate* their mastery with some positive feature or content, to "rationalize" it, to justify and ground it in some "empirical" factor (knowledge, wealth, honesty . . .). Nietzsche finds this turn toward the legitimization (and justification) of power "slavish"; he considers the very idea of a "legitimate power" obscene. Following Nietzsche's arguments concerning the genealogy of the word "good" (and "evil"), one could also say that the main difference between "masters" and the "herd" (as the new masters) is that masters are the ones who "give names"[11] (and can thus say "this is so-and-so"), whereas "the herd" fights for the *interpretation* of these names ("this *means* so-and-so"). Yet this interpretation is itself a form of mastery, and is often much more tyrannical than the act of "giving names."

According to Nietzsche, "slaves" and their "reign" do not in the least subvert or abolish the topography of mastery. They claim only that mastery should be deserved, that one has to be "qualified" to be a master (or that one has to "work hard" in order finally to become a master). Even God should earn the right to be called God: He seems to be more and more incompetent at performing His job, and men have "reasonable grounds" for doubting that He is equal to His task. This, for Nietzsche, is "slave morality" at its purest: we want a God/Master, but a competent one! We want a Master, but a Master who will be dependent upon us, a Master whom we can approve of, and eventually replace with another one. In other words, we want mastery without the Master. Just as, according to Nietzsche, Christianity perpetuates itself without God, mastery comes to perpetuate itself without masters. It perpetuates itself through knowledge that poses as objective, as absolutely foreign to the "irrational" and tautological dimension of mastery ("it is so, because I say it is so"). But this is still a form of mastery ("the new tyranny of knowledge"), and a very powerful one at that.

The Ascetic Ideal

It might seem that the notion of the ascetic ideal, as well as Nietzsche's analysis and criticism of it, somehow belongs to the past, and has no particular relevance to our largely hedonistic "postmodern condition." Yet this assumption could not be more erroneous. The hedonism of postmodern society, far from representing a step out of the framework of what Nietzsche calls the ascetic ideal, is deeply rooted in this framework. In order to see this, we must first understand that, for Nietzsche, the asceticism involved in the ascetic ideal does not simply involve a renouncement of enjoyment; it involves, above all, a specific mode or articulation of enjoyment. Moreover, one could even say that the ascetic ideal coincides with the very "invention" of enjoyment: enjoyment as different from pleasure, as something which lies—to use Freud's term—beyond the pleasure principle.

If, according to Nietzsche, all great religions are an answer to man's feelings of displeasure and pain, they never treat the cause of this displeasure. Instead, they soothe the sensation of displeasure—they soothe it by providing an even stronger sensation. They literally "*outscream*" the displeasure (and the "depression"—this is Nietzsche's term—linked to it) with an even sharper and more acute feeling, on account of which we no longer feel the previous displeasure. The religious (and especially Christian) cure for "depressive discomfort" comes not in the form of an analgesic or a tranquilizer, but, rather, in the form of an "irritating drug" or "excitation-raiser," a stimulant. The ascetic ideal, writes Nietzsche, is *employed to produce orgies of feeling.*[12] It is about immersing the human soul in terrors, ice, flames, and raptures to such an extent that it is liberated from all petty displeasure, gloom, and depression.[13] This is the very core of the ascetic ideal:

> Everywhere the bad conscience, that "abominable beast," as Luther called it; everywhere the past regurgitated, the fact distorted, the "jaundiced eye" for all action; . . . everywhere the scourge, the hair shirt, the starving body, contrition; everywhere the sinner breaking himself on the cruel wheel of a restless morbidly lascivious conscience; everywhere dumb torment, extreme fear, the agony of the

> tortured heart, convulsions of an unknown happiness . . . : awake, everlastingly awake, sleepless, glowing, charred, spent and yet not weary—thus was the man, "the sinner," initiated into *this* mystery. This ancient mighty sorcerer in his struggle with displeasure, the ascetic priest—he had obviously won, *his* kingdom had come: one no longer protested *against* pain, one *thirsted* for pain; "*more* pain! *more* pain!"[14]

In a word, one could say that the thing the ascetic ideal employs in response to displeasure is *jouissance*, (surplus-) enjoyment: "morbidly *lascivious* conscience," "convulsions of an unknown happiness," and the fundamental imperative: *More! Encore!* It also invents the "second body": a sublime body, sleepless and spent, as if *charred*, but never weary. Nietzsche repeats this insistently: the ascetic ideal is about excitement—it is, so to speak, a "passion diet"; it is not about moderation, it counters passions with a surplus of pure passion.

It might be interesting to note that this problematic is very closely connected to the one discussed by Eric Santner in his book *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig.* Santner starts from the notion that life—or, taken more narrowly, the psyche—is characterized by a constitutive "too-muchness" (the human mind is defined by the fact that it includes more reality than it can contain—it bears an excess, a "too-muchness" of pressure that is not merely physiological). This "too-muchness" of pressure cannot be done away with, but it can take two different forms or paths: it can be either the agent of our engagement "in the midst of life," or a defense against such engagement. The line between the two, between the passions infusing our engagement in the world and our defenses against such engagement, is often a thin one. The common path is precisely the one that constrains our capacities "by burdening them with an uncanny sort of surplus animation. We are dealing here with a paradoxical kind of mental energy that constrains by means of excess, that leaves us stuck and paralyzed precisely by way of a certain kind of intensification and amplification."[15] This effect, which Santner calls "undeadening," is generative of a disturbing surplus animation, and is not "unlike the

king's 'second body' posited by theorists of sovereignty."[16] What Nietzsche discusses under the name of the ascetic ideal is precisely this kind of passion, in which man is awake—supremely awake, animated and immersed in very strong sensations and feelings—but not alive. The word that Nietzsche uses to express this (a *charred* man) is very eloquent in itself.

In this respect, Nietzsche's diagnosis is quite contrary to Marx's diagnosis: religion is not so much the *opium* of the people, a tranquilizer that constitutes an escape from (harsh) reality, as an "excitation-raiser" which binds us to this reality by activating some mortifying passion. Discomfort is soothed (or silenced) by crises and states of emergency in which a subject feels *alive*. But this "alive" is nothing other than "undeadness," the petrifying grip of surplus excitation and agitation. Of course, Nietzsche also often talks about the "opium" dimension of religion: the fairytale about life after death, about the existence of another, better world, about the existence of a righteous judge who can make sense of the often senseless and unfortunate vicissitudes of our daily life. But he does not situate the core of religious mastery (the ascetic ideal) in this dimension. The power and strength of religion (in the form of the ascetic ideal) do not spring from the fact that it promises the suffering and the disappointed a better world in exchange for their faith, thus forcing them to accept and endure the miseries of this world (instead of rising against their causes). Pain and suffering are not simply burdens that a true Christian (who, in Nietzsche's argument, can very well be an "atheist Christian") stoically endures; they are, rather, something in relation to which a Christian *comes to life* as a subject. The core of the ascetic ideal lies in its articulation of the economy of enjoyment that—although it needs a reference to a beyond in order to be operative—operates in this "corporeal" world: it is *here* that it mobilizes and motivates souls, and provides them with enjoyment.

The ascetic ideal places the Real of pleasure in enjoyment (and posits enjoyment of pain or suffering as the most vivid human experience—an experience in which the degree of self-sensation and

self-presence attains its highest intensity, producing a kind of paralyzing wakefulness), and makes it a law. The specificity of this enjoyment-enjoining law—for this is precisely what this law is all about—is that it does not allow for any play of transgression: it does not capture us by means of arousing a transgressive desire to which we cling as to a promise of some secret enjoyment. It is not a law with which we could establish some kind of relationship, situating ourselves as subjects in relation to it. It is a law that leaves nothing outside it, for now, writes Nietzsche, a man is "like a hen imprisoned by a chalk line. He can no longer get out of this chalk circle."[17] He can, however, rotate in it to infinity: the limit and the infinite are not in contradiction here, since it is the limit itself that is infinite.

It is tempting to say that something was in the air in that second half of the nineteenth century, something that brought Nietzsche to his conceptualization of the ascetic ideal and Freud to his theory of the superego. Lacan's reading of the superego law in terms of the "imperative of enjoyment" is, of course, very significant in this context. Something has changed in the juncture of Law and enjoyment, in their nexus. Of course, Nietzsche recognizes this mode of enjoyment in the whole history of Christianity; he does not conceive of it as of something that has just recently occurred. Nonetheless, this is the fate (and the power) of most concepts: once they are forged, we can easily recognize their elements in past historical formations, or even in other, older concepts. This, however, does not contradict the fact that Nietzsche writes from the perspective of a certain shift or break that befell the history of Christianity (or, more broadly, of Western civilization as based on Christianity), and that it is only in this break that things that "were there all the time" became visible.

With the term "ascetic ideal," Nietzsche names the passage from one logic of the law to another, a passage from the law that forbids and regulates enjoyment to the law that commands (not pleasure, but) enjoyment, confronting us with an imperative of enjoyment. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that the two sides of the law—the prohibition of enjoyment and the surplus of enjoyment—were always linked together, mutually supporting each other. (Sur-

plus-) enjoyment is not simply something that is suppressed or repressed by the law. The prohibition of enjoyment equals the creation of a "beyond" where surplus-enjoyment (although forbidden) finds its place. This "beyond" is the very thing from which the law draws its power to *attach* us, since the law really functions not when it manages to hold us simply by fear of its authority, but when we adhere to it through a specific mode of (our) enjoyment. The "shift" mentioned above concerns the fact that this other side of the law (its "back side") becomes its front side. Or, perhaps more precisely: (surplus-) enjoyment is no longer a hidden support of the law; rather, it becomes one with the law, as if a kind of short circuit between the two had been established. This could also be expressed in terms of what, in his book *Homo sacer*, Giorgio Agamben develops at the political level: modern politics is characterized by the fact that the "state of emergency" (the state that is, at one and the same time, the exception to as well as the support of the rule of law) is itself becoming a rule of law.

Thus, the crucial feature of the ascetic ideal does not consist in the fact that the law (as the imperative of duty and self-denial) constitutes a weapon with which we are to fight our passions and drives; the law does not exactly "suppress" the drives and the passions. The problem and power of the ascetic ideal lie in the fact that it is only through it that passion actually "runs wild," and becomes limitless. In paragraph 229 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche designates the "fear of the 'wild, savage beast'" (i.e. the fear of what, in men, is supposed to be lawless and animal-like) as *superstition*. The belief according to which there is some primary "wildness" in man (a wildness that has to be transformed by means of culture and spirit) is an empty belief. If there is a "*pure* passion" to be found in the history of Christianity (as the essential bearer of the ascetic ideal), it is to be found on the side of the Law, on the side of the ascetic ideal itself. In the struggle against sensuality and corporeality, in the "dissection of conscience," there is an "abundant, overabundant enjoyment [*Genuß*]."[18] And "high culture" is based on the deepening and spiritualizing of cruelty: "that 'wild beast' has not

been killed off at all, it lives and thrives, it has only—made a divinity of itself."[19]

It is only with the (Christian) law that sensuality as such gets invented. This was Kierkegaard's thesis, but for Kierkegaard it basically means that, in contrast to the Greek individuality that strove for a balance between the spiritual and the sensual, Christianity, as the affirmation of the spiritual principle, also established its Other: it excluded the sensual, and thus merely granted it its autonomous existence.[20] Nietzsche's emphasis is slightly different: with the formation of the ascetic ideal, the sensual is not simply the Other of the law, but becomes the very thing that the law gives form to—it becomes one with the law. (The ascetic ideal "is employed to produce orgies of feeling," as Nietzsche puts it.) The fundamental gesture of the ascetic ideal in relation to the sensual is not exclusion but, rather, something like a complete appropriation, an inclusion without any remainder. The sensual itself takes on the form of the law. If, on the one hand, the purely sensual or boundless passion is a fiction generated by the law (i.e. a fiction of an otherness sustained by the law), it is, on the other hand, the very *Real* of the law. Pure sensuality (passion, pleasure, voluptuousness) is nothing but the law itself. The law becomes the only Real (in the sense of the only source of excitation, passion, pleasure, and pain): the pleasures that remain *outside* (it) are, strictly speaking, "null" and "void" in relation to the (overabundant) pleasure that the law provides, gives body to, and enjoins. In this context, the assertion about the "nullity of pleasures" (outside the frame of the ascetic ideal) is not simply empty ideological talk, flatly contradicted by the Real of human experience. The triumph of the ascetic ideal consists precisely in the fact that, at some point, it conquers the very soil of "real human experience." Before this, the pleasure might well have been dispersed, chaotic, without clear boundaries; yet this does not meant that it was infinite and boundless before the law set limits to it. On the contrary, the law (of the ascetic ideal) is the very name for limitless pleasure, for the enjoyment that became infinite and fathomless. In the ascetic ideal, the

law is not something that sets limits to passion, restraining and regulating it. Instead, it is the very outlet of passion. It is the passion of the infinite or an infinite passion—even though it takes the form of an infinite passion to set limits, to purify, to narrow the circle around the pure. The only (now existing) infinite passion is the passion that takes on the form of the law.

Precisely as the struggle against displeasure (in response to which it employs enjoyment), Christianity is also a struggle against pleasure, defined exactly as that which, in enjoyment, is *not real* ("fleeting pleasures," "passing voluptuousness") but "illusory." And the genuine triumph of the ascetic ideal comes when people themselves (atheists included) actually and personally begin to *feel* that such pleasure is indeed "empty," "null," and "illusory"—that is to say, when it is no longer necessary for all kinds of church authorities to preach about it. This is why the ascetic ideal attains its climax (or becomes what it is) only after the "death of God."

I have already indicated the proximity of these arguments to some of Freud's claims from *Civilization and Its Discontents*. What Nietzsche analyzes under the name of "ascetic ideal" corresponds, almost point by point, to what Freud calls the superego, the law of an insatiable passion. The more we obey it, the more we sacrifice to it—the more it wants, and the more it gains in strength and severity. We are dealing with the same image of vampirism that is also present in Nietzsche: the (superego) law literally feeds on the drives, devouring their "blood," and ultimately becoming the only real locus of enjoyment. It could be said that the superego itself comes to be "structured like a drive." It is common knowledge that Freud posits a kind of temporal paradox at the very core of the superego and the moral conscience linked to it: the renouncement of the drives creates conscience, and conscience demands the renouncement of the drives.[21] In this way, the very form of renouncing becomes a form of enjoyment, a mode of its organization. This is especially blatant in obsessional neurosis, in which Freud recognizes the paradigm of "religious" thinking.

All this could be related to another important theme from the *Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche insists upon a generic difference between punishment and guilt. It is not that punishment gives rise to the feeling of guilt. Punishment can scare us, it can make us more cautious and cunning, and it can also make us masters of deception and hypocrisy—but it is not something that can, in itself, produce a bad or guilty conscience. There is something liberating (in relation to guilt) in the very idea of punishment as payment.

According to Nietzsche, punishment originally presupposes measurability of injury and of enjoyment. In principle, I can repay (even if it is with nothing less than my life) the enjoyment I have stolen from the other (the damage or injury I have inflicted upon him). Punishment functions against the background of a possible equivalence between different deeds, even if this equivalence is quite arbitrarily set.

On the other hand, guilt (the invention of guilt) is of a quite different origin: it arises not from the logic of (possible) equivalence and measurability, but from the logic of immeasurability. The presupposition of guilt is that enjoyment as such is not measurable (which could also mean that it is infinite or unattainable), that it has no equivalent. Accordingly, the debt opened up by "evil" deeds is not measurable either. The more we pay, the more remains to be paid. In this sense, the notions of guilt and surplus-enjoyment emerge together. Yet—and again—not in the sense that guilt refers to enjoyment, that enjoyment causes guilt, but, rather, in the sense that guilt is itself an articulation of enjoyment (just as the law can be the articulation of pure sensuality); it is a means by which the infinite can inscribe itself in the finite, or the beyond can inscribe itself in the body. Guilt is thus not a consequence of punishment. Rather than stemming from hard-hearted indifference, or even cruelty, it stems from love and sacrifice. This is, according to Nietzsche, "the stroke of genius on the part of Christianity": "God himself sacrifices himself for the guilt of mankind, God himself makes payment to himself, God as the only being who can redeem man from what has become unredeemable for man himself—the creditor sacrifices

himself for his debtor, out of *love* (can one credit that?), out of love for his debtor!—"[22]

God pays the debts of His debtors with His own pound of flesh. This solution is simultaneously both a stroke of genius and a sure path to catastrophe. It repays the debt (thus giving hope for a new start), but, simultaneously, it gives it an image that is precisely the image of the Infinite. And it is this payment of our debt that has the perverse effect of involving us in a new, eternal debt, bringing about the most terrible sickness of mankind:

> There resides a madness of the will which is absolutely unexampled: the *will* of man to find himself guilty and reprehensible to a degree that can never be atoned for; his *will* to think himself punished without any possibility of the punishment becoming equal to the guilt; his *will* to infect and poison the fundamental ground of things with the problem of punishment and guilt . . . ; his *will* to erect an ideal—that of the "holy God"—and in the face of it to feel the palpable certainty of his own absolute unworthiness. . . . Here is *sickness*, beyond any doubt, the most terrible sickness that has ever raged in man; and whoever can still bear to hear . . . how in this night of torment and absurdity there has resounded the cry of *love*, the cry of the most nostalgic rapture, of redemption through *love*, will turn away, seized by invincible horror.[23]

It is true that there is also a rather different notion present in Christianity, a notion much closer to Nietzsche's own position—namely, the notion of *mercy* as situated "beyond law" (*Jenseits des Rechts*). Nietzsche links to this notion nothing less than the possibility of an escape from the vicious circle of punishment and guilt. But his notion of mercy is not simply that of an act of forgiveness; it can spring only from a surplus of "power" and "richness." Illustrating this with the example of actual wealth, Nietzsche writes that the creditor becomes more human to the extent that he has grown richer: so that, finally, how much injury he can endure without suffering from it becomes the actual measure of his wealth.[24] Such a creditor can now allow himself the noblest luxury possible: letting those who harm him go unpunished. In this way, the justice which began with

"everything is dischargeable, everything must be discharged" ends by winking, and letting those who are incapable of discharging their debt go free. This "self-overcoming of justice" is called mercy, and remains the privilege of the most "powerful."[25] We should be careful here not to believe that the terms "rich" and "powerful" refer simply to those who have a lot of money, and hold this or that position of power. As Nietzsche points out, it is the capacity not to be injured, and not to suffer because of an injustice, that constitutes the *measure* of one's richness and power—not the capacity to *endure* suffering and injury, to bear pain, but the capacity not to let this suffering as suffering enter the constitution of one's subjectivity (which also means the capacity not to let oneself be subjectivized in the figure of the "subject of injury," the figure of the victim). Those who can manage this are "rich" and "powerful" *because* they can manage it, not the other way around.

There is also an important difference between forgiving and (what Nietzsche calls) forgetting. Forgiveness has a perverse way of involving us even further in debt. To forgive somehow always implies to pay for the other, and thus to use the very occurrence of injury and its forgiveness as a new "engagement ring." Nietzsche makes this very point in relation to Christianity: the way God has *forgiven* our sins has been to pay for them, to pay for them with His own "flesh." This is the fundamental perversity of Christianity: while forgiving, it simultaneously brandishes at us the cross, the instrument of torture, the *memory* of the one who suffered and died so that we could be forgiven, the memory of the one who paid for us. Christianity forgives, but does not forget.

One could say that, with the eyes of the sinner fixed on the cross, forgiving creates a new debt in the very process of this act. It forgives what was done, but it does not forgive the act of forgiving itself. On the contrary, the latter establishes a new bond and a new debt. It is now infinite mercy (as the capacity of forgiving) that sustains the infinite debt, the debt as infinite. The debt is no longer brought about by our actions; it is brought about by the act of forgiving us

these actions. We are indebted for forgiveness. The infinite capacity to forgive might well become the infernal flame in which we "temper" our debt and guilt. This is why Nietzsche counters the concept of forgiving with the concept of *forgetting* ("a good example of this in modern times is Mirabeau, who had no memory for insults and vile actions done to him and was unable to forgive simply because he—forgot").[26]

This is perhaps the moment to examine in more detail what Nietzschean "forgetting" is actually about. What is the capacity of forgetting as the basis of "great health"? Nietzsche claims that memory entertains some essential relationship with pain. This is what he describes as the principle used in human "mnemotechnics": "If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory."[27] Thus, if memory is essentially related to pain (here it seems that Nietzsche claims the opposite of what psychoanalysis is claiming: that traumatic events are the privileged objects of repression; yet pain is not the same thing as trauma, just as "forgetting" is not the same thing as repressing), then forgetting refers above all to the capacity not to nurture pain. This also means the capacity not to make pain the determining ground of our actions and choices. What exactly is pain (not so much physical pain, but, rather, the "mental pain" that can haunt our lives)? It is a way in which the subject internalizes and *appropriates* some traumatic experience as her own bitter treasure. In other words, in relation to the traumatic event, pain is not exactly a part of this event, but already its memory (the "memory of the body"). And Nietzschean oblivion is not so much an effacement of the traumatic encounter as a preservation of its external character, of its foreignness, of its otherness.

In *Unfashionable Observations,* Second Piece ("On the Utility and Liability of History for Life"), Nietzsche links the question of forgetting (which he employs as a synonym for the ahistorical) to the question of the act. Forgetting, oblivion, is the very condition of possibility for an act in the strong sense of the word. Memory (the

"historical") is *eternal sleeplessness* and alert insomnia, a state in which no great thing can happen, and which could even be said to serve this very purpose. Considering the common conception according to which memory is something monumental that "fixes" certain events, and closes us within their horizon, Nietzsche proposes a significantly different notion. It is precisely as an eternal *openness*, an unceasing *stream*, that memory can immobilize us, mortify us, make us incapable of action. Nietzsche invites us to imagine the extreme example of a human being who does not possess the power to forget. Such a human being would be condemned to see becoming everywhere: he would no longer believe in his own being, would see everything flow apart in turbulent particles, and would lose himself in this stream of becoming. He would be like the true student of Heraclitus. A human being who wanted to experience things in a thoroughly historical manner would be like someone forced to go without sleep.[28] Memory holds us in eternal motion—it keeps opening numerous horizons, and this is precisely how it immobilizes us, forcing us into frenetic activity. Hence, Nietzsche advances a thesis that is as out of tune with our time as it was with his own: "every living thing can become healthy, strong and fruitful only within a defined horizon; if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself and too selfish, in turn, to enclose its own perspective within an alien horizon, then it will feebly waste away or hasten to its timely end."[29] Of course, Nietzsche's aim here is not to preach narrow-mindedness and pettiness, nor is it simply to affirm the ahistorical against history and memory. On the contrary, he clearly states that it is only by thinking, reflecting, comparing, analyzing, and synthesizing (i.e. only by means of the power to utilize the past for life, and to reshape past events into history) that the human being becomes properly human. Yet, in the excess of history, the human being ceases to be human once again, no longer able to create or invent. This is why Nietzsche insists that "every great historical event" is born in the "ahistorical atmosphere," that is to say, in conditions of oblivion and closure:

> Imagine a man seized and carried away by a vehement passion for a woman or for a great idea; how his world changes! Looking backward he feels he is blind, listening around he hears what is unfamiliar as a dull, insignificant sound; and those things that he perceives at all he never before perceived in this way; so palpable and near, colorful, resonant, illuminated, as though he were apprehending it with all his senses at once. All his valuations are changed and devalued; . . . It is the most unjust condition in the world, narrow, ungrateful to the past, blind to dangers, deaf to warnings; a tiny whirlpool of life in a dead sea of night and oblivion; and yet this condition—ahistorical, antihistorical through and through—is not only womb of the unjust deed, but of every just deed as well; and no artist will create a picture, no general win a victory, and no people gain its freedom without their having previously desired and striven to accomplish these deeds in just such an ahistorical condition. . . . Thus, everyone who acts loves his action infinitely more than it deserves to be loved, and the best deeds occur in such an exuberance of love that, no matter what, they must be unworthy of this love, even if their worth were otherwise incalculably great.[30]

If we read this passage carefully, we note that the point is not simply that the capacity to forget, or the "ahistorical condition," is the condition of "great deeds" or "events." On the contrary: it is the pure surplus of passion or love (for something) that brings about this closure of memory, this "ahistorical condition." In other words, it is not that we have first to close ourselves within a defined horizon in order then to be able to accomplish something. The closure takes place with the very ("passionate") opening toward something ("a woman or a great idea"). Nietzsche's point is that if this surplus passion engages us "in the midst of life," instead of mortifying us, it does so via its inducement of forgetting. Indeed, I could mention a quite common experience here: whenever something important happens to us and incites our passion, we tend to forget and dismiss the grudges and resentments we might have been nurturing before. Instead of "forgiving" those who might have injured us in the past, we forget and dismiss these injuries. If we do not, if we "work on

our memory" and strive to keep these grudges alive, they will most probably affect and mortify our (new) passion.

It could also be interesting to relate Nietzsche's reflections from the quoted passage to the story of *Hamlet*, in which the imperative to remember, uttered by Hamlet's father's Ghost, plays a very prominent role. *Remember me! Remember me!*, the Ghost repeats to Hamlet, thus engaging him in the singular rhythm that characterizes the hero of this play—that of the alternation between resigned apathy and frenetic activity or precipitate actions (his killing of Polonius, as well as that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; his engagement in the duel with Laertes . . .). This movement prevents Hamlet from carrying out the very deed his father's Ghost charges him with. Many things have been said and written about the relationship between action and knowledge in this play, and about how knowledge prevents Hamlet from acting. Although the two notions are not unrelated, it might be interesting to consider this also in terms of memory (not only in terms of knowledge). It could be worthwhile to contemplate the role played by the *imperative* of memory. Could we not say that one of the fundamental reasons for the difficulty of Hamlet's position is precisely the structural incompatibility of memory and action—that is to say, the fact that action ultimately always "betrays" memory? And do we not encounter something similar in the wider phenomenon of melancholy (in the play, Hamlet is actually said to be "melancholic") as a never-ending grief that keeps alive, through pain, the memory of what was lost? Additionally, although we can recognize in this kind of melancholy a form of fidelity (for instance—to use Nietzsche's words—fidelity to "a woman or a great idea"), this kind of fidelity, bound to memory, should be distinguished from fidelity to the very event of the *encounter* with this woman or idea. Contrary to the first form, this second form of fidelity implies and presupposes the power to forget. Of course, this does not mean to forget in the banal sense of no longer remembering the person or the idea in question, but in the sense that forgetting liberates the potential of the encounter itself, and opens up—precisely through its "closure"—the possibility of a new one.

If we return to the question of the ascetic ideal, we can easily see its link to the imperative of memory: the "sleeplessness" it generates is very closely related to the state of being "everlastingly awake" that Nietzsche identifies as one of the essential features of the ascetic ideal. The same is true of frenetic activity as the very impossibility of actually acting and of the obsession with the fact that everything that happens to us, or everything we do, has to be registered somewhere.

Nihilism . . .

So far, we have been discussing the ascetic ideal as a uniform notion, and this is not altogether appropriate. Nietzsche conceptualizes two types of the ascetic ideal, and although they are both rooted in the same fundamental configuration, they grow in two quite different directions. On the general level, the difference between them is precisely the difference between "active" and "passive" (or "reactive") nihilism. The first is still an expression of the power of the spirit, where "life interprets life against life"; whereas the second is the expression of its impotence. Active nihilism could be described as a fight against semblance, as an attitude of exposing and unmasking the "illusions," "lies," and imaginary formations *in the name of the Real*. Active nihilism is a form of what Alain Badiou calls "the passion for the Real." Nietzsche describes this attitude as that of "honest atheism":

> Unconditional honest atheism (and *its* is the only air we breathe, we more spiritual men of this age!) is therefore *not* the antithesis of that ideal [i.e. the ascetic ideal], as it appears to be; it is rather only one of the latest phases of its evolution, one of its terminal forms and inner consequences—, it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of two thousand years of training in truthfulness that finally forbids itself the *lie involved in belief in God*.[31]

Christianity as *morality* (with its imperative of truthfulness) has won over Christianity as dogma or *faith*. The passion involved in unmasking the false and the apparent could no longer stand the lie or the "fairytale" at the very core of its own structure. What Nietzsche is describing here is basically the movement of the Enlightenment, which was not nihilistic in the sense of passive resignation, but was, on the contrary, driven by great enthusiasm. To some extent, and in some contexts, Nietzsche himself identifies with this movement. It involves the power always to go forward, to remove one veil after another—it is the enthusiasm of knowledge that (still) believes in its salutary power. It does not stop before the truth, as cruel as the latter might be. This, however, is not the end of the ascetic ideal, but, rather, its very triumph:

> these hard, severe, abstinent, heroic spirits who constitute the honor of our age; all these pale atheists, anti-Christians, immoralists, nihilists; these skeptics, ephectics, hectics of the spirit (they are all hectics in some sense or another); these last idealists of knowledge in whom alone the intellectual conscience dwells and is incarnated today—they certainly believe they are as completely liberated from the ascetic ideal as possible, these "free, *very* free spirits"; and yet, to disclose to them what they themselves cannot see—for they are too close to themselves: this ideal is precisely *their* ideal, too; they themselves embody it today and perhaps they alone. . . . [32]

One of Nietzsche's definitions of nihilism is that it takes place (or, rather, its definite form takes place) as a result of the emptying of a magnificent (although in itself disastrous) spiritual edifice, of which there is nothing left but an empty skeleton. Yet perhaps we should reverse this metaphor: there is nothing left of this magnificent "spiritual building" but its spirit (morals, ideals, the mechanism of sense, the imperative of truth, the need to look behind appearances . . .), whereas the edifice (religion as a universal institution) has collapsed, crumbled, particularized. Or—to put it in Marxist terms—although religion as base is dead, it continues to live on as superstructure.

However, among those enumerated above (atheists, anti-Christians, immoralists, nihilists; skeptics, ephectics, hectics of the spirit) there is an important difference, which is precisely the difference between active and passive nihilism. The core of this difference is best expressed in what Nietzsche articulates as the difference between "willing nothingness" and "not willing." Here is the relevant (famous) passage from *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "*That* the ascetic ideal has meant so many things to man, however, is an expression of the basic fact of the human will, its *horror vacui*: it *needs a goal*—and it will rather will *nothingness* than *not* will." [33]

If what Nietzsche describes here explains the human propensity for active nihilism, then passive or reactive nihilism could be defined precisely as the name of the configuration where *men will not to will rather than will nothingness*. Considering the evolution of the ascetic

ideal, it represents the occurrence of a strange reversal in the dialectics of the will, the will somehow accepting its being deprived of a goal (object). The fundamental presupposition of this attitude runs as follows: the best we can do is to avoid the worst (some bigger evil), and not to want anything too passionately. This is the morality of the dictatorship of the reality (principle): no great idea is really worthwhile; there is nothing fundamental that one can do or change. It is not exactly that the will as such disappears. Rather, it is entirely and exhaustively employed in the practice of self-restraint and self-regulation. It is a will not to will, a will to nonwilling. Nietzsche does not propose an explicit theory of the relationship between the two kinds of nihilism (which are also two articulations of the ascetic ideal). He sometimes suggests that the first one ultimately leads to the second (active nihilism becomes passive when it exhausts itself). But he usually treats them as a couple. In this second perspective, passive nihilism is more a response or a reaction to active nihilism, and not so much a result of the inner logic of the latter. Consider the following passage, which is interesting in several respects, where passive nihilism (discussed here in the form of skepticism) is presented as a "sedative," as a defense against the radical and exciting character of active nihilism, a defense that concludes in our not willing:

> Against that kind of "good will" (a will to deny life truly, actively) there is admittedly no better sedative or tranquilizer today than scepticism, the dear, gentle, lulling opium of scepticism. . . . "Aren't our ears filled with enough bad noises already?" asks the sceptic, as a friend of peace and almost as a kind of security police, "this subterranean 'No' is terrible! Would you please be quiet, you pessimistic moles!" The sceptic, you see, that delicate creature, is all too easily startled; his conscience has been trained to twitch and feel something like a pang at every "No" and even at a decisive, harsh "Yes." Yes! And No!—that goes against his morality. Conversely, he loves to indulge his virtue with noble abstinence, as if to say with Montaigne, "What do I know?" Or with Socrates, "I know that I know nothing." Or, "I wouldn't venture in here, no door is open to me." Or, "Even if the door were open, why should I go right in!" Or, "What use are

> premature hypotheses? It might be in better taste to make no hypotheses at all." . . . Even uncertainty has its charms. . . . Our Europe of today . . . is thoroughly sceptical . . . and often sick unto death of its will! Paralysis of the will. . . .[34]

What Nietzsche describes here under the name of skepticism is the atmosphere in which the will (or the act of willing) is itself a proof of the fact that we are not "intellectually hygienic" enough, letting ourselves be driven by some Cause or passion which would evaporate like a mirage if only we took the time to look at it more closely. It looks as if active nihilism (and the ascetic ideal on which it is based) sooner or later confronts us with the following choice: either we persist, up to the end, with the "rather nothing than . . ." (whereby we link the imperative of the Real to some [self-] destructive *passage à l'acte*), or we take one last step in the direction of purifying our asceticism by renouncing Nothingness itself (as the only and the last Real that is left), thereby renouncing the constitutive element of the will as such. Actually, it is rather obvious that the thing that is ultimately lacking in passive nihilism is the *nothing* itself. The problem of passive nihilism does not by any means consist in the fact that "there is nothing everywhere," that there is nothing all around us: the problem is, rather, that, all around us, there are "somethings," yet none of these particular "somethings" has the power to engage our will or desire in any serious way.

This is thus the deadlock, the "either/or," of European nihilism as Nietzsche sees it: either living out the consequences of the ascetic ideal (which implies actively "willing Nothingness"), or defending oneself against this in a purely reactive way. Indeed, if one were to define more precisely the general term "nihilism" (which is often used in a loose, careless fashion), one could say that it refers to nothing but the configuration of this mortifying either/or. Nihilism "as such" is the configuration wherein the will (or desire) is captured in the alternative between directly "willing Nothing(ness) itself" and "not willing." In this sense, nihilism is not a general category that then falls into active and passive nihilism; it refers to the very tension

spanning the space between these two figures or "alternatives"—it does not exist outside this space. Active and reactive nihilism are mutually co-dependent and, *as such*, they constitute what is generally called nihilism. There is, on the one hand, the imperative or the need for excitement, the need to be in touch with the "Real," to "feel life" as vividly as possible, to feel awake—the imperative or need in which Nietzsche recognizes the core of the ascetic ideal. This imperative, precisely as an imperative, holds us in a kind of mortifying grip, a paralysis that can very well take the form of some intense activity while still remaining exactly that: a paralysis. On the other hand (and in response to this), there is passive nihilism as a defense against the mortification caused by surplus excitement, a defense that operates by mortifying this excitement itself. In other words, one kind of mortification (the one that takes the path of surplus excitement) is regulated or moderated by another kind. The "will to Nothingness" is combined with the "narcoticization" of the will—exciting stimulant combines with sedating tranquilizer.

An emblematic contemporary figure of this configuration is perhaps the hero of Bret Easton Ellis's novel *Glamourama*, who goes through his (rather frenetic) life by simultaneously consuming champagne and Xanax (a popular anti-anxiety drug that reduces anxiety and tension). He drinks champagne, one could say, to attain some level of excitement, while simultaneously taking Xanax to *de-activate* this excitement. From a broader perspective, one could say that most of what is described today as postmodern disillusionment, an attitude that no longer believes in any Cause (and is shocked by those who are still ready to die for some Cause), is precisely this kind of passive nihilism corresponding point by point to Nietzsche's description of skepticism from the passage quoted above. Far from representing a step out of the mortifying grip of nihilism and its ultimately destructive will, it not only helps to preserve it in a deactivated mode that could easily find a new way of exploding—it also needs this active nihilism as its Other. Active nihilism is not simply absent in the prevailing passive nihilism, but constitutes its inherent Other. Active nihilism provides a good reason and motivation for

"us" to persist in "our way." It reminds us, so to speak, that champagne should always be consumed with Xanax. Nobody is asking us to cut down on our ways of finding excitement, to cut down on champagne—God forbid! We are simply asked to take our champagne with some Xanax or, even better, to buy products that already fulfill the two conditions. What are these products? Coffee without caffeine, sweets without sugar, cigarettes without nicotine (i.e. "substances deprived of their substance"). Perhaps these products should not be conceived of so much in terms of substances that *lack* the very thing that defines them, but, rather, as being composed of two substances, one neutralizing the exciting effect of the other (like champagne and Xanax mixed together). For why else should we need to call this brownish water with no caffeine in it "coffee"? Why, if not because the very name "coffee" evocatively awakens the excitement that is then successfully deactivated by the lack of caffeine? Products of this kind are the perfect response to the double-bind that defines the core and frame of nihilism: on the one hand, the imperative "Enjoy!," and, on the other, the reminder that we are also constantly bombarded with: "Enjoyment can kill you!," "Enjoy!—but be aware that enjoyment can kill you." This is the double-bind that we are constantly dealing with on the most trivial and daily level of our lives.

An important thing to point out here is that the hedonism of our consumerist society does not reside in the imperative of enjoyment. This imperative is, rather, fundamentally ascetic (as I have tried to show with the help of Nietzsche's analysis—and the same could be shown with the help of psychoanalysis). As strange as it might seem at first sight, hedonism does not dwell in the insatiable imperative of enjoyment; it dwells in the realm of that which is supposed to deactivate this enjoyment. Hedonism is not in the realm of champagne (i.e. the stimulant), but in that of Xanax (i.e. the sedative). Hedonism is situated entirely within the very lack of caffeine that we consume with our coffee. To consume sugarless sweets and decaffeinated coffee is—far from being ascetic—a hedonistic act *par excellence*. It is not so very different from the proverbial Roman hedonism, where

people would make themselves throw up in order to be able to consume more food. It is also an equivalent of "how to will without (really) willing." But, of course—and this is the whole point—this modern hedonism needs the stimulation, the excitement, of the ascetic ideal, as well as the threat that looms on its horizon (rather Nothingness itself than . . .). It is a hedonism built upon the ascetic ideal, which is not a bad definition of passive nihilism. Another important point here—a point that also marks the shift from active to passive nihilism—is that morality is now in the realm of hedonism. Our contemporary hedonism is deeply moralistic. Our lives might very well be hedonistic, but this in no way implies that they are immoral, or even "beyond morality," that is, "beyond good and evil." On the contrary, morality thrives under the banner of hedonism, which is not all that surprising, since hedonism has taken the form of self-regulation. (To "work out" regularly, to go on a diet, to stop smoking—such things are not perceived as restrictions on our enjoyment, but, on the contrary, as its forms or conditions. Regular sexual activity is advocated in magazines because it is "good for one's health" [mentally relaxing and physically stimulating], which is probably the most perfidious form of moralism, of hedonist moralism: we have sex because it is good for our health, and for our personal and emotional development. This is an example of the way in which sexual excitement is enjoined in a deactivated mode: once we were encouraged to have sex only for the purpose of procreating children; today we should have it for health reasons.)

As we have already seen, Nietzsche maintains that Christianity *as dogma* was destroyed by its own morality (the training in truthfulness finally forbids itself the lie involved in the belief in God). Nietzsche continues: "in the same way Christianity *as morality* must now perish, too; we stand on the threshold of *this* event."[35] This was written in 1887. So—what happened? Where is this event (if we are still "up to our necks" in morality)? Nietzsche's answer, if we can rely on his prophecy, would be that we are somewhere in the midst of the process leading to it, since "the threshold of this event" is, as we learn a few lines further on, quite a large and extensive one. Nietzsche

writes: "this is the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries in Europe—the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful of all spectacles."[36]

I should point out, however, that the true value of Nietzsche's thought does not lie simply in prophecies and diagnostics like these. And his philosophy should not be understood—as it is by Heidegger—as an attempt at, or a project of, overcoming nihilism. As Alain Badiou correctly points out, for Nietzsche, "the act is not an overcoming. The act is an event. And this event is an absolute break, the proper name of which is Nietzsche."[37] Or, to put it in a slightly different manner, Nietzsche is not simply a severe analyst of contemporary "discontent in civilization," of its forms and causes, endowed with the additional gift of prophecy concerning the eventual overcoming of this condition. He is already a break; he is already something different. Various forms of what he defines as nihilism may still persist for centuries to come. And yet, with Nietzsche, something else—a different configuration of thought—*has already taken place*. That is to say, complaining about (or criticizing) the (post)modern condition, while waiting for or aspiring to an event that will finally change this condition, is in itself as "nihilistic" as the world this attitude denounces as nihilistic. In other words, the possible stepping out of the nihilist either/or is not an act that has to refer to some future point (when the world and its ways will change), but an act that can refer only to past and present points where this stepping out already has its real territory. The true importance of Nietzsche's thought is situated here: not in the fact that it can help us to perceive and criticize the "nihilist condition," but, rather, in the fact that it already carries within itself the Real of a different configuration.

Before looking at this Real more closely, we should assess the theme of nihilism from the (Lacanian) psychoanalytic perspective.

. . . as a "Crisis of Sublimation"?

It is well known that Nietzsche links nihilism to the "crisis of values." But what exactly does this phrase mean? It seems that this kind of diagnosis is not particularly compatible with Nietzsche's stated immoralism: the lamentation concerning the lack of values and their crisis is a very *old* moralistic refrain—from which one can deduce that there has always been a crisis of values, and that values are, almost by definition, in crisis. However, the problem, as Nietzsche sees it, is not the lack of values or their wrongness, but the absence of a power or mechanism for creating values. This mechanism is what Lacan links to the notion of sublimation, and it might be interesting in this context to explore the Lacanian notion of sublimation and its Nietzschean resonances.

In his seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis,* Lacan insists that the question of sublimation must be considered as a "problem of ethics." Sublimation is an ethical problem for one fundamental reason: "it creates socially recognized values."[38] The answer to the question of what, precisely, this claim means will bring us to a rather peculiar sense of the term "sublimation," a meaning that has little to do with our common use of this word.

According to Lacan, sublimation is to be thought of in terms of a problem of ethics because it creates socially recognized values. However, this does not mean that, for instance, artistic sublimation subjects itself to the claims of some preexisting, socially recognized values, thereby transforming certain socially unacceptable drives into something that is not only socially acceptable, but also highly prized and admired. The formulation "it creates socially recognized values" is to be taken absolutely literally: what is at stake is the *creation* of values, not simply the act of adhering to already existing values. It is not that society first establishes certain values to which our "plastic" drives then have to adapt themselves (artistic sublimation would distinguish itself by its ingenuity, originality, and innovation in this process of adapting). On the contrary, what is at stake is that all great sublimations (art, science, religion) create new values, transform certain things into values. This is what Lacan is driving at with his claim that sublimation is "a certain relationship of desire that attracts

our attention to the possibility of formulating . . . a different criterion of another, or even of the same, morality, in opposition to the reality principle."[39] This thesis, which posits the ability of sublimation to formulate new criteria for what is "moral" and what is not, is itself situated in a very significant context. Lacan formulates it while commenting on the famous Kantian example of morality from the *Critique of Practical Reason:*

> Suppose that someone says that his lust is irresistible when the desired object and opportunity are present. Ask him whether he would not control his passion if, in front of the house where he has this opportunity, a gallows were erected on which he would be hanged immediately after gratifying his lust. We do not have to guess very long what his answer would be. But ask him whether he thinks it would be possible for him to overcome his love of life, however great it might be, if his sovereign threatened him with the same sudden death unless he made a false deposition against an honorable man whom the ruler wished to destroy under a plausible pretext. Whether he would or not he perhaps will not venture to say; but that it would be possible for him he would certainly admit without hesitation. He judges, therefore, that he can do something because he knows that he ought, and he recognizes that he is free—a fact which, without the moral law, would have remained unknown to him.[40]

We have two stories, two kinds of situation. The first story presents us with a man who can satisfy his passion, his desire, only at the price of being executed immediately after his act. If he knows that he will be hanged as the result of his action, it is clear—according to Kant—that he will opt against this action. In the second case, we have someone who is asked to give false testimony against a fellow man, equally under threat of being executed if he refuses. According to Kant, this second case allows us at least to imagine that the man in question will choose his duty (and refuse the false testimony), even if he will thereby lose his life. This is supposed to prove that in situations where the stakes are so high as to involve the loss of one's own life, the anticipated pleasure (for instance, to spend a night with your beloved), however great it might be, cannot constitute a sufficient

motive (for this action)—the only thing that can provide such a motive is our duty or the moral law. Yet if we take a closer look at these stories, we cannot fail to notice—and Lacan certainly did not fail to notice—that they are far from symmetrical, and that Kant actually cheats in his argument. He cheats in the sense that, at the very outset, he formulates the two stories according to fundamentally different parameters. He presents the first situation in terms of the choice between pleasure and displeasure, and the second in terms of the choice between pleasure and duty. But nothing prevents us (especially not on the grounds of Kantian moral philosophy, a philosophy distinguished by the fact that the notion of duty or the notion of the moral law is not based upon any preestablished notion of Good) from formulating the first situation in these same terms of duty and of the moral law.

Where the first situation is concerned—spending the night with the desired Lady under threat of being executed afterward—one could claim the following: the possibility is by no means ruled out that, under certain circumstances, the subject might agree to pay this price, just as he might refuse to deliver false testimony. And the condition of this decision is precisely *sublimation*, defined by Lacan as that which "raises an object to the dignity of the Thing."[41] If "to spend the night with the desired Lady" has for the subject some other meaning than that of simply experiencing some carnal pleasure—if he recognizes in this act his Thing, the "transcendental condition of his desire"—then he will hesitate, in exactly the same way as the subject of the second situation hesitates, before falsely testifying against this Thing that gives consistency to his subjectivity. In other words, what Kant calls the moral law is not necessarily absent from the first situation described in his example. The important point to stress here—the point which gets lost in Kant's dismissal of the first situation—is that if the hypothetical man decides to spent the night with his Lady regardless of the consequences, this implies *neither* that he is ready to sacrifice everything for his pleasure *nor* that, for him, (empirical, pathological) pleasure constitutes such a powerful motive that even death is not too high a price to pay for obtaining it. On

the contrary, by accepting death under these circumstances, he pays tribute to what lies "*beyond* the pleasure principle." It is possible to imagine that, for the man in question—and once the dilemma is presented to him in such terms—it becomes a question of "honor" or a question of principle not to leave his Lady alone in this strange house with the gallows erected in front of it (which precisely does not mean that his motive is simply pleasure). If he opts for death, the reason for this is not necessarily his inability to renounce pleasure: in the given circumstances, the choice of pleasure (of spending the night with the Lady) is the only way for him to show that he is able to act contrary to the pleasure principle (or, more specifically, contrary to the reality principle). If we return to the Lacanian thesis concerning sublimation, we could say that this is the only way for this man to show his ability "of formulating . . . a different criterion of another, or even of the same, morality, in opposition to the reality principle." If this man were to act as Kant suggests (and thus to renounce spending the night with the Lady), he would embrace the pleasure principle as the ultimate principle of his action. On the other hand, his decision to spend the night with his Lady, regardless of the consequences, testifies to the opposite. This also means that "to spend the night with the desired Lady," even if we are to hang for it, is a perfect example of sublimation, rather than being an example of the opposite (for instance, we would be sublimating if we were to renounce this enjoyment and do something else instead—write poems, paint, pray . . .).

"To raise an object to the dignity of the Thing," as a fundamental gesture of sublimation, thus enables us to accept as possible something the possibility of which is excluded from the realm of the reality principle. The latter normally functions as the criterion of possible transgressions of the pleasure principle. That is to say: the reality principle sets limits to transgressions of the pleasure principle; it tolerates, or even imposes, certain transgressions, and excludes others. For instance, it demands that we accept some displeasure as the condition of our survival, and of our social well-being in general, whereas it excludes some other transgressions of

the pleasure principle that serve no such purpose (or no purpose at all). Its function of criterion hence consists in setting limits within the field governed by the binary system pleasure/pain. Sublimation is what enables us to challenge this criterion, and eventually to formulate a different one. The important thing to point out here is that the reality principle is not simply some kind of natural way associated with how things are, to which sublimation would oppose itself in the name of some Idea. The reality principle itself is ideologically mediated; one could even claim that it constitutes the highest form of ideology, the ideology that presents itself as empirical fact or (biological, economic . . .) necessity (and that we tend to perceive as nonideological). It is precisely here that we should be most alert to the functioning of ideology. Thus, the Lacanian theory of sublimation does not suggest that sublimation turns away from the Real in the name of some Idea; rather, it suggest that sublimation gets closer to the Real than the reality principle does. It aims at the Real precisely at the point where the Real cannot be reduced to reality. One could say that sublimation opposes itself to reality, or turns away from it, precisely in the name of the Real. To raise an object to the dignity of the Thing is not to idealize it, but, rather, to "realize" it, that is, to make it function as a stand-in for the Real.

Sublimation is thus related to ethics insofar as it is not entirely subordinated to the reality principle, but liberates or creates a space from which it is possible to attribute certain values to something other than the recognized and established "common good." In this sense, sublimation does not operate by transforming obscure and macabre passions or drives into something "brighter" which society recognizes as good (or beautiful); sublimation does not work against the passions and drives. Its main function is to create a stage on which *these very "obscure passions/drives"* become something valuable. What is at stake is not the act of replacing one "good" (or one value) with another within the same planetary system of the reality principle. The creative act of sublimation is not only a creation of some new good, but also (and principally) the creation and maintenance of a certain space for objects that have no place in the given, extant

reality, objects that are considered "impossible." Sublimation gives value to what the reality principle does not value.

In order to illustrate this, let us take the classical example of *Antigone* (as work of art). The play *Antigone* is what it is because it *gives value to a certain passion*. Sophocles' "artistic act" consists in the fact that he creates a scene through which we can see Antigone's passion *as such*—her "visible" and "senseless" desire; a scene where we can watch this desire for some time, observe how it develops and unfolds in different situations, conceive of it as possible, appreciate it for its vigor and fidelity. We are dealing precisely with an act of giving value to the "beyond" of the pleasure principle. Sophocles creates a space in which it is possible to challenge the given criteria of morality, and eventually to formulate new, different ones. By "sublimating" Antigone's passion, he creates a space of freedom. This example shows us very clearly that to "sublimate a passion" does not mean to turn away from it, and concentrate on something else, or something that is more acceptable. On the contrary, it implies that we make of this passion itself something acceptable (or at least conceivable). If Antigone raises her brother's funeral to the dignity of the Thing, Sophocles raises to the dignity of the Thing the very passion or desire that supports Antigone in her act. In the play *Antigone,* we have Antigone's act, but we also have Sophocles' act, which consists in giving an uncontestable value to the "irrational passion" of Antigone's act.

We are thus dealing with a rather unusual meaning of the term sublimation: it concerns the creation of a certain space, scene, or "stage" that enables us to value something that is situated beyond the reality principle, as well as beyond the principle of the common good. It is at this point that sublimation is related to ethics.

However, another remark is necessary here. The attribution of value to the beyond of the reality principle is never a direct, immediate one. In other words, what sublimation allows us to value or to appreciate is never the Thing (*das Ding*) itself, but always some more or less banal, everyday object, a quotidian object elevated to the dignity of the Thing (and an object that also somehow always masks the

Thing as the central void): the night spent with the Lady; a brother's burial. . . . In Lacanian terms, sublimation stages a parade, displaying a series of *objets petit a* that have it in their power not only to evoke the Thing, but also to mask or veil it. They obfuscate the difference between themselves and the void to which they give body, the void to which they owe what appears to be their most intrinsic feature of value. From there emerges the other significant theme that Lacan develops in relation to sublimation: the theme of delusion or lure. It is no coincidence that the chapter introducing the discussion of sublimation bears the title "Drives and Lures."

Here are two passages from *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* that highlight this problem:

> At the level of sublimation, the object is inseparable from imaginary and especially cultural elaborations. It is not just that the collectivity recognizes in them useful objects; it finds rather a space of relaxation where it may in a way delude itself on the subject of *das Ding*, colonize the field of *das Ding* with imaginary schemes.[42]

> In forms that are historically and socially specific, the *a* elements, the imaginary elements of the fantasm come to overlie the subject, to delude it, at the very point of *das Ding*. The question of sublimation will be brought to bear here.[43]

Through this analysis, we can see that the critics of ideology and its "aesthetic effects" are really the critics of sublimation per se. Such criticisms are part of the fight against what Lacan calls the "colonization of the field of *das Ding*," the fight that endeavors to separate "imaginary formations" from their Real, the fight against semblances as a "passion for the Real." I shall not engage in a discussion of the different forms that this passion for the Real can take. Rather, I shall examine a more recent phenomenon that constitutes a kind of backlash related to this "passion for the Real," namely, the refrain about the "end of ideologies." (It is important to note that, in this discourse about the "end of ideologies," ideology is identified as a spectral monster that can make us sacrifice our lives for a Cause. That is to say: ideology is defined precisely in terms of sublimation.)

The thesis about the end of ideology is the obverse side of another thesis, which seems to make a diametrically opposed claim: there is no Real. In fact, however, the two go hand in hand. In order to dismiss the notion of ideology, one has to discredit the notion of the Real, dismiss it as the last transcendence, the last grand narrative, the last great illusion. It seems as if we started with the movement which tried to denounce or unmask, in the name of the Real, all apparent worlds, illusions, ideological formations, and then ended with this "passion for the Real" ultimately turning against itself and denouncing its own presuppositions. What if the very idea of the Real as being different from symbolic fictions and imaginary formations is nothing other than the last big illusion or fiction? Here we come to the last grand narrative from the era of the end of grand narratives: there is no Real, everything is convention, language games, a labyrinth of different possibilities that, at least in principle, are all of equal value. What is the effect of this thesis? Its effect is not exactly the disappearance of the Real, but, rather, its full coincidence with reality. In other words, the reality principle is now conceived of as the only and ultimate Real. This is what Nietzsche calls "modern nihilism" and the "crisis of values," the latter being precisely the "crisis of sublimation" in the sense described above. At issue is not a complaint about the corruption of values, and lack of respect for them, but a diagnosis concerning the weakening of the sublimatory force, the force that could produce or create some distance toward the reality principle and its claims. It entails the closure of the very space of creativity. This is why it is very important to keep insisting upon the notion of the Real that, in turn, has to be defined in terms other than those of some "authentic Real" lurking behind the deceptive appearances. And the (late) Lacanian notion of the Real can help us to do precisely that. The Real is not some authentic Beyond, constituting the truth of the reality. The Real is not the Beyond of reality, but its own blind spot or dysfunction—that is to say, the Real is the stumbling block on account of which *reality does not fully coincide with itself.* The Real is the intrinsic division of reality itself. In this sense,

sublimation is what sustains this division or gap, and is operative precisely within this gap that separates reality from itself. This is why the disappearance of the Real implies above all that reality now appears as fully coinciding with itself, namely, as something utterly unproblematic.

We can see how many "critical intellectuals" are condemning "totalitarian" doctrines and "big ideologies," happily announcing the End of such "dictatorships" without bothering to question the inexorable dictatorship of the reality principle itself as something that "self-evidently" functions as the ultimate limit of the possible. It seems as if we were dealing with some perverse delight concerning the fact that we have finally reached the point where nothing (other) is possible, and can thus peacefully enjoy our lives. This, not surprisingly, is one of the Nietzschean definitions of passive or reactive nihilism.

We all know, however, that this "peaceful state" is far from being actually peaceful, but instead generates "postmodern discontent in civilization" itself. Why is this so?

If the "crisis of sublimation" implies that the Real is getting confused with reality, subjecting us to the dictatorship of the latter (which does not allow much space for our desire to develop), this does not mean that we have simply lost contact with the Thing or the Real. It means, rather, that via the coincidence of the Real with reality, we are utterly subjected to it, obliged to serve it and to respond to its inexorable demands. We can discern in this the result of a mistaken calculation concerning the problems involved in the passion for the Real: let us leave this passion to the Thing, and we will thereby find some peace in this abandonment. In other words, let us give up on our desire, and we will no longer be prey to all the difficult (and "ideological") choices with which our desire confronts us—Wrong! The result is, instead, that we no longer have a moment's peace, for the Thing has moved to the register of the Superego, becoming the source of the imperative of enjoyment that follows us everywhere. One possible formulation of this situation is the

following: since there is nothing beyond the reality (principle), we have to enjoy each and every moment of it. And there is no need to point out that this imperative of enjoyment is the surest way to make any enjoyment impossible.

The whole difficulty lies in the question of if and how it is possible to say "No" to this suffocating Superego imperative of enjoyment. Here we could recall the joke about John, who decides to pay a visit to a psychiatrist because he wets his bed every night. He explains to the doctor that every night, a dwarf appears in his dream, saying to him: "And now, dear John, we are going to pee." And John duly pees in his bed. The psychiatrist advises him to respond to the dwarf's invitation with a determined "NO!" John goes home, but returns the next day. "I followed your advice," he says to the doctor. "When the dwarf appeared, and encouraged me to pee, I firmly said NO! But then the dwarf replied: Very well then, in that case, we are going to shit."

So the question is how to escape the imperative of enjoyment, if—as Freud has so brilliantly shown—every new renunciation, every "no" of this kind, has the effect of involving us even more deeply in this logic of the Superego. Maybe we should try through a Nietzschean gesture: with a "yes"—a "yes" not to the imperative of enjoyment, but to the little bit of enjoyment that keeps persisting on the subject's part, although he believes that (as a result of his renunciation of enjoyment) all enjoyment is now the property of the Thing. This would mean, for instance, that we would reply to the dwarf appearing in our dreams along the lines of: "Hello there! The very sight of you makes me want to pee." This could have the effect of waking the subject, waking him from his dream (but also awakening him to the Real of his own desire and enjoyment). Instead of spending all his energy in trying to escape this Thing that persecutes him so passionately, he just might manage to feel some passion for the Thing.

But let us return to the question of sublimation. Contrary to the idea according to which sublimation is a kind of reaction to the im-

possibility of doing something (thus constituting a surrogate for the satisfaction of the drive), Lacan insists that sublimation *is* the satisfaction of the drive. The link between sublimation and drive actually enables us to formulate more precisely the nature of the duality that we discerned at the very core of sublimation. This duality is not simply the one constituted by the gap that separates the "*a* elements" (the imaginary elements of fantasy) from the Thing as the impossible Real (although it is incontestably true that one "type" of sublimation, precisely the one that is involved in the production of sublime objects, relies upon this kind of duality). Here, the sublime object is the mask of some unrepresentable Void. The phenomenon of sublimation, however, is by no means exhausted by this logic. The exact opposite is the case (and Lacan is careful to point this out on several occasions). The product of sublimation does not need to be sublime. It can even be anything but sublime (in the aesthetic meaning of the word), but we are still dealing with sublimation, that is, with something that opens up and operates within the gap that separates reality from the Real. The duality involved in this second case is duality as intrinsic division or redoubling of the very "*a* element" (the Lacanian *objet petit a*), whereby the Real is nothing other than the name of this internal difference or noncoincidence. As I said above, the link between sublimation and drive enables us to define this other duality more precisely. The object of drive is, by definition, a double object: there is the object that is supposed to satisfy the drive (and at which the drive aims), but there is also this very satisfaction that should itself be conceived in terms of an object (satisfaction as object). Take the case of the oral drive: we have an object in the guise of food that we want to ingest (and that we do actually ingest), but, at the same time, we also have an object that embodies the satisfaction brought about by this very act of ingesting the food ("the pleasure of the mouth"). This "pleasure of the mouth" is itself an object, "satisfaction as object." (The phrase "satisfaction as object" was coined by Jacques-Alain Miller.) The point we should emphasize is that the Real is not situated at the level of either of these two objects, which are both part of reality. It should

not be identified with either of them, but conceived of as taking place in the very interval or gap that separates the two objects. It is correlative to their lack of coincidence. If the Real is not to be identified with the empirical object at which we aim, it cannot simply be identified with the satisfaction as object either. It must be considered as that which names the fact that the two do not coincide. This is a notion of the Real that depicts it not in terms of some massive and disturbing presence (nor in terms of the Real as the truth of reality), but in terms of the stumbling block of reality. Sublimation is active within the field of this interval (between the object of satisfaction and satisfaction as object); it is also what prevents this interval or gap from closing.

To conclude, I should therefore stress that the trap to avoid in this matter is a double one: it concerns not only the danger of eliminating the gap in question by trying to inscribe "satisfaction as object" in the "object of satisfaction" (which could be one definition of fetishism, commodity fetishism included). If the essence of the drive, as well as of sublimation, compels us to distinguish between objects through which we find satisfaction and this very satisfaction as object—and if, furthermore, this implies that a certain effort is necessary here to keep the two apart (the effort that prevents the Real from sliding into the Imaginary)—then it is also necessary to stress that this effort should not go so far as to separate the two levels completely, as if they had nothing whatever to do with each other. In other words, if I say to myself: "I know very well that the real object of my drive is not this man, or this steak, or this dress that I desire at this moment, but only the satisfaction that I will find in them" (if I completely de-realize the "*a* elements," positing them as utterly irrelevant means of obtaining the only goal that really matters), then I risk missing the Real precisely on account of being too efficient. In this way, we obtain the figure of Don Juan, or at least one aspect of this figure (this aspect is not emphasized in the comic—Molière's—version of the story, but is at the center of its dramatic version—Mozart's *Don Giovanni*): Don Juan can fuck as much as he likes, but, finally, it is he who is being fucked by the signifier, that is, by the fa-

mous list that he has to fill up with as many names as possible. He certainly believes that the Real is to be situated entirely on the side of the satisfaction. This gesture of transforming the duality—this duality exists through the interval or gap that, at the same time, links and separates the two sides—into "two ones" (the semblance and the Real) is at the very origin of the superego injunction to enjoy discussed above.

PART II

Noon

We now come to the more delicate part of this essay—delicate, because I will try to express, through a review of some central Nietzschean themes, the concept of something that, in Nietzsche, has no concept, only a recurrent (linguistic) image. This is the image of noon or midday as the figure of the two. In the Introduction, I insisted on the fact that, for Nietzsche, midday is not a moment of unification, when the sun embraces everything, but is, instead, presented as the moment when "One turns to Two,"[1] and as the moment of the "shortest shadow."[2] Nietzsche also associates midday closely with, on the one hand, that which is "beyond good and evil," as well as, on the other hand, his notion of truth as nuance. The terms in Nietzsche's writings that are most frequently and intimately connected to the image of midday are actually the following: eternity, gaze, one turning to two, the shortest shadow, nuance, middle, and almost. If we want to comprehend and measure the reach of the Nietzschean subversion in philosophy, we must avoid grimacing at such nonconceptual concepts; we must struggle to discern the Real of the thought conveyed by them. Perhaps it would be best to start with the term "middle" (*Mitte*), since a significant step in this direction has already been taken.

While discussing the Nietzschean dimension of Deleuze's philosophy, Badiou points out that Nietzsche's *jenseits* ("beyond"—good and evil, truth and appearance . . . here we could go on at length enumerating categorical pairs) is neither a synthesis nor a third term transcending the two. "Beyond" means in the *middle*.[3] And, we might add, this is precisely why midday is the privileged figure of this beyond. Of course, the middle is not something arbitrary; it does not mean "some of each," but is, rather, something very precise. Deleuze expresses this with notions of disjunctive synthesis and conjunctive analysis. Life specifies and individualizes, separates and distinguishes; but, at the same time, it also incorporates, virtualizes, and links together. Life is the name for the neutrality of being in its divergent logic. Life is creative neutrality, taking place *in the middle*, between disjunctive synthesis and conjunctive analysis. This, according to Badiou, is why Deleuze could be said to be Nietzschean:

according to Nietzsche, life produces differences in values, it is the power of evaluation, it is divergency in action. But, in its own neutrality, life cannot be evaluated. The value of life cannot be evaluated because, to put it simply, there is no life of life. There is only a movement, which itself can be thought of only as an "in-between" of two movements, the movement of actualization and the movement of virtualization. The power of Being is neutral, impersonal, anonymous, and indiscernible. The name "life" corresponds to all these nonproperties together. "Life" designates the integral equality of Being.

This is the source of Nietzsche's distinction between the "powerful" and the "weak." To be powerful is integrally to affirm the equality of Being. To be weak is to mutilate its neutrality. As Badiou goes on to observe, the power or the force (of the powerful) is by no means self-evident; it presupposes a constant concentration and effort, requiring us to leave aside all the categories under which we usually construct the shelter of our actuality, our individuality, and our ego. Nietzsche's "to become what one is" means: one is only what one becomes. In order to reach the point where the impersonal force of otherness activates this becoming, however, we have to treat ourselves as a disjunctive synthesis, as a conjunctive analysis—we have to separate and dissolve. This is what the "powerful" do. And this is also why, according to Nietzsche, great health is to be found through illness, for illness turns health into an affirmation and a metamorphosis (rather than a state or a satisfaction). All this, as Badiou is entirely justified in arguing—here Badiou's perspective runs contrary to a superficial-yet-pervasive idea about the philosophies of Nietzsche and Deleuze, the idea that their philosophies celebrate endless possibilities, folds of simulacrum and truth, actualities and virtualities among which we playfully stroll—demands a very high degree of discipline.[4] "Sobriety, sobriety!" is what they both demand of us. Why not? To be up to the task of confronting the neutrality of life is akin to walking a tightrope (the figure of the tightrope walker from *Zarathustra*'s prologue is quite significant here)—it entails walking on the edge that constitutes the "middle."

Thus we must stress that the Nietzschean "neutrality of life" is not some wide, blossoming meadow in which, so to speak, every cow is black, and we can joyfully jump around in any direction we please. It looks much more like the edge of a sheet of paper, separating and, at the same time, holding together the two surfaces. This neutrality is not some kind of grounding or basis, the background of differences and distinctions; it is located in the very midst of these distinctions as the *stuff* from which these distinctions are made—meaning that it exists only as an edge. This is also why the points of breaking, rapture, or crisis are often the points where, one could say, this "stuff" becomes visible, perceptible. And, of course, it is also why anyone who wants to be up to (the task of) this "middle" has to have the skill, concentration, strength, and light, nimble ease of a tightrope walker. As I said above, the fact that *Zarathustra* begins with the story of the tightrope walker who sets off to walk on a rope stretched between two towers, a rope suspended over the marketplace, is no coincidence. The attempt at this walk "along the middle" regrettably fails when the tightrope walker is distracted by a "jester" who makes him lose his balance. This accident also serves to describe or determine the first "middle" that Zarathustra represents, namely, "the mean between a fool and a corpse."[5]

Thus the "middle" or the "mean" has nothing to do with the golden mean or the happy medium, which, according to Nietzsche, is nothing but "mediocrity."[6]

A useful pathway for getting to the heart of what is at stake in the Nietzschean figure of midday or noon leads through his theory of truth (his criticism of this notion, as well as his attempt to forge a different concept of truth which, although it is based on the notion of perspectival viewing, does not simply coincide with it).

Troubles with Truth

A major leitmotiv characterizing Nietzsche's discourse on truth is his insistence on the fact that truth is, by definition, antagonistic or foreign to life. Truth is not and cannot be a function of survival, since it is more harmful than beneficial to life (although, with its inexorability and hardness, it can also strengthen life). This stance could be recognized as the origin of Nietzsche's own oscillation between, on the one hand, the depreciation of truth as an enemy of life and, on the other, a kind of ethical imperative to pursue the truth, advocating (or, at least, valuing) a certain heroism of truth. The following two passages will help us to gauge the amplitude of this oscillation:

> We do not object to a judgment just because it is false; this is probably what is strangest about our new language. The question is rather to what extent the judgment furthers life, preserves life . . . ; and we are in principle inclined to claim that judgments that are the most false (among which are the synthetic a priori judgments) are the most indispensable to us, that man could not live without accepting logical fictions, without measuring reality by the purely invented world of the unconditional, self-referential, without a continual falsification of the world by means of the number—that to give up false judgments would be to give up life, to deny life. Admitting untruth as a condition of life: that means to resist familiar values in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that dares this has already placed itself beyond good and evil.[7]

> How much truth does a spirit *endure*, how much truth does it *dare*? More and more that became for me the real measure of value. Error (faith in the ideal) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*.
>
> Every attainment, every step forward in knowledge, *follows* from courage, from hardness against oneself, from cleanliness in relation to oneself.
>
> I do not refute ideals, I merely put on gloves before them.
>
> *Nitimur in vetitum* [we strive for the forbidden]: in this sign my philosophy will triumph one day, for what one has forbidden so far as a matter of principle has always been—truth alone.[8]

These two passages could be said to condense and sharpen two lines of reflection on truth already at work within the core of the

Enlightenment. On the one hand, truth signifies a brave struggle against prejudices, "false truths," and accepted ideas, a struggle for the purity of knowledge. This purity is supposed to lie not only beyond the mirror of established knowledge (as symbolic), but also beyond the mirror of perception and immediate experience (themselves shown to be deformed by all kinds of accepted ideas). On the other hand, there is recognition of the fact that such deformations and symbolic fictions are the very conditions for life and survival. One cannot simply "live in truth"—something like "time without truth" is essential to life. Thus, for example, the great empiricist Locke writes: "He that will not eat till he has demonstration that it will nourish him; he that will not stir till he infallibly knows the business he goes about will succeed, will have little else to do but sit still and perish."[9] We go through life relying on all kinds of probabilities and beliefs; we rarely have the certainty of truth at hand, and this is precisely what endows us with a capacity for action. To say, as Nietzsche does, that "untruth is a condition of life" is indeed a strong, powerful thesis, yet one that aims at exactly the same point: it is not possible to live in truth; truth is not the adequate medium of life.

Why is this so? In this conception, truth is identified with the Real, and functions as its synonym. The Real, of course, is not to be confused with the empirical (nor with reality), since empirical reality is already a construction (in this respect, Nietzsche is and remains a Kantian). This identification of truth with the Real is an important key to understanding one of the two basic lines of argumentation that characterize Nietzsche's confrontation with the notion of truth. The two passages quoted above are both, despite their apparent incompatibility, expressions of only one of these two lines of argumentation. The apparent contradiction between them disappears in the light of a thesis that Nietzsche keeps repeating (in different forms): "so far, the *lie* has been called truth."[10] The first passage is simply an elaboration of this thesis: what Nietzsche calls "untruth," celebrating its contribution to life, is precisely what has so far been called truth (synthetic a priori judgments, unconditional, logical fic-

tions, mathematics as based on numbers, etc.). The second passage insists on the fact that what has thus far been called truth can no longer be so called, that truth is elsewhere, and that the first statement of this new truth is precisely that, hitherto, the lie has been called truth (or, in another formulation: "I was the first to *discover* the truth by being the first to experience lies as lies").[11] This is the truth that has "always been forbidden." But, even though there is no conceptual contradiction between the two passages (they are both based upon the thesis that "so far, lie has been called truth"), there is a clear contradiction or difference in their orientation: one prizes the (newly recognized) lie as a condition of life, and its flourishing; while the other prizes the courage to pursue the truth at the cost of its danger (to our well-being and life). Nietzsche defends both these stances with equal vigor. We should bear in mind, however, that this oscillation is still oscillation within one of the two Nietzschean lines of argumentation concerning the truth, the one that is based on the identification of truth with the Real as the ultimate Truth of reality.

Consequently, the statement "so far, the lie has been called truth" has a very precise meaning: so far, the truth has been identified with the Symbolic, not with the Real, appearing in the form of symbolic or logical fictions. "So far, the lie has been called truth" is a thesis that in no way concerns the content of what we do or do not hold to be true, but concerns the very nature of truth. Is this nature symbolic or not? Or, more precisely, are we justified in simply identifying the truth with the Symbolic (an identification that originates in very old philosophical and religious traditions)? Nietzsche's answer is negative, and it is important to stress this feature, which constitutes one of the crucial markers of modernity (and is far from being peculiar to Nietzsche alone): the previous generally accepted (and widely praised) symbolic nature of truth suddenly begins to look like an obvious "lie." The truth is (by definition) elsewhere. One could point out that this shift is intrinsically connected with the one involved in the theme of the "death of God": the death of (symbolic) God is correlative to the death of symbolic truths.

Logical truths may be eternal, yet it is not their truthfulness that makes them such—it is their symbolic nature. We have been calling true that which remains the same over time, and is not subject to change. What remains the same in time can only be a symbolic construction, since the latter is precisely what introduces the possibility of counting, of measuring (i.e. *fixing*), as well as the necessary frame of reference that allows one to speak about any kind of continuity over time. Therefore, we have been calling the "lie" (or fiction) truth. Once again, "lie" does not simply mean falsehood. A lie, in this sense, can very well be "true," but it is not *real*—it is symbolic, and this is what makes it a "lie." Faced with formulation of this kind, our postmodern reflexes might make us jump up and scream: But what is real? What real are we talking about? It seems, perhaps, especially misguided philosophically to implicate Nietzsche, of all philosophers, in this business of calling symbolic entities "lies." But there is no denying that, despite the many postmodern undertones in his philosophy, this *is* indeed Nietzsche's question and problem.

An important part of Nietzsche's philosophy is thus shaped by his conviction that it is wrong to identify truth with the Symbolic, that truth should be related to the Real. This is precisely why truth can be dangerous to life: the Symbolic is the shelter of life, whereas the Real is its exposure and vulnerability. This is also what places truth in the field of ethics, as is clear in the second of the passages quoted above (where truth is considered not as an epistemological category, but as a matter of courage—"error is not blindness, error is *cowardice* . . ."). Truth is part of a certain ethical attitude, something that "has always been forbidden." The transgressive motto *Nitimur in vetitum* ("we strive for the forbidden") is also quite significant in this respect. This attitude, implying the recognition of the "cruelty of knowledge," and a courageous perseverance in this cruelty, is something that Nietzsche simultaneously criticizes and practices—for this attitude, founded on the gesture of placing truth in the Real, lies at the very core of what Nietzsche calls the ascetic ideal, and especially of its latest form, "honest atheism."[12] The truth which loses (or renounces) its support and guaranty in the big Other becomes one with the Real,

and is thereafter engaged in the "passion for the Real." In other words, the truth (which, again, is not an epistemological but, rather, an existential category) is itself the cutting edge of things, and of life.

This is why truth is presented here as dangerous to life, as something that can threaten not only the homeostasis of the pleasure principle, but also sheer survival as such. And yet, at the same time, truth is a kind of negative measure of the value of life, or of its strength:

> Something might be true, even if it were also harmful and dangerous in the highest degree; indeed, it might be part of the essential nature of existence that to understand it completely would lead to our own destruction. The strength of a person's spirit would then be measured by how much "truth" he could tolerate, or more precisely, to what extent he *needs* to have it diluted, disguised, sweetened, muted, falsified.[13]

In this conception, truth is like an excessively strong light: if we look at it directly, it blinds or destroys us. We can approach it only by shading (or dimming) it to a certain degree. "The truth is not cut to the measure of a man" would be another way of putting this—a theme that is not unrelated to the theme of a "new man" (a theme that an important part of the twentieth century was preoccupied with). Truth is established in a disjunction with the functions of being and survival. However, the nature of this disjunction or mutual exclusion is dynamical (not structural). This point is absolutely crucial; it will help us to define the difference between Nietzschean truth as portrayed in the present discussion and another Nietzschean conception of truth. To say that the disjunction at stake is dynamical is to say that it is closely involved with the difference in *power*. The weight of the truth/Real is too powerful and violent for us to endure; it can bury us, and the strength of a spirit is measured in relation to how much truth it can still *tolerate* or *endure*. This conception of truth already implies a specific link between truth and nuance (truth needs to be diluted, disguised, sweetened, muted . . .). This specific link must, however, be rigorously distinguished from what one could call the

truly Nietzschean notion of nuance, the one at stake in the following famous passage (and based upon a rather different conception of truth):

> And if one wanted to do away with the "apparent world" entirely, as some valiantly enthusiastic and foolish philosophers want to do, well then, assuming that people like *you* could do that—then at the very least there would be nothing left of your "truth," either! Really, why should we be forced to assume that there is an essential difference between "true" and "false" in the first place? Isn't it enough to assume that there are degrees of apparency and, so to speak, lighter and darker shadows and hues of appearance—different *valeurs,* to use the language of painters? Why should the world *that is relevant to us* not be a fiction?[14]

In *Beyond Good and Evil,* a mere two pages separate the last two quoted passages, so very different in the point they are making: one wants to measure the strength of a spirit by how much truth it can still tolerate; the other invites us to embrace a fiction, if we really care to do so. This fact should demonstrate the fruitlessness of any attempt to resolve such contradictions or antinomies in Nietzsche's philosophy by distributing them between the young and the mature Nietzsche. It should also prevent us from simply disregarding the first of the two passages in emphatically embracing the second. Taking such an interpretive misstep risks failing to notice that the second passage is also driven by a certain "passion for the Real" (apparent in Nietzsche's own emphasis on what "is relevant to us"). The passion is still there, and so, as we shall see, are the truth and the Real, but in a configuration quite different from the one at work in the first passage. Pointing out the two different uses of the word *nuance* (or shadow or hue) is perhaps the best way to express this difference.

In the first passage, the nuance refers to the act of shading (diluting, disguising, sweetening, muting, falsifying) the Truth as the Real. The latter is conceived as inaccessible on account of the discrepancy between its power or violence and our strength or capacity

to tolerate this violence—we can approach it only by shading and deforming it to a certain extent. A nuance refers here to the degree of this shading; it refers to the "veil of truth," a veil that is not essential to the truth itself, but only to our confrontating and coping with truth.

The other line of conceptualization of truth (and of the Real) to be detected in Nietzsche's work implies a rather different configuration. Here, the disjunction of being and truth is not dynamical, but structural or topological. It stems not from the disproportion of two powers, but from the nonrelation of two terms. The pivotal point of this other line of argumentation is Nietzsche's theory of "perspectivity," which is obviously not compatible with the previously sketched conception of truth as the Real (i.e. with the conception in which our knowledge is limited not by our perspective, but, rather, by a deformation that results from our being forced to shade and dilute the truth on account of its incommensurable force or violence). Perspective is something different. The theme of perspectivity in Nietzsche emerges not from the question of whether truth should be conceived of as symbolic or as real, but from a quite separate question: is the truth about a given configuration a part of this configuration too, or is it something that can be posited or formulated only from outside this configuration? The famous Nietzschean thesis according to which "there is no truth, there are only perspectives" is an answer to this question. It implies that truth is part of the situation to which it refers. It implies that there is no truth about a given situation outside this situation. Or, to formulate this the other way around, it entails that the locus of truth is to be found within the configuration to which truth refers. In this respect, the Nietzschean notion of perspectivity is often understood too readily as meaning that all truths are subjective, and thus partial; it is understood as an incentive to adopt a skeptical position from which one can comfortably relativize everything. That is to say: it is misunderstood as a last, solid truth (even if this amounts to nothing more than the truth that there is no truth) in which one can take refuge. The stance of the

skeptical relativist is what Nietzsche identifies as passive nihilism. In Part I of this essay, I quoted the passage where Nietzsche talks about "the dear, gentle, lulling opium of skepticism," and denounces the skeptic as "a kind of security police," twitching and feeling something like a pang at every "No," and even at a decisive "Yes," since "Yes! And No!—that goes against his morality."[15] Nietzsche is even more explicit in this passage:

> With stronger, more vital thinkers, still thirsty for life, things are different: they take sides *against* appearance and are already pronouncing the word "perspectivist" with arrogance; they take credibility of their own body about as seriously as the credibility of the appearance that "the earth stands still" . . . and who knows whether at bottom they might not want to regain something that they once possessed even *more surely*.[16]

Nietzsche's perspectivism is a thesis concerning the immanence of truth, whereas "skeptical truth" exempts itself from the situation it describes. Skeptical truth pretends to exist "outside life," and to constitute a point of view on life. Perspectival truth, on the other hand, is never a point of view on life; it is, rather, truth engaged in life. The crucial question here is whether it is possible to have a perspective on (one's) perspectival truth without giving up on one's engagement in life (i.e. without this second perspective being situated on a meta-level). Can one say that "there are only perspectival truths" without this statement being a meta-statement, formulated as if from the outside of the world to which it refers? In other words, the question concerns how the very concept of perspectivity can enable us to break out of the closure of our perspective without forcing us to adopt a disengaged, relativistic, or dogmatic stance. To say that "there is no truth, there are only perspectives" is definitely not enough. It might constitute a first step, but a step that may end up leading in quite opposite directions. One direction (the one that leads to skepticism) is, as we saw above, explicitly repudiated by Nietzsche. If we bear this in mind, the question becomes: is there, in

a situation with multiple (possible) perspectives, a perspective that one could call the "perspective of truth"? We must be careful not to misunderstand this question. It is not about whether one perspective can be "more true" than the others, for this would still imply that we have some external measure of truth with which to compare particular perspectival truths. The question is much more radical: can one conceive of truth as a singular perspective within a given situation? Is there a perspective that belongs to no subject, and that no subject could claim to be his or her own, although there would be an intrinsic link between this singular perspective and the constitution of every subject belonging to this situation? The Nietzschean enterprise concerning a new notion of truth is heavily dependent on the answer to this question.

In order to attempt to provide such an answer, let us isolate the crucial parameters involved in the Nietzschean theory of perspectivity. An interesting starting point is provided by the following passage from the *The Gay Science*.

> "Explanation" is what we call it, but it is "description" that distinguishes us from older stages of knowledge and science. Our descriptions are better . . . we have merely perfected the image of becoming without reaching beyond the image or behind it. In every case the series of "causes" confronts us much more completely, and we infer: first, this and that has to precede in order that that this or that may then follow—but this does not involve any *comprehension*. In every chemical process, for example, quality appears as a "miracle," as ever; also, every locomotion; nobody has "explained" a push [*stoß*]. But how could we possibly explain anything? . . . How should explanations be at all possible when we first turn everything into an *image*, our image?[17]

At first sight, it might seem that we are dealing here with a version of Kant's statement that we cannot have any notion about things as they are in themselves, and that it is always the knowing subject who first constitutes objects as objects (of knowledge as essentially linked to experience). To a certain extent, this parallel undoubtedly exists. Yet, at root, Nietzsche's problem is a different one. The question is

not what (if anything) is the real substance of an object beyond our descriptive knowledge or explanation. The "miracle" that Nietzsche speaks about, and that our description never touches, is inherent to the phenomena themselves. It is inherent to the appearance, and we could designate it as the occurrence of a leap or discontinuity. The point is not that cause and effect are categories, and that, as such, they do not exist in nature, but only in our description of it; the point is that we do not even know what happens *between* cause and effect, between point *a* and point *b*, between numbers 1 and 2. The question is not what a phenomenon looks like in itself, but, rather, what it looks like "in the middle," or "from the middle."

But what, exactly, does Nietzsche's term "description" aim at? And what is at stake in the statement that true knowledge (or comprehension) is incompatible with first turning things into (our) images? At stake here is the problem of representation in its modern form. We are dealing with exactly the same issue that Gérard Wajcman recognizes as being at the core of modern art: "How to find access to the world in some other way than through the image? How to aim at the world, at the Real, without at the same time interposing the screen of the representation?"[18]

When we talk about Nietzsche, we should not forget that this question is as much his as is the more famous celebration of the surface, of masks and appearances (i.e. of representations). Moreover, this question might well be more fundamental to Nietzsche, so that the importance he assigns to the "montage of representations" (as different nuances of appearances) could be seen precisely as an answer to this question regarding how to represent what, by definition, escapes representation.

The problem of the world *as image* is, of course, correlative to what Nietzsche later calls "perspective seeing." The point of the latter is to emphasize not simply the partiality, fragmentation, and contextualization of our knowledge, but, above all, its remaining within the sphere of images. Nietzsche is fond of repeating how important it is for the knowing subject to be able to change perspectives or points of view, suggesting that the more skilled we are in such "gymnas-

tics," the more complete our knowledge, our image of an object, is likely to be.[19] But here we are still on the level of the image, which is a descriptive level, a level of "realism," and of representation conceived of in terms of the most accurate or complete representational reproduction. And although it is plausible to claim that this kind of knowledge is more objective than the one that satisfies itself with a single perspective, it can nevertheless only approach objective knowledge as an infinitely receding limit-point. Nietzsche's ideal of objectivity, however, is not the impossible totality of all perspectives—this is precisely why, for Nietzsche, objectivity is not an *ideal*. Objectivity *as ideal* (or as a regulative idea in the Kantian sense of the phrase), the ideal objectivity of knowledge, is, rather, the expression of the impossibility of its ever being objective in this sense. Something will always (and constitutively) escape its grasp, stealthily slipping away to the nether side of the looking-glass of representation. There is a basic dichotomy involved in the phenomenon of knowledge (and of truth).

This dichotomy (or, as I called it above, this structural disjunction) also involves a certain lethal dimension, which is to say that Nietzsche also perceives it in terms of the disjunction between life and death. Yet, unlike the dynamical disjunction—which was a disjunction of two symmetrical terms, unequal in their power—this other disjunction or dichotomy is, above all, characterized by its asymmetrical nature. Consider this extremely eloquent passage from *Human, All Too Human:*

> At Noontide—He to whom an active and stormy morning of life is allotted, at the noontide of life feels his soul overcome by a strange longing for a rest that may last for months and years. All grows silent around him, voices sound farther and farther in the distance, the sun shines straight down upon him. . . . He wants nothing, he troubles about nothing; his heart stands still, only his eye lives. It is a death with waking eyes. Then man sees much that he never saw before, and, so far as his eye can reach, all is woven into and as it were buried in a net of light. He feels happy, but it is a heavy, very heavy kind of happiness.—Then at last the wind stirs in the trees, noontide is over,

> life carries him away again, life with its blind eyes, and its tempestuous retinue behind it—desire, illusion, oblivion, enjoyment, destruction, decay. And so comes evening, more stormy and more active than was even the morning.—To the really active man these prolonged phases of cognition seem almost uncanny and morbid, but not unpleasant.[20]

Perhaps the first thing that comes to mind as we read this passage is the proximity of the Nietzschean noon (translated here as "noontide") to what Walter Benjamin calls the "messianic moment," defining this as "dialectics at a standstill." A standstill (a heart that "stands still," or, as this situation is described in *Zarathustra*, "the hand moved, the clock of my life drew a breath") is indeed one of the crucial features of the conceptual figure of noon. We will return to this point.

As for the asymmetrical disjunction between life and death involved in the question of "true knowledge," one could encapsulate the point of the passage as follows: a fraction of life is caught up in death, and this is what blinds life as to its truth—but also what enables life to thrive. In other words, the fraction of life that is caught up in death is not simply situated on the other side (of life); it also constitutes the blind spot of life itself. This blind spot is thus nothing other than the way the fraction of life caught up in death is inscribed—or projected back—into life itself. There are moments when we can have the experience of seeing things from the point of view of this blind spot. The conceptual figure of this experience is the figure of noon.

In his meditations and poems on noon, Nietzsche refers repeatedly to the same enigmatic and fascinating figure of a dead man whose eyes are awake: *ein Tod mit wachen Augen*. The most immediate effect that this image produces is, of course, that of hinting at the "uncanny" experience where the thing we are looking at suddenly returns our gaze, staring right back at us. The "dead thing" looks at us. Against this dead thing whose eyes are alive, Nietzsche juxtaposes *das Leben mit blinden Augen*, life with blind eyes. Things, "dead things," look at us (their eyes are awake); we see things, but not from where they look at us. The opposition between life and death (or, in other

words, between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge) is transformed into something that is not an opposition, but an asymmetry or a nonrelationship. The term "net of light" (*Lichtnetz*) that Nietzsche uses in the passage above is by no means simply an eloquent metaphor. Actually, the whole metaphor ("so far as his eye can reach, all is woven into and as it were buried in a net of light") is taken from a lively seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophical debate, a debate focused on (among other things) precisely the asymmetrical incompatibility between looking and seeing. The central figure of this debate was a hypothetical "blind man" to whom one would restore the sense of sight,[21] and its central question was: what is pure sight, separated from the ideas that come from other senses, especially the sense of touch (which was thought to be responsible for our notions of space, distance, and so on)? George Berkeley suggested that our visual experience is never purely visual, but, rather, composed of two different sets of ideas, one springing from the sense of sight and the other from the sense of touch (which contaminates the sense of sight). He thus spoke of a "visible eye" and a "tangible eye": what I see with the "visible eye" is only a play of light and opacity, of colors, *in myself*, inside my mind. It is the "tangible eye" that tells me about space, distance, figure, and motions.

Condillac, whom Nietzsche admired greatly, replaced the hypothetical figure of a "blind man made to see" with an entirely virtual model: that of a statue internally organized just as we are, but covered on the outside with marble, and animated by a spirit that induces no ideas in it. The marble that covers the surface of the statue does not allow it to use any of its senses. In the mental experiment involving this statue, Condillac removes portions of the marble from its body bit by bit, in order to clear (in different combinations) the way for different senses, and to "observe" what happens. In relation to the sense of sight, Condillac introduces an interesting distinction: "The statue doesn't need to learn how to see, but it has to learn how to look. . . . It seems that we don't know that there is a difference between seeing [*voir*] and looking [*regarder*]."[22] The statue does not need to learn how to see, because it sees all there is to *see*, that is, a colored

net of light (generally considered to be the only "pure sight"). However, the statue has to learn how to *look*—that is to say, how to "put things in perspective." The dichotomy between "net of light" and (perspectival) depth of field was central to this debate, and the passage from the former to the latter was conceived as the moment of the constitution of the ego. The statue, limited only to the sense of sight, was supposed to perceive what it saw as part of itself. In other words, the statue that sees only the net of light sees no-*thing*, because what it sees is a part of itself *qua* thing. The sense of touch must gradually teach it how to look—that is, make it conceive of the consciousness of what it sees as a consciousness of something other than itself, of something exterior (i.e. as something that "is seen" outside). The statue, being at first nothing but part of a net composed of rays and sparkling colors, now emerges as an eye, as the organ of sense. That is to say: the constitution of the ego (and of its limits) corresponds to the statue abandoning a portion of itself (and of its life) to the outer world, to the world of objects that are themselves constituted in this very same gesture. The statue ceases to be a thing, and becomes a subject, at the moment when a part of itself is irredeemably lost, and transformed into an object.

It seems as if Condillac is proposing a kind of mythological version of Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage," as well as the Lacanian theory of the field of vision, focused on the fundamental disjunction between seeing (as the eye) and the gaze. When the statue was just seeing, but had not yet learned how to look, everything it saw was part of itself. But in order to become a subject, to assume a place from which it could say "I" (i.e. the place of the subject of representation in Lacan's schema of vision), the statue had to cut off a part of itself. From the "thing that sees," it was transformed into a looking subject, and to accomplish this, it had to expel something that, through this act of expulsion, thus became an object. This is a fascinating narrative accounting for the constitution of what Lacan calls the "object-gaze," the gaze as (partial) object—the gaze that is always outside, and constitutes the blind spot of our vision. The most important aspect of this account is that the constitution of the di-

viding line between subject (of seeing, of representation, of knowledge) and the world of objects coincides with a part of the subject passing onto the side of objects, thus introducing a fundamental asymmetry in the subject-object relationship. In other words, the subject finds itself on the opposite side of objects or things (seeing them, exploring them, learning about them) only insofar as there is a "thing from the subject" that dwells among these objects or things, a fragmentary remainder of subjectivity dissolved into the "stuff of the world" through the occurrence of a primordial severance. We can already see the interest of these considerations for the Nietzschean theory of knowledge, truth, and perspectivity.

What, exactly, is the conception of truth at work in this configuration of asymmetry, a conception of truth following from the fact that the subject is "ex-centered" in her very constitution? It is not that the truth is too powerful or too horrible for our knowledge (so that it has to be diminished in intensity to a certain degree)—what is at stake is a structural disjunction between the "object of knowledge" and the way we are inscribed in it, this disjunction itself being precisely the place of truth. It is important to stress here that the way we are inscribed in the object whose truth we are trying to learn is something other than the question of the *point of view* from which we look (or speak or judge). These are two separate questions leading us to the problem of what is usually called "perspectivity." Perspectivity and its relativism ("this is how I see things, but I admit the possibility that somebody else sees them very differently") do not simply limit our knowledge, in the sense that we can never know the thing in its pure integrity or wholeness as such. What structurally escape every (single) perspective are not just certain aspects of the thing that remain in the dark (this problem is purely empirical), but the way in which we, as subjects, are inscribed in the thing we are observing.

This is the fundamental problem of perspectivity, and of the world as image; this is the problem of "descriptive knowledge." The fundamental problem of knowledge, and of its relationship to truth, is not the opposition between the part and the whole; it is the fact

that the point of the gaze and the point of view (our perspective) do not coincide. The thing that we cannot see because of our "perspectival seeing," the thing that always flits away back behind the other side of the mirror of representational knowledge, is nothing other than the gaze as the blind spot constituting the place of the subject *within* the observed picture of things. In other words, if we simply keep repeating that all our knowledge is subjectively mediated and necessarily partial, we have said nothing of importance. Moreover, this kind of discourse is the surest way to miss or avoid the question of how the subject is inscribed in or involved with the object, since it reduces the problem to that of the relationship between the "I" (or the ego) as the geometrical point of seeing (the "point of view") and the object as the screen of this very ego. The best indicator of this is precisely the fantasy of the wholeness of the object (even if this wholeness is considered empirically impossible, posited as an unattainable ideal). This fantasy of wholeness clearly indicates that the "subjective gaze" is regarded as something that distorts the image of the object *from the outside*, being in no way inherently related to this object. In other words, if we take the thesis that the subjective gaze is inscribed in the object seriously, then it follows from this that the object is necessarily not-whole. This does not mean that it always lacks the one thing that would make it complete; it means that it is constitutively not-whole.

This point can help us to explain the difference and the relationship between this structural or constitutive non-wholeness and what appears to be the empirical impossibility of the subject (or concept) ever embracing the object as a whole (but this impossibility nevertheless presupposes this wholeness). One could say that the latter is the optical effect of the former: what drives knowledge further and further, and could be called the object-cause of knowledge, is always something in the object of knowledge that keeps escaping our grasp. In this sense, it is possible to say that the (search for) knowledge is structured like desire (taken in the strict Lacanian sense). Every new discovery is thus accompanied by the feeling that perhaps "this is not yet it," that it is always possible to go one step further, or discover yet

another aspect of the object. What keeps eluding our knowledge, however, is simply our own gaze. The object and its different aspects are not merely revealed in the process of knowledge; they are constituted through and by it. The crucial point here is not to understand this in the all too common fashion: as the stance according to which all objects are constructed by something (be it the subject, or some sort of discourse) other than the object itself. The point is quite different: if all objects are constructed in the process of knowledge (or, for instance, in the process of speech about them), it is precisely because there is an irreducible object-element in them (in the pursuit of which we "construct" the object). To put it differently: if objective reality is constituted, not simply given, this is because something of the order of the object *is* given. What stands in the way of the ideal of purely objective knowledge is not some subjective element, but, rather, an element of the object itself. And I am not talking about some inert matter that the subject's gaze can never penetrate; I am talking about the gaze itself as the (irreducible) object-within-the-object.

This point of the gaze is not to be confused with the so-called "point of view" (or viewpoint), the point from which one observes an object or, in Nietzsche's terms, our perspectival stance. Gaze and viewpoint are not the same. This is why we will never get to this point of objectivity by reflecting (upon) our perspective on things, by trying to determine what determines us while we are looking at a certain thing. The perspective (the viewpoint) on an object can, of course, itself become an object of knowledge, and is thus subjected to the same destiny as all other objects of this kind: it gives rise to the question of the perspective on the perspective, and so on *ad infinitum*, landing us in an infinite regression. This reflecting on the reflection is the surest way to avoid the question of the gaze, a question that most certainly does not coincide with the point from which we look at things and reflect upon them. The fundamental disjunction at stake in any process of knowledge is the disjunction between the "perspectival point" from which we look at things (the standpoint or viewpoint) and the point of the gaze (this being the place of the

subject in the thing). The true question concerns not where we stand when we are reflecting on a certain object, but, rather, where we stand within this object itself. Additionally, the fundamental error at work in the idea that, by reflecting on our standpoint or viewpoint, we will at least come closer to objectivity (even if we never actually achieve it) is its placement of the gaze within the point of view. This blurs their fundamental disjunction, mistakenly suggesting that, by reflecting the point of view, the gaze could actually be "caught." We often hear that knowledge is somehow circular, and that what we finally find in the object of knowledge is always something that we have already put there ourselves. But maybe one could also claim the opposite: the circular or metonymic structure of knowledge is attributable to the fact that, within the considered object, we never manage to find what we have put or "deposited" there, namely, our gaze.

In an interesting passage from *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche once again relates his project concerning knowledge and truth to the emblematic figure of the gaze: "To ensure that henceforth man faces man in the same way that currently, grown tough within the discipline of science, he faces the *other* nature, with unfrightened Oedipus-eyes . . . —that may be a strange and crazy project, but it is a *project*—who could deny that!"[23]

What are the "unfrightened Oedipus-eyes," other than the eyes of a blind man, a man who has plucked his eyes out, reducing himself, so to speak, to the pure instance of the gaze as the obverse of seeing? And who did this to himself at the crucial moment when his search for knowledge brought him to his discovery? The figure of Oedipus is paradigmatic; it can help us to avoid the simplistic notion of truth according to which the truth is something so terrible (or its light so overwhelmingly powerful) that it necessarily blinds us if we look at it directly. This conception (which constitutes, as we have seen, one aspect of Nietzsche's own confrontation with the notion of truth) is, in fact, prisoner to the very fantasy (or "world-image") that it tries to unmask. In this context, it is useful to recall a crucial point made by Lacan in his commentary on *Antigone* in the

Ethics of Psychoanalysis. This very blinding splendor or shine—the light that is too strong, and thus forces us to look away from it—is itself the *ultimate mask* (appearance, surface), and it would be utterly wrong to imagine that, by looking at it, we are looking at the (impossible) Thing itself. In other words, this blinding splendor is not simply something that has to be shaded and veiled to a certain degree, in order for us to be able to see something, but is itself already a veil or a shield.

But let us return to Oedipus. Who is Oedipus? We could describe him succinctly as someone who is in search of a certain piece of knowledge, and persists in this search, although several signs indicate that it will not end well, and that it would be better if he stopped stirring up things that should be left in the dark. Through his search, he learns that he himself has committed both parricide and maternal incest. In reaction to this devastating discovery, he does not commit suicide (as everybody expects), but plucks out his eyes. He goes on living, and, despite his tragic experience, he does not abandon his quest for knowledge (here I am referring to *Oedipus at Colonus*). As Lacan points out, in his characteristically insightful manner, Oedipus deals with "the consequence of that desire that led him to go beyond the limit, the desire to know. He has learned and still wants to learn something more."[24]

But—to take a step backward—what should we think of the fact that Oedipus blinds himself? It would be far too simplistic to consider that we are dealing with the metaphor of what happens if we look directly at the truth, that his blindness is the result of encountering the horrible truth face to face. Instead, Oedipus was "blind" before his act of plucking his eyes out; he blindly killed a stranger along the road, and was blind to the fact that he was sleeping with his mother (i.e. his life was "blind" precisely in the Nietzschean sense: first, he was life with blind eyes; then he became death with waking eyes). Moreover, we should think twice before accepting that the horrible Thing or truth that Oedipus finds in his search is simply parricide combined with incest. Is it not, rather, that the Thing that Oedipus finds in his search for knowledge is nothing other than

Oedipus himself—that is, his own gaze? In other words, it is not the parricide and the incest that constitute the Thing—it is Oedipus himself as the object that was, from the very outset, "eliminated from the picture," thrown out in the form of the bundle/package that his parents entrusted to a shepherd with the instructions that it must disappear. It is this elimination that, at the very outset, determines Oedipus' *perspective*, as well as the picture/image of the world in which he then "blindly" finds himself. The crucial point of "perspectival seeing" is not simply that I can see things only from where I stand—it goes much further: I can stand where I stand only because an intimate part of me stands on the other side, outside "me," with the objects. And it is this eliminated, discarded object that Oedipus finds at the end of *Oedipus Rex*. He comes across himself among the objects he is investigating. Furthermore, this object that is Oedipus, and that Oedipus recognizes as such, is not an object that he could recognize himself *in*. The distinction might appear artificial, but is, in fact, crucial. Oedipus does not recognize himself in this object ("this is not me" remains his refrain throughout *Oedipus at Colonus*); instead, he subjectivizes himself in relation to this object, and the act of blinding himself is precisely the mark of this subjectivization.

Here we return to a discussion initiated in the Introduction, concerning the difference between subject and subjectivization. If the (constituted) ego is the one who sees things, but at the price of never seeing the gaze, then the subject is not the one who sees the gaze, but is, in actuality, this gaze itself. The subject is nothing other than the object's gaze, whereas subjectivization is a response to this gaze. More precisely, the constitution of subjectivity coincides with a part of the subject (who, at this preliminary stage, is not yet a subject strictly speaking) "falling out," whereas subjectivization corresponds to the effect of a possible encounter with this fallen part. That is to say: subjectivization is not the condition for one becoming a subject, but its possible (although not necessary) *consequence*. This is a very crucial point of Nietzsche's philosophy, a point implying that

the subject somehow precedes (its) subjectivization. On the other hand—and this is another important Nietzschean theme—it is only through subjectivization that one becomes "what one is," namely, that one becomes the subject one is. In this respect, subjectivization corresponds to the theme of (double) affirmation (to be discussed below).

The thing that one encounters in the object, and that activates/catalyzes subjectivization, is thus the subject itself as object. However, subjectivization is not the consequence of recognizing oneself in this object-subject, but, rather, the consequence of *not being able to recognize* oneself in it. This is also why encounters like this have such a subjectivizing effect (and power), an effect that is missing from all the encounters with things in which we can simply recognize ourselves. Let us take the example of the subjectivizing effect of love, of the amorous encounter. We can respond to love with love (i.e. we can subjectivize ourselves in the figure of love) only if, in some radical sense, we do not know what the other sees in us, and cannot recognize ourselves in this. Moreover, love is a good example of subjectivization via the sudden appearance of the impossible object that, as a rule, is precisely the object-gaze. Perhaps no poet was better at capturing and expressing this moment of "love subjectivization" than Racine. Simply recall the famous verse from *Phèdre,* untranslatable in its subtle play upon the evocative ring of its words: the four nuances of the same sound most poignantly translate the nuances in the meaning of the words that carry them: "*Je le vis, je rougis, je pâlis à sa vue . . .*" ("I saw him, I blushed, I turned pale at the sight of him" would be the literal translation). In relation to Nietzsche, this verse is interesting for at least two reasons: first, because it links the configuration of the event (of "falling" in love) to the way Nietzsche, in the chapter "On Noon" (from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*), defines what triggers subjectivization: "the least, the softest, lightest, a lizard's rustling, a breath, a breeze, a moment's glance"; and, second, because it orients this event around the sudden appearance of the gaze as the very object that escapes seeing (as perspectival seeing)—for

what is this alternation of blushing and paling if not the emergence of the dimension of the gaze?

Let us return to the question with which we started this chapter, the question of truth and its relationship to the Real. This question must now be considered in the context of Nietzsche's thesis that "there exists only a perspective seeing/knowing." Does this simply mean that all our knowledge is always descriptive, that there is no truth in the strong sense of the word?—No: it means, rather, that truth *is* a perspective. It exists neither beyond all perspectives nor as an impossible sum of all perspectives; it exists *as perspective*. But what exactly does this mean, since the crucial question concerns precisely how truth as perspective is possible? (It is interesting to note that we find a very similar question in Lacan: how is knowledge as truth possible?) Earlier, I was talking about the disjunction between the gaze and seeing (or the perspective), suggesting that truth is somehow closely connected to the point of the gaze. Yet the latter is situated on the other side of the screen/mirror of representation; it is the constitutive Other of perspective, something that has to fall out for a perspective to be possible in the first place. But this is exactly the point: insofar as the gaze remains on the other side of the reflective mirror, there is no such thing as "truth as perspective" (although there can be a struggle for hegemony between different perspectives, a struggle over which one of them will assert its truth). To say that every perspective has its truth and its story is, of course, the equivalent of the thesis that "there is no truth, there are only perspectives." This, however, is quite different from the thesis that truth *is* a perspective. The presupposition of the truth as perspective is that the gaze can appear on the level of what is seen (producing an effect of decentering). Yet this occurs not through reflecting on our perspective, but through its *change* or its shift. This is Nietzsche's crucial insight and emphasis. The effect of this shift of perspective is not simply a relativization (and/or an accumulation of numerous perspectives), but the emergence of a stain (or a blind spot) that blurs the transparency of what we see (or know)—this being the objective element in what we see. In order for this effect to take place, we

do not need to embrace a thousand different perspectives—a change between two can be enough. One could also express this as follows: there is a perspective (on things) that emerges only when one shifts perspectives. It does not exist as a separate perspective with its own point of view; yet it is a perspective. We now have an answer to the question I asked above: How is it possible to formulate the thesis about all truths being perspective truths without this statement being a meta-statement, exempt from the situation it describes? The answer is: the point from which it is possible to formulate this thesis is the point of disjunction introduced into the reality of a given situation by the shift of perspective.

Another significant parallel with Lacanian psychoanalysis can be drawn here. In the seminar *Encore,* while he is discussing his theory of the four discourses, Lacan maintains that whenever there is a shift from one discourse to another (i.e. whenever we change discourse), the analytic discourse emerges.[25] Analytic discourse is one of the discourses, but it is also that which emerges whenever we change discourse. Or, to put it differently, Lacan's formulation of analytic discourse is precisely an attempt to give a discursive form to that which exists only "in between," in the shift, in the change as a *Wendepunkt* (a "turning point," to use Nietzsche's term). As a matter of fact, the status of analytic discourse is as fragile as the status of Nietzschean truth, living, so to speak, "on its own credit." Analytic discourse can be sustained only in its "decentering":

> What remains at the center is the fine routine that is such that the signified always retains the same meaning (*sens*) in the final analysis. That meaning is provided by the sense each of us has of being part of his world, that is, of his little family and of everything that revolves around it. Each of you—I am speaking even of the leftists—you are more attached to it than you care to know and would do well to sound the depths of your attachment. A certain number of biases are your daily fare and limit the import of your insurrections to the shortest term, to the term, quite precisely, that gives you no discomfort—they certainly don't change your world view, for that remains perfectly spherical. The signified finds its center wherever you take it. And, unless things change radically, it is not analytic discourse—

> which is so difficult to sustain in its decentering and has not yet made its entrance into common conscience—that can any way subvert anything whatsoever.[26]

This is a striking passage. It has a Nietzschean ring to it, combining, in an intriguing way, a conceptual effort that aims at subversion with a pessimism as to the possibility of subverting anything whatsoever (or, more precisely, of maintaining this subversion). Subversion cannot occur either through revolution (in the sense of simply changing the center around which our world revolves) or through that which, in our postmodern times, we like to call the "absent center," or the absence of any center. In Lacan's view, the subverting point is *a center which is not at the center,* subsisting in its decentering. This is why he likes to emphasize, for instance, that the true revolution in astronomy did not take place with Copernicus (who substituted one center—the earth—for another—the sun), but with Kepler (who posited that the movement of the earth was not circular but elliptical, which is precisely to say that the center of this movement is not at the center). The signified, writes Lacan, finds its center wherever you take it. This is why our world is "spherical." The whole problem is how to produce a decentering of the signified, and how to sustain this decentering. Analytic discourse is (or is supposed to be) constantly dealing with this problem. Of course, the decentering can be (and is) produced elsewhere, outside analysis (for instance, every time there is a change of discourse). In this respect, analysis can be seen as a device for the "artificial" production of this decentering of the signified. But it is also (and this, perhaps, is one of the crucial features that distinguishes Lacanian theory and gives it its political dimension) an effort to conceptualize and to construct a discourse that is the support and the form of this very decentering—a discourse in which the decentering of the signified does not simply lead to a new center (of the signified), but is, instead, able to sustain the very gap implied in the term "decentering."

I would suggest that a very similar problem is at the heart of Nietzsche's philosophical preoccupations. What is crucial in the

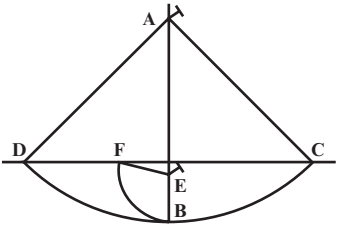
changing or shifting of one's perspective is not what is brought about through the new perspective (for example, the replacement of old values with new ones). What is crucial is what *takes place* in this very shift or change. And this is precisely the perspective of truth. To consider that which takes place in the very shift as crucial, as "the thing itself" (and not as a period of transition that only leads to the thing itself), is precisely to isolate and to think the decentering as such. The conceptual effort at stake is that of how to think something which appears as a fleeting/transitory flash between two orders of being as a discourse (in Lacan's case), or in an independent figure ("noon," in Nietzsche's case). The status of this discourse—to take Lacan's example—is a paradoxical one. It is possible to think of it as discourse, yet it is constructed around a fundamental decentering on account of which it is also always an awry perspective on discursivity as such. It is a perspective on discursivity from within discursivity. One could also say that analytic discourse is the Lacanian matheme for the discursivity of the event as that which appears as the reverse side of any discourse or discursivity.

Something structurally homologous is involved in Nietzsche's articulation of the event via the figure of noon as a figure of the *two*. In relation to the potentially infinite number of perspectives, this figure does not produce one Object (as the Real or the Original), but the very form of disjunction (or noncoincidence) that is the condition and the motor of this potentially infinite multiplication of perspectives. It gives form to a certain "in-between"; it gives a temporal form to the moment of interruption or break. In other words, the central category here is neither the One nor the multiple, but a Two (as the figure of pure disjunction, noncoincidence, or gap) that gives rise to multiplicity. To recognize—as it is generally recognized today—that the One is not something originally given, but an operation performed upon an underlying multiplicity, should not, as it often does, make us eagerly embrace the "revolution" of this stance, and hastily declare multiplicity to be what is originally given. Conceptually speaking, the glorification of the multiple against the (authority of the) One is—as Nietzsche saw extremely clearly—merely

another way for the signified to reestablish its center wherever we happen to take it. With his notion of the Two as the noncoincidence of the same, Nietzsche aims precisely at decentering the circle constituted by the (modern) alternative between the One and the multiple.

To illustrate this, we can once again examine the phenomenon of the "play-within-the-play," the most famous example of which is probably still the "mousetrap" in *Hamlet* (the scene when, upon Hamlet's orders, the players perform a play that could be taken as a replay of the murder of Hamlet's father, with the murderous [new] king Claudius and the rest of the court as audience). On a general level, the play-within-the-play is a device for mirroring gazes: while introducing a second stage, it also introduces a second gaze by subjecting the observing audience itself to a gaze (of the second audience). Yet this reversing—via an extension in concentric circles—of the one who is looking to the one who is also being looked at is not what gives the "mousetrap" its exceptional and fascinating status. First of all, it should be stressed that, while he watches the play, the murderous king is not shaken simply by the fact that he himself is also subjected to the gaze (that of Hamlet, Horatio, and ourselves). Furthermore, the two theatrical realities (the interior one—the play-within-the-play—and the exterior one—the play) are not exactly in a relationship of concentric circles: of the narrower and the broader, or the interior and the exterior, circle. They are—from the narrative as well as the formal aspect—very much intrinsically connected, and connected at a point that is most crucial for the dramaturgy of the play. We must also not lose sight of the fact that one of the main effects (and objectives) of the play-within-the-play is precisely to decenter the center of the play.

Laurence Olivier's film production of *Hamlet* succeeds in poignantly representing this dimension of the "play-within-the-play," the dimension where the effect of truth takes place as a result of shifting perspectives and the consequent decentering of perspective. The scene is shot according to the principles of Galilean physics, as represented in the following scheme:



At point A, there is a nail from which a pendulum hangs. If the pendulum starts swinging from point C, it will travel through point B and come back to the starting point on the other side (i.e. to point D). Yet, if we add another point of gravity by placing a second nail at point E, the pendulum will swing to point B normally, and then curve towards point F.[27]

This is exactly how Olivier shot the play-within-the-play. The traveling actors who came to the court are performing the play Hamlet asked them to perform (the "Murder of Gonzago"); the king, the queen, and a host of courtiers are the audience of this play, forming a semicircle in front of the stage, with the king at the midpoint of this semicircle. Hamlet and Horatio (whom Hamlet has previously acquainted with his suspicions, and with the words of the Ghost) are standing on the two extreme points of the semicircle (corresponding to points D and C in the above scheme) watching the king. While the actors are performing the play, the camera, first moving in a large, continuous semicircle, swings behind the backs of the audience, as if it were attached to a pendulum suspended from the center of the stage. Then, this swinging motion (with the stage as its center) is interrupted by a series of cuts: the king looking at the stage—a close-up of the stage—Hamlet looking at the king—Horatio looking at the king—Hamlet looking at the king. These cuts (or, more precisely, the gazes they shuttle around) have the effect of moving the center from "the center" (the stage) toward the king. They have—literally and metaphorically—the effect of *nailing the king* (as the other center, at point E in the scheme above). From this moment on, the camera resumes its swinging motion, except that the previous (semi-)circular motion is deformed or transformed into

something closer to a (semi-)elliptical motion (F–C). This motion is the result of the decentering of the center; its consequence is that the signified (the signified that, according to Lacan, "finds its center wherever you take it") no longer finds its center—and hits the king full in the face, blurring his "perspective" on events. The king's subsequent outcry ("Give me some light!") is a poignant reminder of this.

The play-within-the-play is not structured in concentric circles. The (re)doubling we are dealing with is above all a co-positing of the two, and our place as spectators is more on the edge of these two plays than simply in an external, all-embracing position. One could, in fact, say that the "mousetrap" in *Hamlet* is structured like Nietzschean midday, where the beyond takes its place, and assumes its form in the figure of the middle. In relation to the "inner" audience (the privileged element being King Claudius), our perspective is not simply broader, but, rather, dislocated: we are, so to speak, "looking awry."

A superficial glance at the place and the function of the "mousetrap" in *Hamlet* makes it obvious that the play-within-the-play *is not* the first or inaugural cell of a (potentially) endless mirroring of representations—and its logic is not metonymic and referential, but has, on the contrary, the role of a standstill, of rupture, of punctuation. One could even say that it interrupts the metonymic play of gazes and reflections in the mode of which the major part of the play unfolds. With the montage of two perspectives, it succeeds in making the gaze appear as, precisely, the Other of perspectivity. The play-within-the-play is—as Hamlet himself already knows, and says—the "trap" for this elusive gaze.

We could object to this by pointing out that what bestows this function of interruption upon the play-within-the-play is not a consequence of its formal structure but is linked, rather, to its content. In other words, we could argue that the crucial fact is not that the actors are performing any old play-within-a-play, but that the central feature concerns *what* they are performing: namely, Claudius' crime. This is true, but with one significant caveat that once again reverses

this standard reading: it is essential that Claudius' crime be *staged*. If Hamlet were to inform Claudius of his knowledge directly, this would have quite a different effect. It would not have this effect of "I, the truth, am speaking," which I mentioned in the Introduction.

The play-within-the-play in *Hamlet* interests us here for yet another reason. It is in reference to it that Lacan formulates the thesis that truth is structured like fiction—a thesis with a recognizably Nietzschean ring to it. This thesis must be understood in light of the above argument.

It is not possible to say that there is only one theory of truth at work in Lacan. In precisely the same way as Nietzsche, Lacan also identifies, at some point during his teaching, the truth with the impossible Real that could possibly "kill" the subject if the latter came too close to it. This identification (or, at least, proximity) of truth and the Real in Lacan stems from the fundamental distinction between reality (which is always fantasmatic) and the Real, a distinction that can easily lead to positing the Real as the (repressed) truth of reality. The other concept of truth in Lacan situates the truth, so to speak, in the midst of reality. Here, the discontinuities, ruptures, standstills, and crises of reality are places or points of its truth. The truth is not some impossible and lethal Beyond that can be reached only by transgressing the limits of the Symbolic and the Imaginary—Lacan comes to present it as something that speaks between the lines, detectable in changes of discursivity, in the disturbances, interruptions, and slips of a discourse. . . . According to this conception, the truth is also identified with the Real, but the Real itself now has a different status (this change is marked by the passage from the concept of *das Ding* to the concept of *objet petit a*). The third version of the Lacanian conception of truth, which is most interesting for our discussion here, is the one in which the truth itself, although it still emerges from the interruptions, disturbances, and shifts of a given discourse (this thesis remains a constant in Lacan's thinking), takes on a certain discursivity.[28] We could demarcate this last version of Lacanian truth via three propositions (or, rather, two propositions and one rhetorical figure):

1. The structure of truth is the structure of fiction.
2. Truth is woman on account of the fact that it is not-whole, that it is impossible to say it "all."
3. *Moi, la vérité, je parle* ("I, the truth, am speaking . . .").

Let us start at the end. The truth that speaks in the first person is, of course, something quite different from the truth that speaks between the lines. The connotations of this figure of speech used by Lacan are not simply provocative; they have far-reaching theoretical implications: Truth as person and—in connection with certain themes already delineated here—as stage person (the theatricality of the quoted sentence obviously is not coincidental), even as a character from comedy, points in the direction of what Lacan calls "relegating the truth."[29] In this context, we should recall Nietzsche's words: "I do not want to be a holy man; sooner even a buffoon.—Perhaps I am a buffoon.—Yet in spite of that—or rather not in spite of it, because so far nobody has been more mendacious than holy men—the truth speaks out of me."[30]

Truth as a stage person or "character," however, has yet another specific meaning in Lacan, related to the theory and practice of the analytic experience. I am referring to the notion of *la passe* ("the pass") developed by Lacan as the "test" by means of which an analysand who expresses the desire to become an analyst either is or is not allowed to become an analyst. In this arrangement, the analysand reports on his or her experiences in analysis (reports about—why not?—her or his truth) to two randomly chosen people (who are either analysts, or a very long way into their own analyses). These two auditors then report about this truth in front of a jury which decides if the "pass" is accomplished or not. We could say that, in this process, the analysand "lets go of her or his truth." The truth is sent off to speak on its own. And, of course, the "test" consists precisely in whether or not the truth "passes," whether or not it survives as truth in this "pass," whether or not what comes out on the other side is not simply a description of a particular analysis, but transmits a certain knowledge, a "knowledge about truth." In his late work, Lacan insists

upon this adamantly: analysis is based on a presumption "that knowledge about truth can be constituted on the basis of its experience."[31]

We are all very familiar with the occasionally agonizing discrepancy that can exist between the way we experience a certain situation and see its truth and, on the other hand, the "objective" description or verbal account of this situation; the latter can strike us as entirely missing the point. It can strike us as something that, despite being "correct," nevertheless *lies,* falling wide of the mark, sounding wrong. What is at stake here is not simply the discrepancy between the "inner" or personal truth and the truth as it is articulated in the Symbolic. The point is that not all symbolic articulations are articulations of truth—but, nonetheless, there exists a criterion for distinguishing among them that is inherent to the Symbolic itself. The question is not whether a given symbolic articulation corresponds to what we have experienced; the question is, rather, whether this something can be "re-created" in the Symbolic in such a way that it could be "passed on" (i.e. transmitted). And this is precisely what the thesis according to which the truth has the structure of fiction aims at. If we were to venture to propose a definition, we could say that truth is the staging of the Real by means of the Symbolic. The truth *aims at* the Real, and this expression is to be taken quite literally. Truth is neither truth *about* the Real, nor is it identical or synonymous with the Real. Truth is in a certain relation to the Real, a relation that could be described as "privileged," which is also where the privilege of truth comes from. The only implication here is that, in order to assert or sustain this privilege, truth cannot appeal to any Real outside itself. This, precisely, is the difference between the truth that takes the form of the play-within-the-play versus the (hypothetical) situation where Hamlet would confront Claudius with the fact that someone who "keeps returning from the Real" has told him that he, Claudius, has killed his father (thus trying to found the truthfulness of this knowledge upon this "testimony of the Real"). The whole point of staging the original crime in *Hamlet* is not so much to establish, or even to prove, the truth as to formulate the truth, to inscribe it in the very reality of which this truth is the truth.

Once more, the question is not whether a certain knowledge is true or not, but, rather, how truth as knowledge is possible at all. "Truth aims at the Real" does not therefore mean that it tries to "hit" it or "express" it—if we engage in this sport, we are inevitably left not with the truth, but with generalized wisdom.

In this Lacanian (as well as Nietzschean) conception of truth (which, as we have seen, is not the only conception—although it is the one in which truth is related to the figure of midday), truth is neither correspondence between a statement and reality (i.e. what Nietzsche calls "correct description" as opposed to truth), nor some hidden essence of being that has to remain veiled in the interests of our survival. The truth is not to be found outside the (order of) being or life, but can only be a place within life. But of course, this is not just any place: it is precisely the "middle" of life (in the sense of the word "middle" outlined above). To put this in somewhat paradoxical terms: this conception also implies, in a certain way, that truth is *beyond* life, but in the sense that this "beyond life" is itself part of life—in the sense that this beyond is the middle, the inner edge, of life, the point where life is decided.

We will come back to the question of truth—not only to the aspect of this question that we have thus far left aside, which concerns the connection truth–woman (common to both Nietzsche and Lacan), but also to some of the aspects discussed above. For a productive recapitulation of this specific notion of truth, however, it is crucial that this analysis should be further developed in the context of yet another discussion: the discussion concerning the status of "Nothing(ness)" in Nietzsche's philosophy.

From Nothingness Incorporated . . .

". . . man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will."[32]

What, strictly speaking, is the point of this notorious Nietzschean statement? Would it be better if man did not will?—Of course not. Clearly, for Nietzsche, both alternatives are, so to speak, "worse." It is also clear that they are both situated in relation to a third term or possibility: the one where man would will *something*. To say that this possibility is in crisis could be one way of defining nihilism—or, more precisely, defining the state to which nihilism is a response. As I have already pointed out, nihilism is what sets before us this forced choice: "to will nothingness or not to will."

We thus have: one, to will something; two, to will nothingness; and, three, not to will. It would, however, be wrong to conclude that nothingness or negativity enters the game only via the last two possibilities. The dialectics of the will (which can be compared in this respect to the dialectics of desire) *always* presupposes negativity or nothingness. As Slavoj Žižek has pointed out, every passionate desire (or will) for something presupposes and includes "willing nothingness" as its internal condition:

> it is absolutely crucial to bear in mind the co-dependence between detachability from any determinate content and excessive attachment to a particular object that makes us indifferent to all other objects—such an object is what Lacan, following Kant, calls "negative magnitude," that is, an object which, in its very positive presence, acts as a stand-in for the void of Nothingness (or for the abyss of the impossible Thing), so that *wanting this particular object, maintaining one's "stubborn attachment" to it come what may, is the very concrete form of "wanting Nothingness."*. . . It is the very formal structure of the reference to Nothingness that enables us to overcome the stupid self-contained life-rhythm, in order to become "passionately attached" to some Cause—be it love, art, knowledge or politics—for which we are ready to risk everything.[33]

In other words, the fact that, on a fundamental level, one wants nothingness is the very condition for one's capacity to want something/anything. Nietzsche is very well aware of this, and it would be com-

pletely wrong to suppose that his philosophy is, *en bloc*, hostile to all forms of nothingness and negativity. After all—and as Nietzsche himself puts it—"the psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how he that says No and *does* No to an unheard-of degree, to everything to which one has so far said Yes, can nevertheless be the opposite of a No-saying spirit."[34]

From the Nietzschean perspective, the problem is not nothingness or negativity as such, but, rather, its combination with the categorial couple truth/appearance—that is to say, its insertion in the traditional topography of truth. According to Nietzsche, this insertion was one of the fundamental gestures of Christianity as the "religion of truth." If one is right in assuming that, without wanting nothingness, one cannot truly want anything (concrete), then the insertion of this immanent link between nothing(ness) and something into the topography of truth can hardly fail to have far-reaching (and, according to Nietzsche, catastrophic) consequences. The result of it is that the split between the true and the untrue falls upon the will itself, and the question arises as to which of the two internally connected facets of the will is true (and which untrue). The answer is: nothing(ness) is true, whereas "something" (meaning all worldly objects, attachments, and struggles) is always false, deceptive, and untrue. In this way, the desire for or will to truth inherently becomes the desire for or will to nothingness. This "fact" has remained concealed for a long time, since Christianity has put in the place of this nothingness nothing less than God. In other words, in Christianity, the name for Nothing(ness) as the internal condition of all will or desire is God. God is this radical negativity, the "unplugging" from the world that makes any passionate attachment to *something* possible. It makes it possible, but, at the same time, it also prevents us from forgetting that in the beloved person, in the art for which we burn, or in the Cause for which we fight, we are actually loving and valuing God (i.e. Nothingness). Thus God is the name for the thing we are truly after, or the thing at which we (indirectly) aim, via our entanglement in worldly activities and with worldly objects.

Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity is not simply that it posits Nothingness as irreducible, but that it places the truth and the Real exclusively in this Nothingness, denying truth to the objects to which Nothingness is attracted and bound. This is especially true of the figure of the ascetic ideal, meaning that it also includes the latest form of Christianity: "honest atheism." By exclusively favoring only one of the two facets of the will, Christianity inaugurates the process that eventually leads to (the explicit form of) nihilism, since it is itself inherently nihilistic: the process whereby the two intrinsically connected facets of the will ("to will nothingness" and "to will something") become independent, separated from each other. This separation is what defuses the will, and brings about the state in which the will can no longer be activated except in relationship to nothing(ness) *as such*. In other words, one no longer wills nothingness in the form of this or that particular and concrete object; one wills it directly, without all the "nonsense" and "rubbish" around it. If we replace the word "will" with what psychoanalysis conceptualizes with the word "desire," we could say that nihilism appears when the only possible object left to desire is its transcendental condition itself. In this way, however, the very structure of desire gives way and collapses into itself, since what gets eliminated is the very interval or gap (i.e. the gap between the object of desire and its transcendental condition *qua* Nothingness) that sustains desire itself.

God Himself will not be exempt from this logic that is, basically, the logic of the ascetic ideal. God Himself will be submitted to the cleansing induced by the opposition truth/appearance, and by the consequent imperative that may be formulated as follows: "We want God, but without all the nonsense and rubbish that accompanies this notion." Yet if we thus set out to do away with everything in God that is just "apparent," we are bound to discover, sooner or later, that nothing is left of the "true God" either:

> *What*, in all strictness, has really *conquered* the Christian God? . . . Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness taken more and more strictly, the confessional subtlety of the Christian conscience

> translated and sublimated into the scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price. To view nature as if it were a proof of the goodness and providence of a God; to interpret history to the glory of a divine reason . . . ; to interpret one's own experiences . . . as if everything were preordained, everything a sign, everything sent for the salvation of the soul—that now belongs to the *past*, that has the conscience *against* it. . . . All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming. . . . In this way Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality. . . .[35]

In other words, God Himself was too entangled in semblance to survive the "moral pressure" of the ascetic ideal.

Thus we are dealing with a specific movement that starts from an accurate insight into the inherent split between desire/will and its objects (the object of desire is always twofold, being in itself redoubled into nothing and something—it functions as the envelope of the nothing). This split is then interpreted as the difference between the Real and the semblance. Then, in a third step, a kind of ethical imperative of the Real emerges, declaring war on the semblance. This is the movement that Nietzsche classifies under the rubric of the ascetic ideal. The crucial feature of the ascetic ideal is not that we renounce all satisfaction, but, on the contrary, that we are compelled constantly to look and strive for the immediate Real of satisfaction as such, beyond all "apparent" and always partial satisfactions.

The dynamic of this movement is perhaps best illustrated by the example of anorexia (which is also a very good example of the intimate link that exists between the ascetic ideal and enjoyment as imperative). As Lacan observes, the anorexic subject does not simply refuse to eat food; rather, she eats Nothing(ness) itself. One could say that the anorexic subject aims directly at the mysterious "X" on account of which any particular food can become an object of desire. In a certain fashion, she attempts to isolate or distill from food the "thing in food more than food" (i.e. the mysterious surplus or difference between the satisfaction of a need and the "other satisfaction," to express this in Lacanian terminology). She makes this "other satisfaction" the immediate object of satisfaction. Yet the

problem is that, in this configuration, the very structure of desire collapses. The desire to find enjoyment in food has passed into the register of the imperative of enjoyment, just as the will to enjoyment as such (as Lacan has shown in his analysis of de Sade) implies that the subject becomes a pure instrument of the enjoyment of the Other (as the source of the imperative of enjoyment). In relation to food, there is probably no other subject who would be more subjected to the inexorable imperative of enjoyment than, precisely, the anorexic subject. A glutton, who—if I may say so—enjoys and consumes Nothing(ness) with food and through food, still maintains the gap in which desire can find its place (with a glutton, one could say that the more of the Nothing he wants to eat, the more food he has to consume). The anorexic subject, on the other hand, succeeds in eating the Nothing directly; she manages to isolate from food the pure substance of enjoyment. In this way, by bringing the difference between need and desire to its extreme point, the anorexic subject abolishes this very difference. In discussing the Lacanian notion of sublimation, I have already highlighted this danger: the danger involved in the gesture of simply separating the "object of satisfaction" from the "satisfaction as object" (and of appointing the latter the only locus of the Real).

If—and this is an important lesson for both philosophical theories of the will and psychoanalytic theories of desire—we simply let the will or desire go through the process of the distinction true/apparent (or real/semblance), then we will witness a growing accumulation of, on the one side, the semblance (as the veils of appearances to be looked behind); and, on the other side, a greater and greater Nothing (as the inaccessible, quasi-noumenal dimension to be sought after). Every "something" has its inverse underside, easily leading to an infinite regression (i.e. the infinite regression of always seeking an ever-receding Real behind the manifest semblances). In this sense, according to Nietzsche, the imperative of distinguishing between truth and appearance, or between the Real and the semblance, is a machine for producing the Nothing, a kind of "factory of nihilism." Nietzsche is not simply hostile to

categories of truth and of the Real, he demands a new and different topology for them. One of the major points of Nietzsche's philosophy is—phrased in terms that are not Nietzsche's, but excellently capture what is at stake here—that the Real cannot be reached or attained by its *differentiation* from the Imaginary and the Symbolic. We will not find the Real by searching for it behind the veils of the Imaginary and the distortions of the Symbolic. This tendency that ultimately identifies the Real with some unspeakable authenticity or Truth is the nihilistic tendency *par excellence*.

There is still the question of how Nietzsche situates truth and the Real: What is the relationship between them? What is the mode of the nothingness or negativity that is not already "nihilistic" in itself? The answer to these questions is to be sought in what I shall call the Nietzschean theory of the Other as articulation of a Two.

. . . via Double Affirmation . . .

What follows from the logic of the One is, to put it simply, a nonrelationship to the Other. Take the example of the conceptual couple truth/appearance in its most rudimentary form: as opposed to one another, they each constitute a One that needs the Other, but only in order to delimit its own field of reference. In other words, truth and appearance are not in any kind of relationship; truth is everything that is not appearance (and vice versa). Their intersection is empty, whereas their union produces the couple Truth–Appearance. In this configuration, however, Truth and Appearance constitute a couple only on account of the fact that, together, they exhaust a Totality of which they are part—that is, on account of the *exclusion of the third possibility.* Nietzsche's opinion of Aristotelian logic, and especially of the exclusion of the third, is common knowledge: Nietzsche felt that this does not even allow for the second. We exclude the third possibility in order to make people accept the first one, since the second (or the other) one is always "bad," forbidden, or despicable (evil as opposed to good, appearance as opposed to truth . . .). Neitzsche's struggle for—if I may put it this way—the inclusion of the third possibility ("the third eye," "the third ear" . . .) aims precisely at restoring and affirming the status of the Other. It aims at a concept of the Other that would not be simply a derivation or a negative determination of the One. This implies, however, that the Other can never be One (yet another One), but is always-already two (i.e. two at the same time).

But what, exactly, is the third possibility? The simplest answer would be: the repetition of the second. The third possibility is not a combination of the first two; it does not refer, for instance, to an appearance combined with some truth. That this is not what Nietzsche is after is perhaps most obvious in relation to another conceptual couple that is paradigmatic for all Nietzschean couples: the couple of affirmation and negation, of Yes-saying and No-saying, of active and reactive forces. I have already referred to the passage from *Ecce homo* where Nietzsche claims that "the psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how he that says No and *does* No to an unheard-of degree, to everything to which one has so far said Yes, can

nevertheless be the opposite of a No-saying spirit." The way Nietzsche solves this problem is not by adding, as a third term to the dichotomy of Yes and No, something like "perhaps," or "neither Yes nor No"—he adds another Yes, another affirmation. Zarathustra says Yes and No—No perhaps even more often than Yes—yet he represents affirmation as such.

One way of understanding this would be in terms of the dialectics of the negation of negation: Zarathustra negates negation, and is thus the spirit of affirmation. This, however, is not what Nietzsche has in mind. Negation does not refer to or negate the affirmation (nor an already existing negation); it negates something neutral, namely, life or becoming. The same is true for affirmation. One could say that they both "struggle for life." And, of course, they are both part of life. Negation negates life not from the outside, but from within life itself—it becomes itself a form of life. This implies that we are dealing not with a dialectics of affirmation and negation, but, rather, with two parallel dialectics: one in which life is qualified by negation, and one in which it is qualified by affirmation. The two do not follow from one another, but they are both present. More precisely, they *were* both present, since the reactive forces seem to have conquered life, and become its only and dominant form. This is what Nietzsche calls nihilism. All has become One. The history of the world is not a gradual loss of some mythical unity or Oneness—on the contrary, it is the loss of a double source. This is why the Nietzschean event implies, above all, the (re)activation of the other/second source (affirmation)—yet a second source which is already double in itself.

To put it differently: the logic of a possible change or breakthrough in relation to nihilism does not depend upon the power of negation being so radical as to finally negate itself too, thus opening the way for affirmation. To wait for this to happen is, literally, to wait for Nothing. As Gilles Deleuze has pointed out, in order for a force to become active, it is not enough that it goes to the limit of what it can do; it must make what it can do an object of affirmation.[36] In other words, although negation is capable of negating itself, it is not

capable of affirming this capacity. The negation that goes to its limit also stays at this limit, is stuck at the limit, and the only affirmation it produces is a *reaction* to its own radicality, to its own capacity to—as Nietzsche puts it—"deny life truly, actively." The affirmation as reaction to the force of negation is not and cannot be active in the strict sense of the word; it can only take the form of a *tranquilizer* trying to counterbalance the *excitation* involved in the force of the will of negation. The affirmation in which we say "yes" to everything (accepting things as they are, readily welcoming even what we don't like, always being "positive" in life) is an "ass-like" affirmation, characteristic of the "spirit of gravity." As Nietzsche puts it in the chapter "On the Spirit of Gravity" in *Zarathustra*:

> Verily, I also do not like those who consider everything good and this world the best. Such men I call the omni-satisfied. Omni-satisfaction, which knows how to taste everything, that is not the best taste. I honor the recalcitrant choosy tongues and stomachs, which have learned to say "I" and "yes" and "no." But to chew and digest everything—that is truly the swine's manner. Always to bray Yea-Yuh—that only the ass has learned, and whoever is of his spirit.[37]

This, indeed, is passive nihilism, and Nietzsche's description of it in this passage also helps us to define the ultimate deadlock of nihilism. Nihilism refers to the configuration in which the active force is entirely on the side of negation (but has its limit: it cannot affirm this activity), and affirmation is always *reactive* (or passive). "Passive nihilism" is Nietzsche's name for reactive affirmation. This means that nihilism is not simply a reactive state; it still involves a struggle between active and reactive forces, but a struggle wherein the "active" is strictly on the side of negation, while the only form of affirmation is a reactive one.

This is why one of the major fronts of Nietzsche's philosophy is a fight against the "spirit of gravity": against affirmation as acceptance (of responsibility), as "shouldering," taking upon oneself, facing up to whatever comes along. Once again (and as Deleuze has shown), Nietzsche's target here is the conception of affirmation that

sees it as a simple *function*, a function of being or of what is. For Nietzsche, a true affirmation can only be an agent, an "activist of becoming," so to speak, not a function of being. "To affirm is not to take responsibility for, to take on the burden of what is, but to release, to set free what lives."[38] This is why a Dionysian "Yes" is a Yes that knows how to say "No," and can put negation in the service of the force of affirmation. But in order for this to happen, in order for the negation itself to become a mode of affirmation, two affirmations are needed: the affirmation itself has to be redoubled; the affirmation itself needs to be affirmed. Affirmation itself has to become the object of affirmation. This is the Nietzschean theory of double affirmation, a theory that endeavors to mobilize Nothings(ness) or negativity in the form of Nothing(ness) as *interval* or *minimal difference* of the same.

Double affirmation ("white affirmation on white background," to paraphrase the title of Malevich's famous painting) is precisely the creation of a minimal difference. This minimal difference or hiatus between two affirmations, this "crack" created by the very redoubling of affirmation, is what activates negation/negativity[39] without transforming it into something that one could take for a direct object of one's will. This is because negation exists only in and as this hiatus; it exists only as the minimal difference between the two—as, to use Nietzsche's terms, the "shortest shadow." In this configuration, negativity is not the opposite, obverse side of every positive entity, neither does it function itself as a singular entity (as in the case of the configuration discussed in the previous chapter—for instance, that of an anorexic subject who manages to eat the Nothing itself). In other words, the effort involved in this conception is, in a sense, restrictive in relation to the miraculous power of the Symbolic to transform the Nothing itself into something, to transform the lack itself into an object. Instead of the lack of an object itself becoming an object, the lack exists solely in the form of the inherent difference of an object, that is to say, in the form of the object not fully coinciding with *itself*. Yet this does not in any way imply that this conception of negativity or lack is presymbolic, or even bound to the

imaginary register. On the contrary, what is at stake is the capacity to distinguish between, on the one hand, the power of the Symbolic, and, on the other, its products (which can well be imaginary in their nature).

All the (usually shiny) objects that come to embody the void or the Nothingness are the effect of some symbolic operation, but do not themselves belong to the register of the Symbolic. Nietzsche's labors are directed precisely at introducing a difference and a distance between the two. If the nihilistic approach to reality consists in the attempt to differentiate the Real from the Imaginary, Nietzsche's strategy is therefore distinctive: it consists in the attempt to distinguish and separate the Symbolic from the Imaginary, and thus to create or open up a space for the Real. But this also means that the Symbolic is not conceived of as something that comes *after* the Imaginary and solves its impasse: the three dimensions (the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real) are strictly simultaneous. In relation to the two conceptions of Nothing(ness), the first positing the Nothing as something, and the second positing it as difference or interval (the mechanism of double affirmation presupposes that the negation or lack gets inscribed only as difference and nonrelationship: not the difference between the One and the Other, but the difference of the Other itself, since the Other is always two)—in relation to these two conceptions of Nothing(ness), we cannot say that the first one is symbolic and the second remains caught in the duality of the Imaginary. If this were the case, it would also mean that the Lacanian difference between the logic of "all" and the logic of "not-all" would be subjected to this categorization, forcing us to say that the logic of "not-all" remains mired in the imaginary register.

A comparison of Nietzsche and Lacan on this point can indeed be very instructive, since the Lacanian notion of "not-all" is a notion that is itself based on nothing other than what we have called the "inclusion of the third possibility." What would be the "third possibility" in the Lacanian conceptual universe?—The Other (of the) Other. We should note that the Lacanian thesis that "there is no Other (of the) Other" aims not at the exclusion of the third, but, on the

contrary, at its inclusion. The Other (of the Other) is included in the Other—and this is precisely what makes the Other Other, not just a duplication or repetition of the One. On account of this inclusion, the Other is, by definition, not-all or not-whole.

Let us examine this through an example recurring, in different articulations, within Nietzsche's philosophy as well as in Lacanian psychoanalysis: the example of the "liar from Crete." The famous paradox goes as follows: "A Cretan said: all Cretans are liars." If the Cretan told the truth, then he was lying (since all Cretans are liars); if he was lying, then he was telling the truth (for, if it is not true that Cretans lie, then they tell the truth). Modern logic responded to this paradox in two strictly correlative ways: on the one hand, by prohibiting and *excluding* as nonsensical all statements that speak about their own logical value (truthfulness or falseness); and, on the other, by claiming that a statement about the logical value of another statement is not a statement on the same level (i.e. by positing it on a *meta*-level). One can immediately say that the construction of the "meta-" level is correlative to the exclusion. However, if, in logic, we can prohibit and exclude these types of statement, then we cannot do the same in our spoken language. Moreover, what appears as a paradox in logic does not necessarily appear as one in the realm of natural languages. Statements like "I am lying" are frequently used, and function perfectly well—we have no problem understanding them. What is the interest of this example for our discussion?

First, we have to pay attention to the fact that the statement that is thus excluded in logic ("the third possibility") is not something between truth and falsehood; it is not a half-truth, but, precisely, the point where we are uttering a truth in such a way that we are *simultaneously* saying something about this utterance. It is by excluding this possibility (the possibility that, in stating something, we also state the value of this statement) that the strict dichotomy between a truth and a lie is established. In other words, the exclusion of the third possibility coincides with the construction of the meta-level that guarantees, from the outside, the truthfulness of the truth and the

falseness of the lie. Solely in this way can a truth (as well as a lie) be *whole*. "All Cretans are liars" is a statement that only an outsider can formulate without contradiction.

Lacan rails against this very notion: statements such as "I am lying" exist in language, and we understand them from within this same language. Furthermore, the fact that we understand them clearly indicates that what, in formal languages, appears as a meta-statement (i.e. the part of the statement that speaks about the logical value of this same statement) is situated, in spoken languages, on the same level as the statement itself. It is included in the statement—which is to say, precisely, that it is not a meta-statement. This implies, however, that a statement is, in itself, always-already twofold, and Lacan conceptualizes this duality in terms of a distinction between the level of enunciation and the level of the enunciated (i.e. the level of the statement). The *I* of enunciation must be distinguished from the I of the statement (i.e. from the shifter that, in the statement, designates me). The *I* is not simply "me"—it is a shifter that anybody can use to refer to him- or herself. This is why it is perfectly valid to say "I am lying"; in saying it, I say nothing but "she who is speaking (and who happens to be me) is lying." I can formulate such statements about myself as validly as I can formulate them about others, since I, who speak, am not necessarily forming a kind of metaphysical unity with the shifter "I." In this way, what seemed to be an irresolvable paradox demanding a hierarchy of statements (the introduction of a meta-level) is resolved by pointing out the difference inherent to the same level (i.e. by decentering one and the same level). The relationship between the level of enunciation and the level of the statement is not that of a hierarchical order—it is a relationship of two centers on the same level.

Lacan's thesis that there is no meta-language concerns the fact that the language we speak is not formalized. Outside language, there is nothing that could evaluate it. Yet this *does not mean* (an all too common misunderstanding) that, in Lacanian thought, "language is all." On the contrary: from what has been said, it follows that, for Lacan,

language is *not-all*. If there is nothing outside language that could speak about the (truth) value of language, then language can never become a totalized unity. Moreover, if there is nothing of this kind outside language, then this evaluative capacity must exist *in language*, within language. In other words, Lacan *includes* the "third possibility," and this is what the following series of statements (in which the word "Other" could be replaced with "order of language") aims at: "There is no Other (of the) Other," "the big Other does not exist," "the Other is not-whole," "the Other is barred/inconsistent," and so on. The statement about truth being not-whole (or not-all), the statement that it is possible only to half-speak (*mi-dire*) the truth, is also part of this same argument.

But what exactly does this mean? It does *not* mean that truth is not-whole because it always includes a certain degree of lying, deceptive falsehood. What makes the truth not-whole is not some fraction or share of lie in it, but the fact that truth, while pronouncing itself, always and irreducibly also pronounces a truth about itself. This is the Real that truth can never state (directly), but that always accompanies it. The order of language contains something that cannot be directly stated (i.e. that cannot be stated in the logical form of "s = p"), yet something that nevertheless gets stated in language all the time. We can obtain the "whole" truth only by eliminating that which is being stated at the same time as truth, and by placing what was thus eliminated on another (higher) level. The problem arises from the fact that truth is a constitutive dimension of speech. We can say nothing without positing it as true.[40]

Every time we say "I am lying," in a conversation, we are positing something like: (It is true that) "I am lying." But the moment we try to eliminate this from what was said, and formulate it as a statement at another meta-level, we get: "It is true that I am lying," which again contains and states something more: "It is true that it is true that I am lying," and so on. Thus we get a potentially endless series of levels on which the same statement appears: $s(s'(s''(s''' \ldots s^n \rightarrow p)))$. In short, if we eliminate the level of enunciation from the statement by

formulating this enunciation itself as a statement, placing it on a different level, then the original problem only multiplies. To say that truth is "not-whole" does not imply that a statement cannot say all there is to say, that there is always something still missing, something that cannot be said or fails to be said. The problem is, rather, the opposite: it is that, by telling the truth, we tell more than the truth. What keeps getting in the way of the possibility of telling "the whole truth" is not a lack, but an excess, a surplus that sticks to whatever we say. The level of enunciation cannot be separated or eliminated from what is enunciated, but, rather, sticks to it. If truth were not a constitutive dimension of speech—that is to say, if it were not a dimension *inherent* to speech, if it were possible to locate it somewhere outside of speech—then there would be no problem in telling "the whole truth and nothing but the truth." But since this is not the case (and since speech is not simply a tool we can use to express whatever we want to express), truth stumbles. In other words, what makes the truth not-whole is the fact that it is *simultaneously* a constitutive dimension of speech as such, as well as something within speech itself. More precisely, what makes it not-whole is the fact that, in the realm of our spoken language, it is not possible merely to delimit these two levels on which truth operates, treating them separately. Furthermore, the level of enunciation is not simply an empty form of truth that accompanies every statement ("It is true that . . ."), but also the very point where the subject who utters a statement is inscribed in this statement.

The same problem could be articulated through the relationship between knowledge and enjoyment (*jouissance*). Lacan points out that, when we demand from a witness that she tell the "whole truth," we actually expect two things from her: that she should tell the truth about what she knows, and that she should tell us something that will allow us to make a judgment about her enjoyment (i.e. that she avows the enjoyment). The witness is thus confronted with the impossible demand to formulate her own place or position in the knowledge that she is stating. And this is precisely what

cannot be formulated directly, but only through a delay (a "time lag")—it can be stated only retroactively, from within another level (which does nothing more than push the problem back a step).

I have already said that the thing that makes the truth not-whole is not a portion of a lie in it (nor some opaque and inert kernel of the Real that can never/should never be spoken), but the fact that, whenever a truth is being stated, something is also being stated about this statement. What makes the truth not-whole is precisely this autoreferential moment on account of which a truth is always also a truth about itself. It is this "doubling over" or self-overlapping of truth that Lacan calls the Real. Truth is not truth *about* the Real; the Real is inherent to truth as its inner limit, as what redoubles truth into knowledge and (surplus-) *jouissance*. Or, in another formulation, the Real is what redoubles truth into the Symbolic and the Imaginary (insofar as the "jouissance is questioned, evoked, tracked, and elaborated only on the basis of a semblance,"[41] that is, on the basis of the Imaginary). The Real is precisely this interval between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The Real is the interval or gap that exists, within truth, between knowledge and enjoyment. The nihilistic temptation consists in placing the Real either on one side or the other, on the side of knowledge or on the side of (surplus-) enjoyment, thus abolishing the very doubleness that *is* the Real of truth. (In this sense, the "asceticism" of knowledge and the "hedonism" of enjoyment are strictly correlative, forming two sides of the same nihilistic tendency.) The crucial claim to be maintained is that truth is not only the surplus of the spoken over the statement, but that it is always *both:* the statement as well as the surplus over it. Just as we must avoid the temptation to reduce the truth entirely to knowledge or the statement (and also simply to forbid or exclude, for this purpose, statements of the type "I am lying"), we must also avoid the temptation to locate truth exclusively in this surplus, thus reducing it to a pure tautology (of enjoyment). If we locate truth exclusively in this surplus, and see in it the Real of truth, we inevitably fall into the Imaginary—and the only Real left to us thereafter is Nothing(ness). This is one mode of nihilism that paradoxically re-

sults from affirmation gaining utter independence. And this is precisely what the Nietzschean theory of double affirmation seeks to prevent.

An interesting illustration of what Nietzsche is aiming at with the notion of double affirmation is provided by the Kantian distinction between objective, subjective, and aesthetic judgment.[42] Let us take Kant's own example, that of "green meadows," examining how this object functions in the three stages or types of judgment. The first stage is the objective stage: the green color of meadows belongs to objective sensation. "Meadows are green" is an objective judgment. The second stage is the subjective stage: the color's agreeableness belongs to subjective sensation, to feeling. "I like green meadows" is a subjective judgment meaning, "I would like to see green meadows as often as possible." This is a judgment that says "yes" to the object that is supposed to *gratify* us (Kant's term); in other words, it says "yes" to what we have previously called the "object of satisfaction." The third stage is a "yes," not to the object (the green color of meadows), but to the agreeable feeling itself. This is a "yes" not to the object that gratifies us, but to the gratification itself (i.e. to the "satisfaction as object"), namely, a "yes" to the previous "yes." In this case, the feeling itself, the sensation, becomes an object (of judgment). "Green meadows are beautiful" is a judgment of taste, an aesthetic judgment, that is neither objective nor subjective. This judgment could be called "acephalous" or "headless," since the "I," the "head" of the judgment, is replaced, not with some impersonal neutrality, as in statements of the type "the meadows are green," but with the most intimate part of the subject (how the subject feels itself affected by a given representation) *as object*. The aesthetic judgment states something like: "I like the feeling that I like this (object)."

We can already see how close the third stage is to the Nietzschean theme of the "affirmation of affirmation." The Nietzschean "yes" has itself to be affirmed in another "yes." A second affirmation must take place, so that the affirmation itself is affirmed. This is why the Dionysian "yes" (the "yes" to everything that gratifies us) needs the

figure of Ariadne in order to be completed. This could also be a way of understanding what is usually referred to as the Nietzschean "aestheticization of life": if life is to be a "yes" to a "yes," then this means precisely that it should be aestheticized (in the Kantian sense of the word). Life must involve pleasure and passion (engagement, zeal, enthusiasm, interest), but this pleasure and passion must always be accompanied by an additional "yes"; otherwise, they ultimately terminate in nihilism. Yet—and this is Nietzsche's crucial emphasis—this second "yes" alone, if it were completely independent (i.e. if satisfaction itself were to become the sole object of affirmation), can lead only to nihilism. Nietzsche's point is that the affirmation of affirmation cannot simply be the last stage, in the sense that it alone would suffice. In isolation, the second "yes" is no longer a "yes" to a "yes," but a drunken "yes" of an indiscriminate, empty approbation of everything. The Nietzschean figure of affirmation can only be a figure of a *couple*—affirmation is, so to speak, double or nothing. A white square is not the same thing as a white square on a white background. The affirmation remains an affirmation only as doubled (and, at the same time, it activates the negation). This is the point at which the theme of double affirmation is most closely related to the problem of truth, since truth has the structure of a double affirmation—this being what makes it not-whole.

I said above that Nietzsche, as well as Lacan, starts from the "inclusion of the third possibility," and that, in the Lacanian conceptual scheme, the third possibility is what he calls the "Other (of the) Other." We could also translate this as the "guarantor of the truthfulness of the truth," or "guarantor of truth of that which, in language, is produced as truth." We have also seen that the inclusion of the third possibility does not mean positing a third possibility besides the first one and its second Other, but including this third in the second Other itself. It might seem that, in this way, we lose any criterion of truth. But does Lacan's thesis that "there is no Other (of the) Other" (or—what amounts to the same thing—that "there is no meta-language") really and simply mean that there is no guarantor of truth, that the truth is indistinguishable from a lie?—Absolutely

not. It means that the criterion in question is inherent to *language*, that is, *included* in language itself. The Other is included in the Other, and this is precisely what makes the Other not-whole. Lacan expresses this doubleness with a neologism coined from the word language (*langue*): *lalangue* ("llanguage," in the English translation). But, if the criterion of the distinction between true and false is interior to language itself (thereby becoming *lalangue*), where or what is this criterion? Lacan's (quite Nietzschean) answer is: "Our recourse, in language, is to that which is breaking it."[43] These "breaks" are nothing other than the inner hindrances/differences of the Other, inscriptions in/of the Other not coinciding with itself.

Here we can, perhaps, clarify another ambiguity. Both Nietzsche and Lacan posit an affinity between "truth" and "woman." "Nietzsche and the question of woman" is, of course, a very controversial topic that has already produced quite a number of studies and books. What interests us in the present context is only one aspect of this topic: Nietzsche's statement (also found, in a considerably more elaborated form, in Lacan's work): "truth is woman." The first misunderstanding to be avoided here is the one that consists in reading this as arguing that woman is the truth (or symptom) *of a man*. Woman can be the truth/symptom of a man only *for* a man, that is, to the extent to which she plays the role of what Lacan calls the *objet petit a*, constituting and maintaining masculine desire. We should therefore say that although woman can undoubtedly play the part of the truth/symptom of a man, this is not what defines her ontological status. Lacan is explicit enough in this respect: woman can "personify" the *objet petit a*, but, if this were what she really *is*, then there would be a sexual relationship: $\$ \lozenge a$ would be not the matheme of fantasy, but the matheme of the "sexual relationship." In other words, we must avoid the temptation to define woman on the basis of that in the name of which a man is searching for her—that is to say, in the name of that which eludes and escapes discourse. If we fail to do this, Woman/Truth becomes that supplementary, always-present-but-never-spoken "it is true that . . ." which silently accompanies every statement. In this case, Woman is Truth (with capital

letters), but only by being fundamentally silent and letting truths be catalyzed through her—only by being excluded from discourse. The "something" that emerges together with language and through language, the surplus of what is said over the statement itself, is thus eliminated by being isolated and retroactively posited as the unfathomable ground/condition of language. Woman is excluded, but also set on the pedestal of Woman–Truth. Contrary to this, the only thing that, according to Lacan, constitutes the affinity between truth and woman is contained in his notion of *not-whole* (or not-all), as well as in the immanent "count for two" that this notion implies.

This idea of an immanent count for two, and of its pertinence for the notion of the Other, is perhaps the key to a rather strange passage from Lacan's (unpublished) seminar "*. . . ou pire*" that has already attracted some critical attention (for instance, that of Alain Badiou):[44] Lacan goes so far as to say that the number 2 can never be attained starting from the numbers 0 and 1. There is, according to Lacan, an insurmountable gap between 1 and 2, and, from this perspective, the number 2 is already infinite. Has Lacan forgotten the equation $1 + 1 = 2$? How could he (he who was quite proud of his interest in, and knowledge of, mathematics) pretend to address the complex problem of "actual infinity" by claiming that the latter is already here, right under our noses, in the simple number 2? We can, in fact, question Lacan's use of mathematics in this case; at the same time, however, it is quite clear what he is aiming at, and where the problem comes from. Lacan refers to 2 not as though to yet another number (the "second one"), but as the (numeric) signifier of the Other. His claim is that we will never get (to) the Other through the operation of addition, that is, by adding one and one. This kind of adding is precisely what defines, according to Lacan, the "masculine" approach to the sexual (non)relationship. The Other that a "man" is dealing with is *objet petit a*. A man "is unable to attain his sexual partner, who is the Other, except as much as his partner is the cause of his desire"[45] (i.e. the *objet petit a*). This *a*, however, is always a one—it might even be a "thousand and third" one (as in the case of Don Juan), but it is not the Other: $a + a \neq A$ (Other).

Lacan endeavors to define the Other by claiming that here, so to speak, we start to count at 2. As far as the Other is concerned, 2 is the first number that we are forced to reckon (with)—that is to say, we start with a split as such, with a noncoincidence of the same. And, incidentally, Lacan is much closer to Badiou here than Badiou is willing to admit. In his paper "La scène du Deux," Badiou dwells on the possibility of "a Two that is neither counted for one nor is it the sum of one + one. A Two that is counted for two in an immanent way . . . , where Two is neither a fusion nor a sum; and where Two is thus in excess over that which constitutes it, without there being a Third [term] to join it."[46] In other words, Badiou undertakes, in his own way, the construction of a concept of a "2" that cannot be obtained starting from 0 and 1, and is not a sum of 1 + 1.

Instead of affirming the Other by saying "the Other exists" (and thus making the Other the other One), Lacan says "a two exists." He axiomatically posits (an)other starting point from which (and only through which) it is even possible to think the Other as Other. As I said above, this starting point demands that the Other is constitutively a "two."

This fundamental noncoincidence with itself that characterizes the Other must be distinguished from the noncoincidence that constitutes the nonrelationship between the two sexes. In other words, the two sexes are not the figure of the Two in the sense described above. To illustrate this second nonrelationship, the nonrelationship between the two sexes, Lacan, as is well known, resorts to the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise. In order to understand this illustration properly, one has to read very carefully the following comment made by Lacan: "It is quite clear that Achilles can only pass the tortoise—he cannot catch up with her. He only catches up with her at infinity."[47] One should not understand this in the sense that "man" is Achilles and "woman" the tortoise (the unattainable, opaque, enigmatic, inert being that man can approach only at infinity, without ever actually being able to reach her, or to "coincide" with her). Rather, "man" and "woman" are *two different Achilles,* whereas the tortoise is the "object" through which they try to relate to each other

(*objet petit a* in the case of a man, and **Φ** in the case of a woman). "Man" is the Achilles who can never catch up with the tortoise, since, when he reaches the tortoise's point A, the latter is already at point B; and, when he reaches her point B, the tortoise is already at point C, and so on. In short, he keeps pursuing the metonymic object of his desire. "Woman," on the other hand, is the (Lacanian) Achilles, who can do nothing but pass the tortoise, and who, so to speak, passes it already with the first step, relating to it from the initially double or split standpoint of the Other[48] (i.e. from the standpoint where "woman" is already and initially not-whole, where she is the Other as the irreducible difference of the same). Hence we are dealing with two different differences: the irreducible difference *of* (or *to*) the Other (the "masculine" position), and the irreducible difference *within* the Other (the "feminine" position).

With reference to my previous arguments concerning different modes of Nothingness, this could be formulated as follows: in the first case (Achilles trying in vain to catch up with the tortoise, being able merely to reduce the distance between them, but never to abolish it), we are dealing with the "incorporated Nothing" that propels us from the outside; in the second case (Achilles passing the tortoise), we are dealing with Nothing as the inner difference of the same that constitutes an immanent count for two. This latter mode of Nothing(ness) is the one Nietzsche associates with the notion of double affirmation, an affirmation that is crucial for his notion of truth, and contained in the figure of noon or midday: "*Um Mittag war's, da wurde Eins zu Zwei*" ("It was at midday that One turned to Two . . ").[49]

. . . to Nothingness as Minimal Difference

We can now return to our initial question—the one about the status of Nothingness in Nietzsche's philosophy—from a slightly different angle. What would the Nothingness involved in a non-nihilist configuration be—a negativity Nietzsche treats under the heading of "beyond good and evil"?

An interesting starting point for tackling this question is a remark that Lacan makes in his seminar on *Transference:* that the expression "beyond good and evil" is all too easily (mis)understood. When we say of someone that he is acting as if he were "beyond good and evil," we usually mean that, to put it plainly, he doesn't give a damn about the good. The expression "beyond good and evil," which has become a kind of *ritornello,* is typically misused—that is to say, it is used to refer to what would be more correctly referred to as "beyond good." In other words, it is employed to describe a space where, although the good is no longer taken into consideration, the evil and the fascination with evil are still very much at work. In this context (and if we follow Lacan's thinking to its logical conclusion), even the scandalous Marquis de Sade got no further than merely transgressing the good. In de Sade's literature, the victims not only remain beautiful throughout the horror to which they are subjected, but even gain in beauty during this process: right up to the end, a sublime beauty "covers" the bodies of the victims, even in their naked exposure. Lacan's point is that there are walls or defenses that humanity has erected as shields against the central field of *das Ding* (connoted as evil): the first protective barrier is the good; the second is the beautiful or the sublime. This is where the intimate link between sublime beauty and evil (or danger) originally springs from. Nietzsche himself develops the idea that, by transgressing (or being indifferent to) the good, we enter the domain of the sublime, although this does not by any means imply that, for all this, we are effectively "beyond good and evil." He develops this idea in relation to the question of knowledge and truth, in a passage immediately preceding the one I have already quoted in the discussion of truth, the one that introduces the figure of Oedipus:

> *This* will to appearance, to simplification, to masks, to cloaks, in short, to the surface . . . is *countered* by the sublime tendency of the man in search of knowledge to take and to *want* to take things deeply, multifariously, profoundly, as a kind of cruelty of intellectual conscience and aesthetic taste that every courageous thinker will recognize in himself. . . . They are beautiful, glittering, jingling, festive words: honesty, love of truth, love of wisdom, sacrifice for knowledge, the heroism of truthfulness—there is something about them that makes one swell with pride. But we hermits and marmots, we have long ago convinced ourselves in all the privacy of our hermit's conscience, that even this worthy linguistic ostentation belongs with the old adornments. . . . To ensure that henceforth man faces man in the same way that currently, grown tough within the discipline of science, he faces the *other* nature, with unfrightened Oedipus-eyes . . . —that may be a strange and crazy project, but it is a *project*—who could deny that! Why have we chosen it, this crazy project? Or to ask in another way, 'Why bother with knowledge?' Everyone will ask us about it. And we, pressed in this way, we who have asked ourselves just the same thing a hundred times over, we have found and find no better answer. . . .[50]

Nietzsche starts with the "will to appearance, to simplification, to masks, to cloaks, in short, to the surface," which he previously identified with the thriving of life and the "decision for ignorance." He then goes on to point out how there is something that works against this will, namely, the "sublime [*sic*] tendency of the man in search of knowledge." He talks about the "cruelty of intellectual conscience," and the "aesthetic taste" accompanying it, which should be enough to remind us that we have already transgressed the limits of the good, along with the considerations and second thoughts that may arise from it. We are on the ground of the sublime and of the heroic. In short, we are precisely on the ground governed by truth as an ethical (more than an epistemological) imperative, the ground where courage is needed, and the strength of a spirit is measured by how much truth it can tolerate. In a subsequent step, however, Nietzsche characterizes this very heroism of truthfulness (and the "beautiful, glittering words" that accompany it) in terms of a "worthy ostentation" that belongs to the "old adornments" (i.e. precisely to the mask and cloaks). That is to say, he recognizes the very blinding splen-

dor—supposedly the splendor of the "naked truth"—as yet another mask. He then introduces the figure of the "hermit" (*Einsiedler*), a figure epitomized by the man with "unfrightened Oedipus-eyes." This figure can thus be considered as the emblem of "beyond good and evil." The paragraph concludes with a brief meditation on the question "why bother with knowledge?"—we should bear in mind that this question is one of those that emerge with the crossing of the limit of the good, and with the very knowledge that is produced in this crossing.

Why bother with knowledge, if we "know" (a crucial moment of so-called modern consciousness) that—to put it as simply as possible—this is not the way to happiness, that it cannot promise any final redemption or salvation? In other words, the very passion for knowledge and truth appears here (together with all other passions) as *meaningless*. This, of course, is one of the definitions of nihilism. We give up on things because we know that they "make no sense," because there is no ultimate Meaning attached to them. Or, in another form (that of active nihilism), we strive toward and settle on the Nothing as the ultimate goal, believing that the world will find "*ein Finale ins Nichts.*" Yet, as Nietzsche puts it, "a goal is still a sense" ("*ein Ziel ist immer noch ein Sinn*"). Nietzsche defines nihilism as the psychological state that makes us search for meaning or sense in everything that happens. In other words, it is not simply statements about the meaninglessness of everything that are nihilistic—the very need that we experience for all things to have a meaning is the very height of nihilism. In this respect, one of the definitions of "beyond good and evil" is precisely "beyond the imperative of meaning." And if—as Nietzsche suggests—knowledge and truth, once "beyond good and evil," again become worth the trouble, this is due to the absence of an answer to the question "why bother with them?"—and because *this fact* doesn't bother us. This is exactly the position of Oedipus (in *Oedipus at Colonus*) who, despite his tragic experience, does not abandon his quest for knowledge.

All this indicates that Nietzsche does not treat the couple of good and evil as a sort of co-dependent simultaneity, thereby suggesting

that by abolishing the one, we automatically abolish the other. The fact that, for Nietzsche, good and evil do not simply form a complementary couple, but are topologically dislocated and positioned in relation to a third term, is probably most obvious in his theory of nihilism. Would not the most concise definition of nihilism, based upon Nietzsche's reflections, be that, in relation to good and evil, the state of nihilism is the state of being captured in-between the two? Nihilism is the state that accompanies the transgression of the good (and of the various considerations following from it), but a state that, nonetheless, is not "beyond good and evil." Nihilism could be said to take its place "between good and evil." Yet, if it is true that good and evil are topologically dislocated, and positioned in relation to a third term, what would this third term be?—nothing other than *das Nichts,* nothing(ness). This is why one cannot say that "good" and "evil" depend, in terms of their existence, solely upon each other, or that evil is simply the negative determination of good. This might be true at the level of the content covered by these two notions, but not at the level of their existence, namely, at the level where they exist as two different modes of the will. Why is this so?

The "good" is the mode of the will in which the latter remains constitutively blind regarding what it actually wants. It always wants something, and fails to see that it actually wants the Nothing (to which the "something" gives body). In schematic terms, the step "beyond the good" corresponds to the will becoming "aware" of the fact that its ultimate object, the thing it is after in every particular object, is, in fact, the nothingness to which this object gives form and body. This is the territory of nihilism, thus further explaining the difference between active and passive nihilism, between "wanting nothingness" and "not wanting." These two modes of the will are both "beyond good," although, admittedly, they are not "beyond good and evil." The difference between them is that the second mode ("not to will") hesitates before another, ultimate step (or transgression), whereas the first mode (to want nothingness) has for its goal precisely this ultimate transgression, that is, the step into nothingness. In the latter, we recognize the conceptual tendency in

Nietzsche that identifies the truth with the Real, and portrays it as a heroic ethical imperative: "Truth as the Thing" will probably kill us, but this is what our courage must measure itself against. This, however, changes nothing about the fact that to "actively want nothingness" cannot be said to belong to the domain "beyond good and evil." Even though Nietzsche values active nihilism much more than passive nihilism (with its "paralysis of will"), he refuses to identify his philosophical project with active nihilism. He does not set "beyond good and evil" in this apocalyptic perspective of double transgression that finds its finale in Nothingness: ". . . there may even be some puritanical fanatics of conscience who would rather lay down their lives for a certain Nothing than for an uncertain Something. But however valiant the gestures of such virtue, this is nihilism, the sign of a despairing, mortally weary soul."[51]

Therefore, if the formulation "beyond good and evil" is to have some other meaning than that of a "poetical refrain," we need to take into account the configuration sketched above. In a first approach, "beyond good and evil" could appear to mean that we first step "beyond good," that is to say, into some sublime inter-space where Evil appears on the horizon as the ultimate veil surrounding Nothingness itself; and then, when we step even beyond that veil, we find ourselves in Nothingness (which would then seem to be the very definition of "beyond good and evil"). Yet it is clear that this is not what Nietzsche has in mind with "beyond good and evil." Nothing(ness) is not some place or void *beyond* good and evil; Nietzsche's whole point is that Nothing(ness) is what structures the pair good/evil from the inside. Of course, Nothingness may appear as the eternally elusive object that good and evil chase after, but this does not mean that it topologically exists outside of them, independent of this pair. Nothing(ness) is, rather, something that dictates the inner structure, logic, and dynamics (or "tempo") of good and evil. Nothingness is not beyond good and evil; it is, rather, the key organizing element of the field(s) of good and evil.

This is why we should say that "beyond good and evil" can only mean "beyond Nothingness" as the central point structuring the

dialectics of good and evil. If "beyond good and evil" implies a certain crossing or transgression, this can only be the transgression of Nothing(ness) itself. What does this mean? At stake is not an attempt to revive some kind of metaphysics of the positive against Nothingness and negativity. It is not that we should leave Nothingness or negativity behind us once and for all, and embrace something positive. ("Think positive!," as today's fashionable advertising has it: the vacuity of this motto could constitute an amusing gag, were it not meant and taken seriously. But perhaps this is precisely what makes it a gag.) The point is not that Nothingness now simply falls out of the picture. The formulation "beyond Nothingness" concerns not the question of abolishing Nothingness but, strictly speaking, the question of its *location* or position (as well as the question of its form—Nothingness as object versus Nothingness as minimal difference). Another way of putting this would be to say that Nothingness as the central point that structures the field of good and evil needs to be decentered.

That is to say, the expression "beyond Nothing(ness)" should be taken quite literally, and the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise referred to above can help us to demonstrate what is involved in this claim. In Lacan's reading, the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise touches on several important issues, including the problem of infinity (as an infinite approach toward a limit) as well as the problem of Nothingness as object (the tortoise as *objet petit a*, which is precisely Nothingness as object); this object-nothing is, at the same time, the very cause of the configuration of infinite approaching. Lacan's commentary on the paradox (Achilles cannot, in fact, catch up with the tortoise, although he can *pass* it) indicates quite directly what it would mean to pass, to *overstep*, Nothing: it means to inscribe it within the realm of "here." It means that Nothing is no longer the unattainable Thing (always beyond our reach) that we are after, dictating our steps with its very unattainability. To avoid the criticism that we are imputing to Nietzsche some purely Lacanian speculations, let us quote the following fragment from *Nachlass:* "Modern man is . . . all over crossed by infinity [*überall gekreutz von der Un-*

endlichkeit], like the quick-foot Achilles from the parable of Zeno of Elea: infinity inhibits him, he doesn't even catch up with the tortoise."[52]

This is one possible definition of the nihilist "state of affairs": infinity as the Nothing that we are infinitely approaching, the Nothing that propels our desire/will, but is, at the same time, the irreducible hindrance that always nonetheless separates us from the realization of this Infinity/Nothingness. To catch up with the tortoise is not the same thing as to pass it; similarly, actively to want Nothingness (to want the world to have "*ein Finale ins Nichts*") is not the same thing as to "overstep Nothing(ness)." The latter is not some ultimate transgression, a kind of enterprise that would demand inhuman effort. It is more like the crossing of the Rubicon; it is rather simple (since, after all, the Rubicon is but a small stream), yet, nevertheless, it completely changes the coordinates of a given symbolic universe.

Or—to draw another comparison (one that reintroduces the reference to Malevich from the beginning of this study)—to cross or overstep the Nothing is like painting a black square on a white surface: Nothing could be easier! ("Any child could do it," as they sometimes say)—yet whatever is painted from this point onward (or the artistic image as such) will never again have the same status as before. Never again (not even in contemporary figurative painting) will a picture worthy of the name be seen as a representation of something exterior, of something that it endlessly tries to approach in a more and more accurate or precise way. The insight behind Malevich's artistic act is precisely this: although a picture can approach its subject matter in a manner akin to a curve approaching a limit-point, it will never "catch up with it"; if it did catch up with it, this would amount to the very destruction/negation of creativity. The only way out of this is thus to *pass* the object (the "subject matter") and, with it, the Nothing. The following passage from Malevich's writings is a very appropriate formulation of this insight:

> The efforts of the artistic authorities to direct art along the road of common-sense reduced creation to nil.

> And with the strongest people real form is distortion.
>
> Distortion was driven by the strongest to the moment of vanishing, but it did not overstep the bounds of nothing.
>
> But I transformed myself in the zero of form and moved beyond nothing to creation, that is to Suprematism, to the new realism of painting—to non-objective creation.[53]

Here we can discern very clearly the difference between the two types of logic: the one that brings "distortion" to its disappearance, to Nothing (but does not overstep the bounds of Nothing), and the one that "transforms itself in the zero," and thereby "moves beyond Nothing to creation." It is essential to point out that Malevich's "squares" are not abstractions from real forms, or their purification, a purification aiming at the pure essence of a form. Moreover, they are neither a zero-point nor the last thing that remains as the ultimate veil of Nothing. They are, rather, something like a first veil *after* Nothing. (This is probably how one should read and understand the enigmatic title of the 1915 exhibition in Petrograd, where Malevich presented his *Black Square* for the first time, namely: 0,10, "Zero, ten.") To talk about Malevich's painting as something interesting in its radicality, yet, at the same time, as something so extreme that we cannot, in any case, go any further from there (i.e. as a kind of dead-end demanding that we return, in one way or another, to figurative painting), is to miss the point completely. Malevich's gesture in not an extreme or a terminal one; it is, rather, an inaugural one. We could say that, in a certain sense, modern painting starts with *White Square on White Background*. This is not meant to be a chronological statement, an attempt to fix a date for the birth of modern art—it functions as a conceptual statement. Malevich's *White Square* is not just one among the paintings of modern art. It could be taken as the painting that portrays the very presuppositions of modern art, the turning point or break at the very heart of modern art, and of our conceptions of it; a break that inaugurates a completely new notion of representation that can no longer be defined in terms of representation representing an object for the subject. It is also (the picture of) the first picture after zero, and further developments of art (toward new

forms of figurative painting) in no way undermine this claim. This development is not a regression to represented objects after the dead-end of radical abstractionism; nor is it simply a step in a different direction. It is its continuation, since a "figure" on canvas will never again have the same status as before. Whenever we see a painted object now—say, a pipe—we know that "*ceci n'est pas une pipe.*"

The objects painted "beyond zero" or "beyond Nothing" are no longer appearances or representations of true objects. Instead, they are appearances of themselves, and *this is precisely what makes them true* (or not). This is how we can understand, on the one hand, Lacan's thesis that truth has the structure of fiction (i.e. that it can be measured only against itself), and, on the other, Nietzsche's thesis that truth can be found only in "different hues of appearance." Nietzsche's bet on appearance is not a bet on appearance *against* truth; it is a bet on truth as inherent to appearance. "Different hues of appearance" presuppose a configuration different from the one governed by the difference between the real/true object and the image/appearance of this object. The object is no longer external to the image or representation (so that the image could be compared to it), but inherent to it: it is the very relation of, say, a painting to itself. In other words, representation represents that which is created in the very act of representation.

Certainly, to "move beyond Nothing" does not mean that Nothing (or negativity) disappears. Malevich's creations "beyond Nothing" do not simply finish with Nothing once and for all. If we take *White Square on White Background,* where is the Nothing in this picture? It dwells in the very midst of whiteness: it is the "shortest shadow," the minimal difference of the same. Negativity is not what enables us to see and discern positivity; it is not a background against which things stand out. Negativity is what enables us to see the One as constitutively Two; it enables us to see white as "white and white" (or "white on white"). It enables us to perceive a Two where we usually see only One. Nothing is not the background of this picture—it is situated within the very midst of it. As I have already stressed repeatedly, the Nietzschean midday is defined in exactly the same terms: as

the "moment of the shortest shadow," as the point when "One turns to Two."

If Nietzsche's formula "beyond good and evil" is to suggest the affirmation of the neutrality of life as an affirmation of being in all its divergent logic, what does this imply for the relation between—to use Badiou's terms—"being" and "event"? In Nietzsche, an event is nothing other than the time when being appears in all its neutrality. The event is not the Other of being; it is not an encounter with something that simply strikes us as radically contingent in relationship to the order and the laws of being. The event is, rather, what makes us experience being itself (and its order or laws) as radically contingent. This is why Nietzsche links "beyond good and evil" to the "heaven Accident, the heaven Innocence, the heaven Chance, the heaven Prankishness"[54]—or, in a word, the heaven of midday.

This last attribute of midday is intrinsically connected to another one that I have mentioned only briefly in comparing midday to what Benjamin calls the "messianic moment," namely, the dimension of midday that Nietzsche describes in terms of a *standstill* ("the hand moved, the clock of my life drew a breath," or "All grows silent around him, voices sound farther and farther in the distance . . . , his heart stands still, only his eye lives"). This moment when life (with all that this implies: desire, illusion, enjoyment . . .) stands still, and "draws a breath," is presented by Nietzsche as a kind of reversal of perspective: we see from the point where things, dead things, are "looking at us." Consequently, Nietzsche's "messianism," related to the figure of midday or noon, is not that of awaiting a Messiah who will deliver humanity from its chains and discomforts: the Messiah is noon itself as an always-contemporary moment of our being. This is precisely what the liberating dimension of noon as a standstill is about—it is a perspective on life from life itself, and this perspective is, in itself, liberating. In a certain sense, one could say that the perspective of noon constitutes a point from which one sees life as something that can turn in many different ways and directions, not necessarily following the path it (seemingly) follows. Yet, if this perception of different possibilities or different "possible worlds"

(which Nietzsche also emphasizes) has a liberating effect, this is not because it would suggest a sort of fundamental openness of being, one where we could freely choose among these possibilities, and simply change the course of our lives. Instead, the liberating effect resides in the fact that, from the perspective of noon, we see the very necessity (of what *is*) in the light of contingency (with the additional qualification that to welcome contingency implies embracing necessity). But let us first look at the entire passage:

> Verily, it is a blessing and not blasphemy when I teach: "Over all things stand the heaven Accident, the heaven Innocence, the heaven Chance, the heaven Prankishness."
>
> "By Chance"—that is the most ancient nobility of the world, and this I restored to all things: I delivered them from their bondage under Purpose. This freedom and heavenly cheer I have placed over all things like an azure bell when I taught that over them and through them no "eternal will" wills.[55]

This passage is crucial for more than one reason. It should by no means be read as advocating Chance against Necessity. Necessity and Purpose (or "eternal will") are not one and the same thing. The passage is very important because it appears in the context where Nietzsche speaks of "eternal recurrence" and the affirmation (the "Yes-saying") related to it. These last two themes are, as is well known, directly associated with Nietzsche's commendation of *amor fati* ("love of fate"), defined as "Nor merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it . . . , but *love* it."[56] In other words, if heaven Accident or heaven Chance abolishes the notion of Purpose, and of an eternal will willing through all things, it by no means abolishes the notion of necessity. What it does abolish in relation to this notion is a necessity of necessity. That is to say: necessity exists, and things are as they are through necessity; yet this very necessity of things is "what it is"—is such as it is—by accident. Necessity as such is perceived as something that springs from contingency. And this is the key reason why Nietzsche rejects (and mocks) the notion of free will: what undermines the notion of free will (in its

decision-making sense) is not necessity, but contingency—the contingency of/at the very origin of necessity, of what has become necessity. In a somewhat Nietzschean style, we could say that every particular necessity is a "child" of contingency. Contingency is what one cannot master with one's "free will." Yet if one cannot master contingency, one can embrace and affirm it. In embracing it, one inevitably embraces two things at the same time: the thing that has occurred (as necessary) through contingency, and this contingency itself. Or, even more precisely, in embracing contingency, one also embraces necessity.

This argument leads us back to the theme of double affirmation. When Nietzsche keeps repeating that man still has to "learn how to will" ("to reject all *halfhearted* willing" and "to be *able to will*"),[57] this is what he is getting at: man has to comprehend the will (or wanting) as something that is always double or redoubled. If one really wants a thing, one also wants the chance that brought this thing about; and vice versa: if one wants contingency, one also wants the thing that this contingency has brought about (as necessary). If not, the willing itself is crippled, plunged into the "spirit of revenge and gnashing of teeth." In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche formulates this double dimension of willing in terms of the will being able *also to will backward*. "All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I willed it.'"[58] This Nietzschean theme is sometimes (mis)understood as a form of volunteeristic appropriation or abolishment of necessity (and of the contingency at its origin): whatever happens is retroactively posited as something we wanted. Yet this would simply be what Nietzsche calls "concealing the necessity" (out of vanity), and is quite different from *loving* what is necessary. When Zarathustra says that his will can dominate chance,[59] this in no way implies that the will changes chance into something else, something that was brought about by our will. On the contrary, will can dominate or "disarm" chance precisely and simply by wanting it *as chance*. In this sense, "willing backward" is nothing but affirming (saying "Yes" to) what one might call "con-

tingent necessity" (or, alternatively, the unavoidable necessity of contingency itself).

This is also how we should understand the thesis that every true will has two tenses, past and future, and that every double affirmation is structured like the "future perfect" (or "future anterior"): not in terms of "I want this," but in terms of "I will have wanted this." This is the very core of the difference that Nietzsche tirelessly insists upon, the difference between accepting what is necessary (enduring it, tolerating it) and *loving* it: the latter is not only a simple "Yes" to the necessary—it is a Yes to the necessary by being a Yes to contingency. This accounts for the fact that a Yes to what is necessary is not only an affirmation of what *is*, but also an affirmation of that which *is not*. Double affirmation is what holds the place for what is not, preventing necessity from closing in upon itself.

The affirmation of contingency (in the sense developed above) is both liberating and enchaining. The freedom gained by positing a "heaven Chance" over all things is not an abstract freedom. It is not the freedom of detachment or indifference, not the freedom simply to choose among various possibilities. It is a concrete freedom, one that works in reverse: it is not that we are free to want whatever we choose; it is that our truly (which is to say "doubly") wanting *something* sets us free. What is liberating is precisely the engagement with its necessity. This is why *amor fati*, love of fate or love of necessity, is already, and in an immanent way, love of contingency. Or, as Nietzsche also suggests, it is love *tout court*.

Addendum: On Love as Comedy

The status of this addendum is that of an "essential appendage." Nietzsche is not discussed in it. It is a short study of the logic of comedy, and its inherent affinity with the functioning of love (one could also say: with love that "functions"). Of course, comedy and laughter are Nietzschean themes *par excellence,* whereas love is, perhaps, the most palpable figure of the Two—not simply in the sense of a couple, of "two persons," but, rather, as a figure that somehow (and locally) solves the eternal antinomy of desire (or "will") and enjoyment (the "Thing" or the Nothing) by articulating the two on the same level, as a minimal difference of the same. The value of this appendage for the discussion of Nietzsche, however, does not lie in the fact that it also touches some of the themes that were important to Nietzsche. On the contrary, its interest resides in the fact that, while it departs from a quite independent question and context (the original paper was written for an occasion that had nothing to do with Nietzsche), its argument leads to the very core of what I have developed here as the Nietzschean theory of the two, and of truth as a montage of two semblances/appearances. This is why I chose to couple this essay with the main body of the text just as it is, without attempting to integrate it by any kind of rearrangement of its internal components.

In Lacan's seminar *L'angoisse,* we find the following, rather peculiar statement: "Only love-sublimation makes it possible for *jouissance* to condescend to desire."[1] What is peculiar about this statement, of course, is the link it establishes between love *as sublimation* and the movement of condescending or descending. It is well known that Lacan's canonic definition of sublimation from *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* implies precisely the opposite movement, that of ascension (that sublimation raises, or elevates, an object to the dignity of the Thing, the Freudian *das Ding*).[2] In this last definition, sublimation is identified with the act of producing the Thing in its very transcendence and inaccessibility, as well as in its horrifying and/or inhuman aspect (for example, the status of the Lady in courtly love, which is, as Lacan puts it, the status of an "inhuman partner"). Yet, on the

subject of this particular sublimation that is called love—which is thus opposed to courtly love as the worshiping of a sublime object—Lacan states that it makes it possible for *jouissance* to condescend to desire, that it "humanizes *jouissance*."[3]

This definition is surprising not only in relation to sublimation, but also in relation to what we usually call love. Is love not always the worshiping of a sublime object, even though it does not always take as radical a form as in the case of courtly love? Does love not always raise or elevate its object (which could be quite common "in itself") to the dignity of the Thing? How are we to understand the word "love" in the quoted sentence from Lacan's seminar *L'angoisse*?

Lacan himself provides a way of answering these questions when he states, in *Le transfert*, that "love is a comic feeling."[4] Indeed, instead of trying to answer these questions immediately, we should perhaps shift our interrogation, and examine the one form of sublimation that incontestably fits the first definition quoted above (as well as the condescending movement it implies): the art of comedy. This might then make it easier for us to see how love enters this definition. The question that will guide our interrogation of comedy is the following one: how does the comic paradigm situate the Real in relation to *das Ding*?

Concerning the art of comedy, we can actually say that it involves a certain condescension of the Thing to the level of the object. Yet what is at stake, in good comedies, is not simply an abasement of some sublime object that thus reveals its ridiculous aspect. Although this kind of abasement can make us laugh (consistent with the Freudian definition according to which laughter plays the part of discharging the libidinal energy previously invested in sustaining the sublime aspect of the object), we all know that this is not enough for a good comedy to work. As Hegel knew very well, genuine comic laughter is not a scornful laughter, it is not the laughter of *Schadenfreude*, and there is much more to comedy than just a variation on the statement "the emperor is naked." First of all, we could say that true comedies are not so much involved in unveiling and disclosing the

nudity or emptiness behind appearances as they are involved in *constructing* emptiness (or nudity).

Good comedies lay out a whole set of circumstances or situations in which this nakedness is explored from many different angles, constructed in the very process of its display. They do not undress the Thing. Rather, they take its clothes and say, "Well, this is cotton, this is polyamide, and here we have some pretty shoes—we'll put all this together, and we'll show you the Thing." One could say that comedies involve the process of constructing the Thing from what Lacan calls "*a* elements" (imaginary elements of fantasy), and from these elements only. Yet it is essential to a good comedy that it does not simply abolish the gap between the Thing and the "*a* elements," which would come down to a "lesson" that the Thing equals the sum of its elements, and that these (imaginary) elements are its only Real. The preservation (or, rather, the construction) of a certain *entre-deux*, interval, or gap, is as vital to a good comedy as it is to a good tragedy. The trick, however, is that instead of playing on the difference or discordance between the appearance of the Thing and its real residue or its Void, comedies usually do something else: they reduplicate/redouble the Thing, and play on (or with) the difference between its two doubles. In other words, the difference that constitutes the motor of the comic movement is not the difference between the Thing in itself and its appearance, but, rather, the difference between two appearances.

Recall Chaplin's *The Great Dictator,* where "the Thing called Hitler" takes the double form of the dictator Hynkel and a Jewish barber. As Gilles Deleuze has pointed out, this is a Chaplinesque gesture *par excellence:* we find it in *City Lights* (Charlot the tramp and Charlot supposed to be rich), as well as in *M. Verdoux*. Chaplin's genius, states Deleuze, consists in being able "to invent the minimal difference between two actions," and to create a "circuit laughter–emotion, where the former refers to the little difference and the later to the great distance, without effacing or diminishing one another."[5] This is a very important insight that will help us to specify the mechanism

of comedy, as well as that of love. First, however, let us determine more precisely what this "minimal difference" is. We could say that it stands for a split at the very core of the same. In order to illustrate this, let us take another comic example, a punch line from one of the Marx Brothers' movies: "Look at this guy, he looks like an idiot, he behaves like an idiot—but do not let yourself be deceived, he *is* an idiot!" Or, to take a more sophisticated example from the Hegelian theory of tautology: If I say "*a* is *a*," the two "*a*"s are not exactly the same. The very fact that one appears in the place of the subject and the other in the place of the predicate introduces a minimal difference between them. We could say that comic art creates and uses this minimal difference in order to make palpable, or visible, a certain Real that otherwise eludes our grasp. We could go even further, and state that, in the comic paradigm, the Real is nothing but this "minimal difference"—it has no other substance or identity.

The comic line from the Marx Brothers also enables us to grasp the difference between the act of taking a (sublime) Thing and showing the public that this Thing is, in fact, nothing more than a poor and altogether banal object, and the act of taking the Thing, not to the letter, but, rather, "to the letter of its appearance." Contrary to what is often believed, the axiom of good comedies is not that "appearances are always deceptive," but, rather, that there is something in appearance that never deceives. Following the Marx Brothers, we could say that the only essential deception of appearance is that it gives the impression that there is something else or more behind it.[6] One of the fundamental gestures of good comedies is to make an appearance out of what is behind the appearance. They make the truth (or the Real) not so much reveal itself, as appear. Or, to put it in yet another way, they make it possible for the Real to condescend to the appearance (in the form of a split at the very core of the appearance). This does not mean that the Real turns out to be just another appearance; it means that it is real precisely *as appearance*.

A good example of this is to be found, once again, at the beginning of *The Great Dictator,* when Chaplin gives his momentous impersonation of Hitler (in the guise of Hynkel) addressing the crowd. If,

in the case of such speeches, we usually have to ask ourselves what the speaker was *really* saying, that is, what was the true significance of his words, Chaplin shows us this underlying meaning in a most direct way—and he does so precisely by eliminating the very question of meaning. He speaks a language that does not exist, a strange mixture of some existing German words and words that sound like German but have no meaning. The scene is interrupted from time to time by the voice of an English interpreter, who is supposed to translate and sum up what Hynkel is saying, but who is obviously trying to make the speech sound quite innocent. These sporadic translations make us laugh as much as Chaplin himself. They make us laugh because they are so obviously false and full of omissions. Yet the very fact that they make us laugh is in itself quite funny, since we could not exactly be said to *understand* what Hynkel is saying (and to compare this with the "translation"). In other words, we understand nothing of what Hynkel is saying, but we know perfectly well that the translation is false. Or, to put it in yet another way, we never get to know the Thing in itself, but we are perfectly capable of distinguishing it from its false appearances. What we get are two fake speeches, yet somehow we know exactly what Hynkel is saying.

In one of his best movies, *To Be or Not To Be*, Ernst Lubitsch provides another very good example of how comedies approach the Thing. Once again, the Thing in question is Hitler. At the beginning of the film, there is a brilliant scene in which a group of actors are rehearsing a play featuring Hitler. The director is complaining about the appearance of the actor who plays Hitler, insisting that his makeup is bad, and that he doesn't look like Hitler at all. He also says that what he sees in front of him is just an ordinary man. Reacting to this, one of the actors replies that Hitler *is* just an ordinary man. If this were all, we would be dealing with a didactic remark that transmits a certain truth but does not make us laugh, since it lacks that comic quality which has quite a different way of transmitting truths. So, the scene continues: the director is still not satisfied, and is trying desperately to name the mysterious "something more" that distinguishes the appearance of Hitler from the appearance of the actor in

front of him. He searches and searches; finally, he notices a picture (a photograph) of Hitler on the wall, and cries out triumphantly: "That's it! This is what Hitler looks like!" "But sir," replies the actor, "that is a picture of me!" This, on the contrary, is quite funny, especially since we ourselves, as spectators, were taken in by the enthusiasm of the director who saw in the picture something quite different from this poor actor (whose status in the company is not even that of a true actor or a star, but of a simple walk-on). Here we can grasp very well the meaning of the "minimal difference," a difference that is "a mere nothing," yet a nothing that is very real, and in relation to which we should not underestimate the role of our desire.

But what is the principal difference between the tragic and the comic paradigm? How do they situate the Real in relation to the Thing, and how do they articulate it?

The classical tragic paradigm is perhaps best defined in terms of what Kant conceptualizes with the notion of the sublime. Here, the Real is situated beyond the realm of the sensible (nature), but can be seen, or "read," in the *resistance* of the sensible or of matter, its inflections, its suffering. We are dealing with a friction that results from a relative movement of two heterogeneous things, one determinable (as sensible) or conditional, the other unconditional and indeterminate. The subject experiences this friction as pain and violence done to his or her sensible nature, yet it inspires her or his respect for this unconditional/unknown Thing in which she or he can recognize her or his practical destination, her or his freedom. What results from this friction is the sublime splendor. (In his analysis of *Antigone,* Lacan insists upon this dimension; he insists that Antigone's *ethical* act produces this *aesthetic* effect of blinding splendor.) So, if we take this classical example, we could say that, in *Antigone,* death appears as the limit of the sensible, its extreme edge—an edge that one can surpass in the name of some Thing in which the subject places her true or real being. The death is the place *par excellence* of this friction we mentioned above, emphasized, in the play, by the transformation of death from something that happens to us into a *place:* Antigone is con-

demned to be buried alive in the tomb, which thus becomes the place of the surpassing, the scene (or stage) of the sublime splendor that Lacan evokes in relation to the heroine. What is important is not so much the fact that the death takes place, but the fact that it *is* a place, a place where certain things become visible. It is as though one were to spread the extreme edge of a body, the skin, so that it becomes the scene for the encounter of two things that it usually separates, the exterior and the interior of the body. What is at stake in the case of *Antigone* is not the difference or the limit between life and death, but—to use Alain Badiou's words—the limit between life in the biological sense of the word and life as the subject's capacity to be a support of some process of truth. "Death" is precisely the name of this limit between these two lives; it names the fact that they do not coincide, that one of the two lives can suffer, or even cease to exist, because of the other. In the case of Antigone, the other life (the unconditional or real life) becomes visible on the scene of death as that something of life that death cannot reach or get at, that it cannot abolish. This other or real life is thus visible *per negativum*; it is visible in the bedazzlement, in the sublime splendor of the image of something that has no image. The Real is identified with the Thing, and is visible in this blinding splendor as the effect of the Thing on sensible matter. It is not visible or readable immediately, only in this blinding trace that it leaves in the word of the senses. In the case of tragic or sublime art, we could speak of an *incorporation* of the Real, which makes the latter both immanent and inaccessible (or, more precisely, accessible only to the hero who is supposed to "enter the Real," and who therefore plays the role of the screen that separates us, the spectators, from the Real).

The comic paradigm, on the other hand, is not that of incorporation, but, rather, the paradigm of what we could call *montage*. In this paradigm, the Real is, at one and the same time, *transcendent* and *accessible*. The Real is accessible, for example, as pure nonsense, which constitutes an important element of every comedy. And yet this nonsense remains transcendent in the sense that the miracle of its real effects (i.e. the fact that the nonsense itself can produce a real effect

of sense) remains inexplicable. This inexplicability is the very motor of comedy. One could also say that nonsense is transcendental in the Kantian sense of the word: it is what makes it possible for us actually to *see* or *perceive* a difference between a simple actor and the picture of Hitler (which is, in fact, the picture of the same actor). This difference that we "really" see is pure nonsense, but it has a transcendental foundation: a dimension that laughter does not dissipate, but only illuminates and localizes. The appearance or illusion of this difference has precisely the same status as the Kantian "transcendental illusion" (*transcendentale Schein*). It is an illusion or error that Kant qualifies as necessary, an illusion that we have to subject to critical examination, but in relation to which it would be illusory to believe that it would dissipate entirely after this examination. What is so singular about this "transcendental illusion" is that it is not a false representation of something. Unlike empirical illusions (for example, optical illusions) that make us see an object as different than it really is, the transcendental illusion presupposes the lack of the object that appears in this illusion.

"Transcendental illusion" is the name for something that appears where there should be nothing. It is not the illusion of *something*; it is not a false or distorted representation of a real object. Behind this illusion there is no real object—there is only nothing, the lack of an object. The illusion consists of "something" in the place of "nothing." It involves deception by the simple fact that it *is*, that it appears. It is precisely the mysterious "something more" that appears in the picture of Hitler, and that we "see," even though it is not an object of experience. This indicates, perhaps, the unique possibility of perceiving something that is not an object of experience, but is also *not* the noumenon, the "Thing in itself." The photograph in question is not a false representation of the actor as its real object. It is an exact representation of the actor *plus* a transcendental illusion. Like the Kantian transcendental dialectic, comedy does not aim at dissipating this illusion or appearance; it discerns it, plays with it, and points at the Real that it contains.

In relation to comic art, one could speak of a certain *ethics of unbelief*. Unbelief as an ethical attitude consists in confronting belief not simply in its illusory dimension, but in the very Real of this illusion. This means that unbelief does not so much expose the nonsense of the belief as it exposes the Real or the material force of nonsense itself. This also implies that this ethics cannot rely upon the movement of circulation around the Thing, which gives its force to sublime art. Its motor is, rather, to be found in a dynamics that always makes us go too far. One moves directly toward the Thing, and finds oneself with a "ridiculous" object. Yet the dimension of the Thing is not simply abolished; it remains on the horizon thanks to the sense of failure that accompanies this direct passage to the Thing. In Lubitsch's movie, the director tries to name or show the Thing directly ("That's it! That's Hitler!"), and, of course, he misses or "passes" it, showing only a "ridiculous object," that is, the actor's picture. However, the Thing as that which he missed remains on the horizon, and is situated somewhere between the actor who plays Hitler and the picture of that actor, which together constitute the space where our laughter can resonate. The act of saying "That's it, that's the Thing" has the effect of opening a certain *entre-deux*, thus becoming the space in which the Real of the Thing unfurls between two "ridiculous objects" that are supposed to embody it.

Let us be more precise: to "move directly to the Thing" does not mean to show or exhibit the Thing directly. The "trick" is that we never see the Thing (not even in the picture, since it is merely a picture of the actor); we see only two semblances (the actor and his picture). Thus we see the difference between the object and the Thing without ever seeing the Thing. Or, to put it the other way around: what we are *shown* are just two semblances, yet what we *see* is nothing less than the Thing itself, becoming visible in the minimal difference between the two semblances. This is not to say that, through the "minimal difference" (or through that gap that it opens up), we get a glimpse of the mysterious Thing that lies somewhere beyond representation—it is, rather, that the Thing is conceived as nothing

other than the very gap of/within the representation. In this sense, we could say that comedy introduces a kind of parallel montage: a montage not of the Real (as the transcendent Thing) and the semblance, but a montage of two semblances or doubles. "Montage" thus means: producing or constructing or recognizing the Real from a very precise composition of two semblances. The Real is identified here with the gap that divides the appearance itself. And in comedies, this gap itself takes the form of an object.

Now, what has all this got to do with love? What links the phenomenon of love to the comic paradigm is the combination of accessibility with the transcendental as the configuration of "accessibility in the very transcendence." Or, in other words, what associates love with comedy is the way they approach and deal with the Real.

Already, on the most superficial level, we can detect this curious affinity between love and comedy: To love—that is to say (according to the good old traditional definition), to love someone "for what he is" (i.e. to move directly to the Thing)—always means to find oneself with a "ridiculous object," an object that sweats, snores, farts, and has strange habits. But it also means to continue to see in this object the "something more" that the director in Lubitsch's movie sees in the picture of "Hitler." To love means to perceive this gap or discrepancy, and not so much to be able to laugh at it as to have an irresistible urge to laugh at it. The miracle of love is a *funny* miracle.

Real love—if I may risk this expression—is not the love that is called sublime, the love in which we let ourselves be completely dazzled or "blinded" by the object so that we no longer see (or can't bear to see) its ridiculous, banal aspect. This kind of "sublime love" necessitates and generates a radical inaccessibility of the other (which usually takes the form of eternal preliminaries, or the form of an intermittent relationship that enables us to reintroduce the distance that suits the inaccessible, and thereby to "resublimate" the object after each "use"). But neither is real love the sum of desire and friendship, where friendship is supposed to provide a "bridge" between two awakenings of desire, and to embrace the ridiculous side of the

object. The point is not that, in order for love to "work," one has to accept the other with all her baggage, to "stand" her banal aspect, to forgive her weaknesses—in short, to tolerate the other when one does not desire her. The true miracle of love—and this is what links love to comedy—consists in *preserving the transcendence in the very accessibility of the other.* Or—to use Deleuze's terms—it consists in creating a "circuit laughter–emotion, where the former refers to the little difference and the latter to the great distance, without effacing or diminishing one another."

The miracle of love is not that of transforming some banal object into a sublime object, inaccessible in its being—this is the miracle of desire. If we are dealing with an alternation of attraction and repulsion, this can only mean that *love as sublimation* has not taken place, has not done its work and performed its "trick." The miracle of love consists, first of all, in perceiving the two objects (the banal object and the sublime object) on the same level; additionally, this means that neither one of them is occulted or substituted by the other. Secondly, it consists in becoming aware of the fact that the other *qua* "banal object" and the other *qua* "object of desire" are one and the same, in the identical sense that the actor who plays Hitler and the picture of "Hitler" (which is actually the picture of the actor) are one and the same. That is to say: one becomes aware of the fact that they are both semblances, that neither one of them is more real than the other. Finally, the miracle of love consists in "falling" (and in continuing to stumble) because of the Real which emerges from the gap introduced by this "parallel montage" of two semblances or appearances, that is to say, because of the real that emerges from the noncoincidence of the same. The other whom we love is neither of the two semblances (the banal and the sublime object); but neither can she be separated from them, since she is nothing other than what results from a successful (or "lucky") montage of the two. In other words, what we are in love with is the *Other as this minimal difference of the same that itself takes the form of an object.*

Here we can clearly see the difference between the functioning of desire and the functioning of love, as well as the reason for Lacan's

thesis that love is ultimately a drive. The difference between desire and drive may be discerned in the two different types of temporality involved in them. Above, we formulated this difference in terms of the difference between succession and simultaneity, but we could formulate it in yet another way. What characterizes the subject of desire is the difference between the (transcendental) cause of desire and its object, the difference that manifests itself as the "temporal difference" between the subject of desire and its object *qua* real. The subject is separated from the object by an interval or a gap, which keeps moving with the subject, and makes it impossible for her ever to catch up with the object. The object that the subject is pursuing accompanies her, moves with her, yet always remains separated from her, since it exists, so to speak, in a different "time zone." This accounts for the metonymy of desire. The subject makes an appointment with the object at nine o'clock, but for the object in question it is already eleven o'clock (which means that it has already gone).

This "immanent inaccessibility" also explains the basic fantasy of love stories and love songs that focus on the impossibility involved in desire. The leitmotiv of these stories is: "In another place, in another time, somewhere, not here, sometime, not now. . . ." This attitude (which clearly indicates the transcendental structure of desire: time and space as a priori conditions of our experience) can be read as the recognition of an inherent impossibility, an impossibility that is subsequently externalized, transformed into some empirical obstacle. ("If only we'd met in another time and another place, then all this would have been possible. . . .") One usually says, in this case, that the Real as impossible is camouflaged by an empirical obstacle that prevents us from confronting some fundamental or structural impossibility. The point of Lacan's identification of the Real with the impossible, however, is not simply that the Real is some Thing that cannot possibly happen. On the contrary, the whole point of the Lacanian concept of the Real is that *the impossible happens*. This is what is so traumatic, disturbing, shattering—*or funny*—about the Real. The Real happens precisely as the impossible. It is not something that

happens when we want it, or try to make it happen, or expect it, or are ready for it. It always happens at the wrong time and in the wrong place; it is always something that does not fit the (established or anticipated) picture. The Real as impossible means that there is no right time or place for it, not that it cannot possibly happen.

The fantasy of "another place and another time" that sustains the illusion of a possibly fortunate encounter betrays the Real of an encounter by transforming the "impossible that happened" into "cannot possibly happen" (here and now). In other words, it disavows what *has already happened* by trying to submit it to the existing transcendental scheme of the subject's fantasy. The distortion at stake in this maneuver is not that of creating the belief that something impossible will, or would, nevertheless happen in some other conditions of time and space—the distortion is that of making something that *has happened* here and now appear as if it could happen only in a distant future, or in some altogether different time and space.

A paradigmatic example of this disavowal of the Real (which aims at preserving the Real as inaccessible Beyond) is the movie *The Bridges of Madison County*: What we have here is a fortunate love encounter between two people, each of them very settled in their lives: she as a housewife and mother, bound to her family (immobile, so to speak); he as a successful photographer who moves and travels around all the time. They meet by chance, and fall passionately in love—or so we are asked to believe. But what is their reaction to this encounter? They immediately move the accent from "the impossible happened" to "this cannot possibly happen," "this is impossible." Since she is alone at the time of their encounter (her husband and children have gone away for the week), and since he has to stay in the area anyway, in order to complete his reportage, they decide to spend the week together, and then to say goodbye, never to see each other again. Described in this way, this seems like a casual adventure (and, I would say, that's what it is). The problem, however, is that the couple perceive themselves, and are presented to us, as if they were living *the* love of their lives, the most important and precious thing that has ever happened in their love life. What is the problem or the

lie of this fantasmatic *mise en scène?* The fact that the encounter is "derealized" from the very moment it happens. It is immediately inscribed and confined within a discrete, narrowly defined time and space (one week, one house—this being their "another time, another place"), destined to become the most precious object of their memories. We could say that even during the time their relationship "is happening," it is already a memory; the couple are living it as already lost (and the whole pathos of the movie springs from this). The real of the encounter, the "impossible that happened," is immediately rejected and transformed into an object that paradoxically embodies the very impossibility of what *did happen*. It is a precious object that one puts into a jewel-box, the box of memory. From time to time, one opens the box, and finds great pleasure in contemplating this jewel that glitters by virtue of the impossibility it embodies. Contrary to what might seem to be the case, the two protagonists are not able to "make do" with the lack. Rather, they make of the lack itself their ultimate possession.

To return to the question of the difference between love (as drive) and desire: we could now say that what is involved in the drive as different from desire is not so much a time difference as a "time warp"—the concept that science-fiction literature uses precisely to explain ("scientifically") the impossible that happens. This time warp essentially refers to the fact that a piece of some other (temporal) reality gets caught in our present temporality (or vice versa), appearing where there is no structural place for it, thus producing a strange, illogical tableau. According to Lacan, the drive appears as something that "has neither head nor tail," as a *montage*—in the sense in which one talks about montage in a surrealist collage.[7] Something appears where it should not be, and thus breaks or interrupts the linearity of time, the harmony of the picture.

There is yet another way of conceiving the proximity of love (precisely in its dimension of creating a "minimal difference," and rebounding in the space between two objects) and drive. This other way leads through the Lacanian analysis of the double path that characterizes the drive: the difference between *goal* and *aim*. The drive al-

ways finds or makes its way between *two* objects: the object at which it aims (for instance, food in the case of the oral drive) and—as Jacques-Alain Miller puts it—the satisfaction as object ("the pleasure of the mouth" in the oral drive). The drive is what circulates between the two objects. It exists in the minimal difference between them—a difference that is itself, paradoxically, the result of the circular movement of the drive.

The *entre-deux,* the interval or gap introduced by desire, is the gap between the Real and the semblance: the other that is accessible to desire is always the imaginary other, Lacan's *objet petit a,* whereas the Real (Other) of desire remains unattainable. The Real of desire is *jouissance*—that "inhuman partner" (as Lacan calls it) that desire aims at beyond its object, and that must remain inaccessible. Love, on the other hand, is what somehow manages to make the Real of desire accessible. This is what Lacan is aiming at with his statement that love "humanizes *jouissance,*" and that "only love-sublimation makes it possible for *jouissance* to condescend to desire." In other words, the best way to define (love-) sublimation is to say that its effect is precisely that of *desublimation.*

There are two different concepts of sublimation in Lacan's work. The first concept is the one he develops in relation to the notion of desire, the one defined in terms of "raising an object to the dignity of the Thing." And then there is another concept of sublimation, which Lacan develops in relation to the notion of drive when he claims that the "true nature" of the drive is precisely that of sublimation.[8] This second notion of sublimation is that of a "desublimation" that makes it possible for the drive to find a "satisfaction different from its aim." Is this not exactly what could be said of love? In love, we do not find satisfaction *in the other* at whom we aim; we find it in the space or gap between—to put it bluntly—what we see and what we get (the sublime and the banal object). The satisfaction is, literally, *attached* to the other; it "clings" to the other. (One could say that it clings to the other just as the "pleasure of the mouth" clings to "food": they are not the same, yet they cannot simply be separated—they are, in a manner of speaking, "dislocated.") One

could also say that love is that which knows this, and desire that which doesn't. This is also the reason for Lacan's insistence that the *jouissance* of the body of the Other is not the sign of love,[9] and that the more a man allows a women to confuse him with God (i.e. with what gives her enjoyment), the less he loves. With this in mind, we can perhaps define more precisely the "desublimation" involved in love: desublimation does not mean "transformation of the sublime object into a banal object"; it implies, rather, a dislocation or a decentering of the sublime object in relation to the source of enjoyment—it implies that we see the "minimal difference" between them. (This, of course, has nothing to do with the archetypal situation in which we love and worship one person, but can sleep only with others whom we do not particularly care about. The case of someone worshiping the other so much that he is incapable of making love to her is precisely what bears witness to the fact that the "dislocation" [sublimation as desublimation] did not take place, and that he confuses the other with the source of some unspeakable, supreme enjoyment [or a supreme lack of it] that has to be avoided.) In other words, in this situation, the Other, instead of inducing an immanent count for Two, falls into "two ones."

Love (in the precise and singular meaning that I have tried to give this notion) affects and changes the way we relate to *jouissance* (where *jouissance* does not necessarily mean sexual enjoyment), and makes of *jouissance* something other than our "inhuman partner." More precisely, it makes *jouissance* appear as something we can relate to, and as something we can actually desire. Another way of putting this would be to say that we cannot gain access to the other (as other) so long as the attachment to our *jouissance* remains a "nonreflexive" attachment. In this case, we will always use the other as a means of relating to our own enjoyment, as a screen for our fantasy (the sexual act being, as Slavoj Žižek likes to put it, an act of "masturbating with a real partner"). The two sides of love that mutually sustain each other, and account for the fact that—as Lacan puts it—love "makes up for the sexual relationship (as nonexistent)," could be formulated as follows: to love the other and to desire my own *jouissance*. To "desire

one's own *jouissance*" is probably the hardest to obtain and to make work, since enjoyment has trouble appearing as an object. One could protest against this, claiming that it cannot be so difficult after all, since most people "want to enjoy." However, the "will to enjoy" (and its obverse side as the imperative of *jouissance*) should not be confused with desire. To establish a relation of desire toward one's own enjoyment (and to be able actually to "enjoy" it) does not mean to subject oneself to the unconditional demand of enjoyment—it means, rather, to be able to elude its grasp.

This eluding or "subtraction," making desire appear where there was no place for it before, is the effect of what I have called "sublimation as desublimation." If, as Lacan insists, "love constitutes a sign," then we should say that love is the sign of this *effect*.

Notes

Introduction: The Event "Nietzsche"

1. Nietzsche was well aware of the pitfalls of a "sneering discourse": the line between a productive intervention and an act of resentment can be very thin. The following passage is illuminating in this context, especially since we know that Nietzsche himself did not think much of Plato:

   > How malicious philosophers can be! I know of nothing more venomous than the joke that Epicurus made at the expense of Plato and the Platonists: he called them "Dionysiokolakes." Literally and primarily, this means "flatterers of Dionysus," that is, the tyrant's appendages and toadies; but it also suggests: "They are all *actors,* there is nothing genuine about them" (for "Dionysiokolax" was a popular term for an actor). And the latter meaning contains the real malice that Epicurus fired off at Plato: he was annoyed by the mannered grandiosity, the theatricality that Plato and his pupils deployed so well, and that Epicurus did not! Epicurus, the old schoolmaster of Samos, sat tucked away in his little garden in Athens and wrote three hundred books—out of fury and ambition against Plato—who knows? (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* trans. Marion Faber [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], pp. 9–10)

2. See Kazimir Malevich's thesis: ". . . the moment when the idealisation of form took hold of them should be considered the downfall of real art. . . . The Venus de Milo is . . . a parody. Angelo's David is a monstrosity." Kazimir Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism," in *Essays on Art* (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 22–23.

3. In music, for instance, he ranks Bizet above Wagner, prefers Mozart to Beethoven, dislikes Liszt and Brahms. In literature, he labels Zola, Flaubert, and Hugo "decadents." The same goes for Delacroix.

4. Matthew Ramply, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

5. Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism," p. 38.

6. Ibid., p. 37.

7. Alain Badiou, "Casser en deux l'histoire du monde?," *Les conférences du perroquet*, 37, December 1992, Paris, p. 11.

8. Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism," p. 25.

9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 45.

10. He is designated as such by Alain Badiou, together with Pascal, Wittgenstein, and Lacan.

11. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 117.

12. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals / Ecce homo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 323.

13. Badiou, "Casser en deux l'histoire du monde?," p. 15.

14. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1979; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 188.

15. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *The Pelican Freud Library*, vol. 14 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985).

16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 145–146. We could perhaps compare this to the way Christ is portrayed in Scorsese's movie *The Last Temptation of Christ*: Christ is shown as being fundamentally unable to recognize himself as God, or to recognize himself in his "mission."

17. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 221.

18. Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, p. 221.

19. The usual English translation of this Nietzschean declaration is "One turned (in)to Two"; see *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 180; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science. With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 371.

20. Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, p. 217.

21. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 277.

22. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 371; translation modified.

23. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 156.

24. Nietzsche describes the figure of the "ascetic priest" (who is the anti-contingency type *par excellence*) by saying that his essential art consists in finding a way of detonating the most dangerous of all explosives (i.e. resentment) in such a way that nothing happens, that is, so that it does not blow up the herd or the herdsman. He succeeds in doing this by altering the direction of resentment. Every sufferer seeks a cause for his suffering, and he seeks it in the outside world: someone must be to blame for it. And the gesture of the ascetic priest is to "introvert" this explosive resentment. He says to the sufferer: "Quite so, my ship! someone must be to blame for it: but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it—*you alone are to blame for yourself!*" Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals / Ecce homo,* p. 128. In other words, there are *always* reasons for our suffering, and these are to be found exclusively within ourselves.

25. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* p. 51.

Part I: Nietzsche the Metapsychologist

1. See, for example, David Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics & Modernity: A Critique of Liberal Reason* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

2. Jacques Lacan, *Le transfert* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 354.

3. Alain Badiou has suggested an interesting reading of this difference between two Gods. See his *Court traité de l'ontologie transitoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

4. This, of course, holds true for Newton's scientific writings, whereas another part of his corpus (for instance, his commentaries of the book of Daniel) implies a different notion of God—here we can observe this twofold status of God within the same author.

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 48. Lacan makes a very similar point in *Encore:* "God (*Dieu*) is the locus where, if you allow this wordplay, the *dieu*—the *dieur*—the *dire,* is produced. With a trifling change, the *dire* constitutes *Dieu*. And as long as things are said, the God hypothesis will persist." Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 45.

6. Here, also, it could be instructive to link this to some of Lacan's observations concerning the shift from the "master's discourse" to the "university discourse." In relation to the latter, he talks about "the new tyranny of knowledge." See Jacques Lacan, *L'Envers de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 34.

7. What, exactly, is this notion, which is considered to be the "cause" of the Reformation movement? The possibility of buying one's remission is an idea that undoubtedly has (and this not only from the Nietzschean perspective) a certain liberating effect. The idea that guilt can be formulated in something external and that, by means of this externalization, we can "get rid of it" is certainly a welcome defense against what Nietzsche describes as "the sinner breaking himself on the cruel wheel of a restless, morbidly lascivious conscience." The problem occurs when this welcome "alienation of guilt" is inscribed in the socioeconomic context, in the distribution of goods that can function as equivalents of guilt, as its payoff. The moment the question of guilt (and the possibility of its forgiveness) is related to the question of economic power, it is clear that the Christian motto "And the first will be last . . ." is no longer operative. This is also why various social movements and revolts have tried to legitimize themselves through the Reformation movement. Yet Luther's position in this respect was unshakable. He refused to give any kind of ideological support to the famous peasant insurrection in 1525, and denounced the "error" of confusing personal Christian freedom with social freedom. The social impact of the Reformation was largely undermined by the so-called theory of two kingdoms.

8. Consider these remarks on Luther: "Luther's attack on the mediating saints of the church (and especially on 'the devil's sow, the pope') was, beyond any doubt, fundamentally the attack of a lout who could not stomach the *good etiquette* of the church . . . he wanted above all to speak directly, to speak himself, to speak 'informally' with his God." Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals / Ecce homo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 145. Consider also this passage, which explicitly links this lack of a symbolic distance to modern discourse: "the so-called educated people, believers in 'modern ideas,' stir our revulsion most of all perhaps by their lack of shame, their easy impertinent eyes and hands that go touching everything, licking, groping; and it is possible that among the common people, the low people . . . there is *relatively* more nobility in taste and sense of reverence than in the newspaper-reading intellectual *demi-monde,* the educated." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* trans. Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 161.

9. In this context, it might be interesting to read Jean-Léon Beauvois's *Traité de la servitude libérale. Analyse de la soumission* (Paris: Dunod, 1994). Basing his findings on a series of sociopsychological experiments, the author shows most convincingly how the granting of freedom can be the best way to make the other do precisely what we want. First, we confront the other, from a position of a certain (social) authority, with a choice between two actions, one of which he is most reluctant to do while knowing, at the same time, that this is precisely the action we expect from him. Second,

we keep repeating that the choice is entirely his, that he is entirely free in his choice. Given these two circumstances, the following will happen: he will do exactly what we expect him to do, and what is contrary to his (previously tested) convictions—furthermore, by virtue of the mechanism of "free choice," he will rationalize his action by changing these very convictions. In other words, instead of viewing the action that was so perfidiously imposed upon him as something "bad" that he had to do (since authority demanded it), he will convince himself that the "bad thing" is actually *good,* since this is the only way for him to justify the fact that he "freely chose" his course of action.

10. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* p. 147.

11. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* p. 26.

12. Ibid., p. 139.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 141.

15. Eric L. Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 22.

16. Ibid., p. 19.

17. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* pp. 140–141.

18. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* p. 120.

19. Ibid.

20. For a more detailed account of this point, see Mladen Dolar, "If Music Be the Food of Love," in Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 51.

21. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents, The Pelican Freud Library,* vol. 12 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985).

22. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* p. 92.

23. Ibid., p. 93.

24. Ibid., p. 72.

25. Ibid., pp. 72–73.

26. Ibid., p. 39.

27. Ibid., p. 61.

28. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations,* trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 89.

29. Ibid., p. 90.

30. Ibid., pp. 91–92.

31. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* p. 160.

32. Ibid., pp. 149–150.

33. Ibid., p. 97.

34. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* pp. 99–100.

35. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* p. 161.

36. Ibid.

37. Alain Badiou, "Casser en deux l'histoire du monde?," *Les conférences du perroquet,* 37, December 1992, Paris, p. 10.

38. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 107.

39. Ibid., p. 109.

40. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1993), p. 30.

41. Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis,* p. 112.

42. Ibid., p. 99.

43. Ibid.

PART II: NOON

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* trans. Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 180.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 51.

3. Alain Badiou, *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), p. 64.

4. Ibid., pp. 65–69.

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 21. A little earlier in the text, Zarathustra describes man as a "rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping." Ibid., p. 14.

6. "'We have placed our chair in the middle,' your smirking says to me; 'and exactly as far from dying fighters as from amused sows.' That, however, is mediocrity, though it be called moderation." Ibid., p. 170. See also: "From scenting out 'beautiful souls,' 'golden means' and other perfections in the Greeks, from admiring in them such things as their repose in grandeur, their ideal disposition, their sublime simplicity—from this 'sublime simplicity,' a *niaiserie allemande* when all is said and done, I was preserved by the psychologist in me." *Twilight of the Idols,* p. 118.

7. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* p. 7. See also:

   How we have managed from the beginning to cling to our ignorance, in order to enjoy a life of almost inconceivable freedom, thoughtlessness, carelessness, heartiness, cheerfulness—to enjoy life! And only upon this foundation of ignorance, now as firm as granite, could our science be established, and our will to knowledge only upon the foundation of a much more powerful will, the will to no knowledge, to uncertainty, to untruth—not as the opposite of the former will, but rather—as its refinement! . . . how even the very best science would keep us trapped in this *simplified,* thoroughly artificial, neatly concocted, neatly falsified world, how the best science loves error whether it will or not, because science, being alive,—loves life! (Ibid., p. 25)

8. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce homo,* trans. Walter Kaufmann, in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals / Ecce homo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 218. See also: "But my truth is *terrible;* for so far one has called *lies* truth. . . . I was the first to *discover* the truth by being the first to experience lies as lies. . . . there will be wars the like of which have never yet been seen on earth. It is only beginning with me that the earth knows *great politics.*" Ibid., pp. 326–327.

9. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Dover, 1959), vol. II, p. 360.

10. See Note 8 above.

11. See Note 8 above.

12. "Unconditional honest atheism (and *its* is the only air we breathe, we more spiritual men of this age!) is therefore *not* the antithesis of that ideal [i.e. ascetic ideal], as it appears to be; it is rather only one of the latest phases of its evolution, one of its terminal forms and inner consequences—it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of two thousand years of training in truthfulness that finally forbids itself the lie involved in belief in God." Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals / Ecce homo,* p. 160.

13. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 37.

14. Ibid., p. 35.

15. Ibid., p. 99.

16. Ibid., p. 11.

17. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science. With a Prelude in Rhymes as an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 172.

18. Gérard Wajcman, *L'objet du siècle* (Paris: Verdier, 1998), p. 166.

19. "There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be." Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 119.

20. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. Paul V. Cohn (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1911), p. 350.

21. For more detailed account of this, see Alenka Zupančič, "Philosophers' Blind Man's Buff," in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* (*Sic* 1) (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

22. Étienne Bonnot, abbé de Condillac, *Traité des sensation: Traité des animaux* (Paris: Fayard, 1987), p. 170.

23. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 123.

24. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 305.

25. Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 16.

26. Ibid., p. 42.

27. See Galileo Galilei, *Two New Sciences* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), pp. 162–164.

28. A question that thus becomes very important for Lacanian theory, and could be dated to Seminar XVII (*L'Envers de la psychanalyse*), is, for example, "how is truth as knowledge possible?"

29. See the following, very Nietzschean passage from Seminar XX:

> In this vein, you can't say it any better than the Gospels. You can't speak any better of the truth. That is why they are the Gospels. You can't even bring the dimension of truth into play any better, in other words, push away reality in fantasy. After all, what followed demonstrated sufficiently . . . that this dit-

mension stands up. It inundated what we call the world, bringing it back to its filthy truth. It relayed what the Roman, a mason like no other, had founded on the basis of a miraculous, universal balance, including baths of jouissance sufficiently symbolized by those famous thermal baths of which only crumbled bits remain. We can no longer have the slightest idea to what extent, regarding jouissance, that took the cake. Christianity rejected all that to the abjection considered to be the world. It is thus not without an intimate affinity to the problem of the true that Christianity subsists. Once one enters into the register of the true, one can no longer exit it. In order to relegate the truth to the lowly status it deserves, one must have entered into analytical discourse. What analytical discourse dislodges puts truth in its place, but does not shake it up. It is reduced, but indispensable. (Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, pp. 107–108)

30. Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, p. 326.

31. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, p. 91.

32. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 163.

33. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), pp. 107–108.

34. See Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, p. 306.

35. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 160–161.

36. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 68.

37. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 194.

38. Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, p. 185.

39. And this is why a true affirmation is finally always *selective*.

40. For more detailed account of this, see Jacques-Alain Miller, "Microscopia: An Introduction to the Reading of *Television*," in Jacques Lacan, *Television* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), p. xx.

41. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, p. 92.

42. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1986), pp. 44–48.

43. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, p. 44; trans. modified.

44. Alain Badiou, *Conditions* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p. 259.

45. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, p. 80.

46. Alain Badiou, "La scène du Deux," in *De l'amour* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), p. 178.

47. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge,* p. 8.

48. "Being the Other, in the most radical sense, in the sexual relationship, . . . , woman is that which has a relationship to that Other. . . . Woman has a relation with S(Ⱥ), and it is already in that respect that she is doubled, that she is not-whole, since she can also have a relation with Φ." Ibid., p. 81.

49. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* p. 180.

50. Ibid., pp. 122–123.

51. Ibid., p. 11.

52. F. Nietzsche, *Nachlass, Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montari, 30 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967–1978), III—2.277; Nietzsche returns to this parabola of Achilles and tortoise in yet another fragment: III—2.341.

53. Kazimir Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism," in *Essays on Art* (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1969), vol. 1, p. 37. In the same essay, Malevich compares art with a heavily burdened "camel," and writes that artists (involved in this kind of art) "were officials making an inventory of nature's property, amateur collectors of zoological, botanic, and archaeological specimens" (p. 26). Both of these comparisons are utterly Nietzschean, especially if we bear in mind that Malevich definitely read Nietzsche. The reference to the "camel," as one of the three major figures from *Zarathustra* (the camel, the lion, and the child), representing the "spirit of gravity (or heaviness or burden)," is quite explicit:

> And we—we carry faithfully what one gives us to bear, on hard shoulders and over rough mountains. And should we sweat, we are told: "Yes, life is a grave burden." But only man is a grave burden for himself! That is because he carries on his shoulders too much that is alien to him. Like a camel, he kneels down and lets himself be well loaded. Especially the strong, reverent spirit that would bear much: he loads to many *alien* grave words and values on himself, and then life seems a desert to him. (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* p. 193)

"(State) officials," "civil servants," and "philosophical workers" are expressions Nietzsche often uses to refer to the "bad" or nonproductive way of engaging oneself in philosophy or science. Take the following example from the *Twilight of the Idols:*

> *From a doctorate exam.*—"What is the task of all higher education?"—To turn a man into a machine.—"By what means?"—He has to learn how to feel

bored.—"How is that achieved?"—Through the concept of duty.—"Who is his model?"—The philologist: he teaches how to *grind*.—"Who is the perfect man?"—The civil servant.—"Which philosophy provides the best formula for the civil servant?"—Kant's: the civil servant as thing in itself set as judge over the civil servant as appearance. (Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 95)

54. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 166.

55. Ibid., p. 166.

56. Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, p. 258.

57. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 172.

58. Ibid., p. 141.

59. Ibid., p. 171.

Addendum: On Love as Comedy

1. Jacques Lacan, *L'angoisse*, unpublished seminar, lecture from May 13, 1963.

2. See Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 112.

3. Lacan, *L'angoisse*, lecture from May 13, 1963.

4. Jacques Lacan, *Le transfert* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 46.

5. Gilles Deleuze, *L'image-mouvement* (Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 1983), p. 234.

6. Which, of course, brings us to the story of Zeuxis and Parrhasius that Lacan evokes in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*: Zeuxis painted grapes so vividly that they attracted birds, whereas Parrhasius fooled Zeuxis himself by painting on the wall a veil so lifelike that Zeuxis, turning toward him, said: "Well, and now show us what you have painted behind it."

7. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 169.

8. Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 111.

9. Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 4.