

THEM OTHERS--VOICES WITHOUT MIRRORS

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*I dreamt I was Queen Nefertiti  
and I was making love to her.*

The sentence quoted above, in addition to evoking the *Orientalism* of *the Other*, aptly characterizes two of the possible relationships to the other--to wit:

1. *I have met the other, and it was only me.*
2. *I have been met by the other , and I was only it.*

The active form in sentence one emphasizes the incorporation of the other into *my* subjectivity in the manner of Descartes or Hegel or Schelling. It characterizes, in other words, the general priority of subjectivity and identity in Western philosophy which converts the other's difference into my identity. In contrast, the passive form in sentence two emphasizes the incorporation of my subjectivity into the other's objectivity. It represents the general critique of subjectivity in Western philosophy mounted in variously nuanced, but similar, ways by Heidegger, Blanchot, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Baudrillard, and others. This critique not only displaces the subject in favor of the object, it is also supposed to displace identity in favor of difference. The claim that identity is displaced in favor of difference, however, is suspect. Passivity, even when combined with *reflexivity* , accomplishes nothing more than the displacement of identity from my subjectivity to the now disguised objectivity of the other. Reflexivity itself is only a disguised form of subjectivity since it is projected from the subject to the object or self to the other, and then *returns* to the subject or self without any necessary return to the other or object. In the passive form the other or object is no longer an object, but has been transformed into the object-as-subject, which means that the other's objective difference is, after all, only a subjective identity in *another* place. In order for difference truly to displace identity, there can be no thematization of subject or object. There is then, a third possibility:

3. *it will have been a -meeting.*

Here the neuter *it* evokes the absence of subject and object, or if one prefers, the absence of thematized subject or object. *It* does not function as a totalization/neutralization of subject and object, identity and difference, or self and other. *Will have been* indexes a *future/past* that is not present, future or past. *A-meeting in this sentence* conveys the sense of non-teleological, continuous process, as in other English expressions such as *a-going, a-running, a-thinking*. It is not the *name of an event* , as in "We held a *meeting*," where *meeting* functions as a noun. The whole sentence is meant to evoke the idea of the *middle voice* without privileging the idea of

the subject, in contrast to the common practice in linguistic analyses of the middle voice which start from the presumptive necessity of the subject(see, for example, Kemmer 1993). In effect, the sentence at number three attempts to avoid the thematizing role of both nouns and verbs by refusing to specify time, *telos*, subject, or object, and thus to suspend the fundamental opposition of their correlates--subjective/objective, inner/outer, self/other, identity/difference.

The difference between the first two sentences and the third is readily apparent in the following contrastive quotes.

*We should liberate the other and let them be, by sensing the other's difference and allowing them to stand apart from one's home culture on their own. The feeling of contrast is primary, and its challenge is to place the strangeness opposite some bit of our lives and, as it were, go to work on it to make sense of the difference (my emphasis). Placed in relation to what is familiar to us, given a linguistic shape, it will cease to be frightening and bewildering to us. This is a struggle not towards a liberation from a limited perspective, but towards a wider understanding which can englobe the other undistortedly (my emphases. Taylor 1990:41-42 ).*

*The worst thing is understanding, which is sentimental and useless. True knowledge is knowledge of exactly what we can never understand in the other, knowledge of what is in the other that makes the other not oneself....what is not instituted by us either in identity or difference (Baudrillard 1993:148).*

In the first quote, the other is only an object of our subjectivity, an object that we *englobe* in order to widen our own understanding. Despite all the fine talk of liberating and letting others be, it is clear that others are important, not in their own being, so to speak, but only inasmuch as we can reduce their strangeness and difference to *our* understanding, which, notably requires their *liberation*. In the quote from Baudrillard, we may well wonder what kind of knowledge would constitute "*knowledge of exactly what we can never understand* " or why it should be *exactly*, but the intent is at least clear. Others are not objects of our understanding such that their differences can be eradicated or englobed by our understanding. So,

### **what can be said of the other?**

We can say nothing about *the* other, for *other* is neither a particular nor a totalized unity. It is ineradicably a plurality of singularities--*them others*, Them others are unthematizable, and we can say nothing about them, but our talk about them, our rumors of them can be thematized, and we can speak of that thematization. This is, of course, the usual trick of

substituting the simulacra of them others for them, but here we can traffic only in simulacra.

Consider first some of the common names for others: *other*, *difference*, *alter*, *alien*, *stranger*, *exotic*, *second*, *double*, *opposite*, *negation*, *object*--among others, as we say. These are the means by which we have sought to thematize the other. Much of this thematization is the story of a suffix, or what older grammars would have called *accidence* - linguistic elements whose role was to *alter* the meaning or syntactic function of *roots*. Roots, in contrast to *accidence*, had a fixed *identity*--even when *altered* by an affix. The main story, then is a tale of the *accidence* of the Indo-European comparative adjective suffix *\*-tero(s)*. This suffix is familiar, though perhaps not recognized, in such familiar English words as *sinister*, *dexter*, *brother*, *sister*, *north* (>*nerter*>*nether*), *south* (*sun-tr*), *east* (*aus-tr*), *west* (*wes-tr*), *either*, *neither*, *hither*, *thither*, *whither*. It is also the source, either through combination with other affixes, or by derivation and association, of all the words for *other* listed at the head of this paragraph, including--not incidentally--*other* itself. *The main sign of the other is a suffix, which is, in turn, a sign of change and difference, and is in contrastive opposition to the root, which is a sign of stasis and identity.* Note that this family of *other* is established by a *comparative* adjective suffix, which thus points to the primary role of the idea of comparison in any use of the various *other* terms. Othering, in other words, is always *comparing*. It is also important to note that many of the English terms cited above occur as sets of paired *opposites* that constitute *correlatives* --terms that are understood by comparison, opposition, and mutual implication, the one unthinkable without the other. *Comparison, opposition, and mutual implication* then, are primary instruments of othering. Consider now, thought picture number one, which illustrates the way in which discussion of the other has been determined by the semantics and derivational structure of *\*-tero(s)*.

### thought picture one about here

Thought picture number one illustrates the derivation of the fundamental vocabulary for talking about the other. In addition to showing the derivation of such important terms as *alter*, *other*, *stranger*, *exotic*, which are among the basic names of the other, it also shows how concepts necessary in the discussion of the other are implicated by the operations of *\*-tero(s)* in combination with prefixes or other terms. Thus, for example, *\*-tero(s)* plus *an-* yields *anteros* ("second of two"), which is not only the source

of English *other*, but also, through its definition, implicates the terms *second* and *duo*, which yield the idea of the other as a second and the concept of doubling and ultimately the notion of *doubt*, *duplicity*, *dupe*, all of which are important in understanding how the notions of *strangeness* and *fear* referred to in the quote from Taylor enter into the discussion of the other. Not only is *stranger* itself directly derived from *ex-* plus *\*-tero(s)*, its combination with *dupe*, *doubt* and *duplicity* evoke possibilities of uncanniness and fear. Moreover, the *-ble* suffix in *double*, which derives from *ply* (<*\*plek-*, "fold, weave, intertwine, back-and-forth"), enables further relations to *difference*, *opposition*, and *negation*. The notions of doubling, folding, intertwining, and back-and-forth are also implicated by the term *alternate*, which derives from *allos* ("other") plus *\*-tero(s)* and yields *alteros* "the other of two." The notions of *inside* and *outside* derived here, are necessary components of the whole discourse of subject and object. Note too, that the topological identification of the other as female is already available here in the term *hys-teros*.

In sum, thought picture one contains most of the necessary ingredients for concocting the story of the other in Western discourse. It implies that we have little control over the discourse of the other. What we can say and think is already constrained by subtle linguistic and associative processes of which we are at best only dimly aware. Moreover, it is important to observe that almost none of the fundamental terms is derived from roots which could be said to be the *names of things*. Almost everything here is merely the combination of prefixes and affixes--pure accident, we might say. Since it has no root, the other has no identity. It is pure difference. Our attempts to control the other by reducing it to our categories of understanding will have had the opposite effect of confirming that we cannot understand the other, for all of our categories for the other exemplify again and again its lack of a fixed identity that could be the proper object of a discourse. The discourse of the other thus confirms the **First Law of Culture:**

*The more we control things, the more uncontrollable we both become.*

**Theorem:**

*The more we comprehend the other, the less we comprehend the other.*

**Proof:**

We cannot comprehend or understand, or explain the other in its otherness, for inasmuch as we will have succeeded in understanding the other, we will have failed to understand the other, for what we will have understood as the other will no longer have been that other, but will have become the other-as-understood-by-and-for-us.

**Example:**

At the very moment when anthropologists were saying the last rites over the corpse of the concept of culture, it returned to life, not as a concept, but as a reality in the viral, monstrous forms of retro-/neo-fascism and racism. The triumph of reason celebrated in the technocosmopolitanism of the new world order has become the rout of reason in which ethnic minorities everywhere rise up and declare their cultural essence and enforce their difference through ethnic cleansing and the atavisms of new conservatism.

**Commentary:**

The attempt of reason to understand or explain its other--**the irrational**--will have failed to present that other in its other-wise as the other of reason, but will have succeeded in representing it as an unreason-reasoned, and it will have led to the suspicion--a suspicion only--that reason is not as reason-able as it would have seemed. It must be a suspicion only, since any attempt to show, demonstrate, substantiate, or otherwise indicate by proofs of whatever kind, must be conducted according to the very principles of reason that are seemingly in question. The same will hold for language. Every attempt to deconstruct or reveal, the conditioning effects of language, as in my discourse on the *family of the other* above, is conducted only by the generosity of means language provides.

**Example:**

Every epistemological discourse, whether it be epistemology proper, or one of the pseudo-epistemologies called perception or cognition, begins with an account of the origin of identity--of the mastery of difference that reduces chance and chaos to patterns of recurrence and ordered regularity. One need only reflect on the central role these discourses give to the ideas of category and categorization to get a sense of the absolute necessity of this origination of **sames**, and also to divine the problems it creates. Categories create sames by an act of forgetting--the forgetting of differences. This is so whether the classificatory mode is directly essentializing in the manner of identifying similarities as shared essences, or consists instead of incompletely distributed properties, as in family

resemblance or polytypic classification. Categories are duplicitous. They cannot be the same as what they categorize, and they create sames by a kind of falsification. *Plant*, for example, categorically includes *tree* and *bush*, but is neither a *tree* or a *bush* at the same time as it is both *tree* and a *bush*. As Foucault has said:

*The most tenacious subjection of difference is undoubtedly that maintained by categories....Categories organize the play of affirmation and negation, establish the legitimacy of resemblance within representation, and guarantee the objectivity and operation of concepts. they suppress the anarchy or difference* (199 ).

Categorization is the essential essentializing means of the *Logos*, the instrument by which the *Logos* "...gathers all present beings into presencing and lets them *lie* before us"(Heidegger 19 , my italics). Still, the desire of philosophy, or of reason generally, has been to track down what is prior to categorization in order to reveal or liberate difference at its source as a kind of *a-categorical thought*. Difference, according to Foucault (199 :186) "...can only be liberated through the intervention of *a-categorical thought*, or as Levinas would have it, we have to think the difference between the said and the saying in order to "...release the *anarchy of difference which is the discourse of the other* (1981:9-11

, my emphasis). *A-categorical thought* is that *middle* between the sensible and the intelligible that has been identified as the function of the image, the schema, the phantasm--all of those figuring figurations that are simultaneously both particular and universal, both sensible and intelligible, both *de facto* and *de jure*.

*A-categorical thought* is before identity. All identity is a sham--always an other posing as a same. It cannot be thematized, cannot consist of recurrent *sames*. Consequently, there can be no *principle of difference*, for the function of *principle* is to thematize, to make an identity of difference. We cannot construct the unity of difference, a unity within difference, or an identity within difference. Nevertheless, consider now the *pyramidology* of difference in thought picture two.

### Thought Picture Two About Here

Thought picture two A illustrates Hegel's system of dialectic. The plus (+) sign indicates the thesis, the minus (-) sign the antithesis, and the zero-

slash (Ø) sign the neutralization or synthesis. In this picture the *oppositions, differences, and negations* between {*subject, self, I, first*} and {*object other, thou, second*} are *neutralized* by the negation of the negation, the difference of the difference. The neutralization is a unity of differences expressed as {*one, identity, unity, it, third*}. This neuter is simultaneously *both/and* and *neither/nor*. That is to say, this *third*, this *it* is both *first* and *second, I* and *thou*, and *neither first* and *second, I* and *thou*. This third is thus a transcendental subject that is constructed through the intentional acts of a subject that constructs the other-as-object and then returns to itself by comprehending its own construction. The rhythm of this projection-reflection establishes the presence of the self to itself in absolute knowledge, and is the means by which consciousness exercises power over itself in simultaneous strangeness and intimacy with itself. Mastery over the self is the consequence of the subject's absolute dominance of the other, which is itself the consequence of the hegemony of representation that enables the ego's intentional act of representing the other to itself. The other--the *in-itself*, the object--is only a secondary being, a construction of the subject--the *for-itself* whose only purpose is to facilitate the subject's self-understanding in the form of the transcendental ego, the *in-itself-for-itself*. The subject overcomes the difference of the other in the construction of its own identity.

Thought picture two B is a rendering of Heidegger's attempt to re-orient the relationship between identity and difference by focusing on the *joining* and *separating* acts that establish the unity of the third and the dominance of identity over difference (1969). He refuses to conflate identity and same, arguing that the *same* (<\*sem- "single" > "simulacrum," "simultaneous," "similar") is the *simultaneous* holding together of what differs and the holding apart of what differs. It contrasts with identity which always moves toward the absence of difference and is the negation or swallowing-up of otherness. Heidegger's phrasing emphasizes difference. The difference between the *both/and* and the *neither/nor* is not reduced to an undifferentiated unity or to a category of shared essence. Where Hegel emphasizes the *holding together*, Heidegger gives equal emphasis to both *holding together* and *holding apart*. Difference, for Heidegger is the *between* of subject/Being and object/beings. It is the condition of the possibility of all subjectivity and objectivity, the between that simultaneously joins and separates the irreducible mean that founds the world and everything in it. It is the unifying element of the *diaphora*, the carrying out and the carrying through (199 42-44). Difference is never present and cannot be represented. It is *before* the thought that thinks identity. This *before* is a

time-space where *appropriation* occurs. Appropriation is a *neutrale tantum*, a neuter *it* that lies between all differences, oscillating within itself. *It gives or sends Being* as the unconcealing of presencing, but is not itself revealed in its giving. For Heidegger, language articulates the *opening*, the between that enables all communication, but it is irreducibly *duplicitous*. Its *poesis* is *cleaving*, the alternating rhythm of joining and separating that counters the unifying force of the *Logos*.

The terms and themes of Heidegger's discourse are repeated in many, if not most, of the important texts dealing with the idea of otherness, but three interrelated topics tend to dominate in the attempt of others to "think difference as difference" (Heidegger 19 ). The are:

1. **The search for the *middle***, the *between* of subject and object.
2. **The search for the *third*** that neutralizes itself and evokes the moments of the *aufhebung* without reducing difference to identity or the one and the many to a tri-unity.
3. **The search for the *neuter*** itself, for a way of characterizing the endless and irreducible oscillating, the back-and-forth of difference in its revealing/veiling. We recognize the theme of the neuter, for example, not only in the *es* of Heidegger, but in the *elle* of Bataille, and Kristeva, the *il* of Blanchot, the *ça* of Lacan, and the *illeity* of Levinas. Heidegger's *zwischen* is the *entre-deux* of Merleau-Ponty, Blanchot, and Levinas. Heidegger's *oscillation* is echoed in Blanchot's "incessant going and coming," and Levinas' "endless alternation that eludes binary opposites." For further comparison of attempts to "think difference as difference" (Heidegger 1969:47), consider the following fragments drawn from Blanchot (1973) and Levinas (1981).

Blanchot, declares "I do not write, *I* does not write, *it* writes." The voice of the writer is not a synthetic third; it is an empty place, the anonymous third. Blanchot speaks of the neuter and the third as what

falls between all binary opposites  
is an irreducible singularity  
calls the subject into question  
has no proper name, is anonymous, nameless  
is a non-conceptualizable concept  
is a pure interval  
calls the subject into question  
is *entre:entre/ne(u)tre*, non-present, non absent  
is an incessant going and coming  
is an *entretien*, an endless conversation that bears the  
resists unity

diff

is passive  
disseminates itself  
has no identity  
interrupts the work  
is the non-identity of the same that carries in carrying away  
is a non-identical difference  
is the other of the other  
is a tear or fissure  
is the open of the poem

Levinas similarly avers that the lapse that slips away from philosophical vision is an *an-archie* that refuses to be assembled into a representation. It is a "deep formerly," an untotalizable diachrony that is beyond essence and is neither being nor non-being. "The other of being or the otherwise than being" is outside all ontological categories. Levinas expresses the difference between categorial and a-categorial thought as the difference between the *said* and the *saying*. The said is the total structure of language that is prior to any subject. It assembles and orders entities into a system that functions entirely under the law of identity. It guides all rational thought, for reason *sentences* beings in the relation of terms that make the unity of a theme. Themes totalize differences, eliminating every difference that does not conform to identity. They mirror what is. Thought and being are one. Language is the *Logos* of being. The saying, on the other hand, is before the sentence, and it expresses a fundamental alterity that

signifies before essence, before identification  
refuses to be assembled into a representation  
is a diachrony that cannot be erased  
is an identity that does not coincide with itself  
is the opening of the one to the other  
is always duplicitous  
reveals itself in the said only inasmuch as it conceals itself  
is an irreparable cleavage in the logos of language  
is a gap that can never be closed  
is not reducible to the will or intention of the ego  
exposes gaps and tears  
is the other of the other, a radical other, a radical alterity  
is an other other outside of ontological categories  
cannot be domesticated by a theme  
eludes binary opposites  
endlessly alternates  
has never been present

reveals the reciprocal relation between being and non-being in  
is always "one-for-the-other  
opens one to the other  
is the discourse of the other

For Levinas the unthinkable singularity called illeity is the *third*, the  
thetic subject that relates itself to itself. It never coincides with itself, but  
is always dislocated by an other. Once penetrated by the other, the  
constitutive subject cannot return this other to the prior sameness of itself.  
It is passive in relation to its un-doing by the other. This passivity is the  
*hetero-affection* of the Infinite that deflects the *auto-affection* of the  
subject.

This characterization of common themes, though indeed contrary to  
the thinking of difference as difference, is not really an attempt to think  
that difference, but has instead a more modest aim of thematizing the  
discourses themselves, first by showing how difference insinuates itself only  
in the form of concepts available to it in language, in what Levinas would call  
the *said*, and secondly by identifying recurrent characterizations of a-  
categorical thought in the works of some of the writers who have struggled  
with the totalizing Hegelian system. Beginning with Hegel, it is possible to  
identify three different grammatical orientations to the relation of subject  
and object, self and other, to wit:

- A. Displace the other in favor of the subject
- B. Displace the subject in favor of the other
- C. Displace both simultaneously

The first of these is something like the Hegelian imperial ego, the *for-itself*  
that is realized either as reflectivity or reflexivity or both. It is also active,  
reflecting the intentionality of the subject who represses the object,  
the other. The second is a kind of *in-itself*. It is reflexive, but passive. It is  
the return of the repressed other. The third is rather like the *in-itself-for-*  
*itself*, but without identity or unity. It is singular, a pure neither/nor  
without reflectivity or reflexivity. It is the grammar of the middle voice.  
These three function in radically different ways. A functions by means of  
*overcoming, suppletion, and identity*. B functions by means of replacement  
and dissolution. C functions by means of oscillation, a-middling.

#### A.I Overcoming

The constructive subject or imperial ego, through its intentional acts  
of representation, dominates the other and becomes the center around  
which the world revolves. The subject is the absolute origin. The central  
figure here is Hegel, but one could as well locate Descartes and all  
empiricists in this category.

## A.2 Suppletion

The subject is essentially incomplete and requires suppletion. Suppletion takes four somewhat overlapping forms. In one, the subject has a twin or double that has been lost, withheld, or displaced into another realm that is nearly inaccessible to normal perception, but can make its presence known in dreams or uncanny experiences. This is the idea of the shadow that figures widely in mythology and folklore, and in Jung's symbology. As Baudrillard remarks, "Of all the prostheses that punctuate the body, the double is doubtless the most ancient" (1993:113). The double is a shadow, a soul, a mirror image, a *doppelganger* that haunts the subject. So long as it remains a figure of the imagination, it is only a sign of the ghostly otherness that disturbs the subject's sense of secure identity. The signs of its presence in uncanny events serve to remind the subject of the difference between itself and its shadow, but when it becomes materialized and can no longer be dismissed as an unsettling figment of the imagination, it signifies the imminence of death. Cloning, according to Baudrillard, materializes the figure of the double, and in so doing, eliminates the difference between the subject and its double (1993:114). Otherness disappears in the accomplishment of exact duplication. Rather than the scissioned subject, consisting of itself and its shadowy other, there is no longer a subject at all. As Baudrillard says, "The subject is gone, because identical duplication ends the division that constitutes it" (1993:115). In place of others, there is only "...the hell of the same" (1993:122). The body, that presumptive source of difference for Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, also disappears. Having become nothing more than a possible message expressed in genetic code, it is no longer a functional organization of parts, or even less a source of difference, for the genetic code, aside from mutation, differentiates only in the sense of producing and reproducing more of the same (1993:116-118).

In the second form of suppletion, there is also loss or lack, but the absent part is not a double. Instead, the supplement is complementary, an other that contributes some essential feature or features that the subject lacks, and without which the subject can never be a whole functioning human. The commonest form of this lack is the idea of the soul as an imperceptible, but necessary part of the human subject.

The third form of suppletion concretizes the subject's lack in terms of masculine and feminine identity. The subject's gender identity as male or female disguises the essential duality of the subject, which is, in reality, equally male and female. One or the other of these essential aspects is hidden by the outward form or appearance of the body. The inner form,

however, is dual. Plato is, of course, the obvious figure here, but some contemporary feminist and psychoanalytic literature uses a similar construction of the ego.

The fourth variety of supplementation, has many features in common with the other three, but focuses on the incompleteness of reason. Here the irrational is the complement, or in some cases, the source of reason. One of the important expressions of this idea is the concept of *carnality*, which posits the body as an independent and originary, *pre-logical* way of knowing. The best-known exponent of this idea is Merleau-Ponty, but Levinas, and probably most phenomenologists would hold to a similar notion. The major question here is the manner and effectiveness of the body's accessibility to reason, the commonest view being that the body always exceeds reason's capability for understanding its own bodily origins, as for example, in Levinas' work.

In *La Double Séance*, Derrida writes of doubling as an inescapable feature of the text that renders it undecidable. Metaphysics, too, speaks with a *forked tongue*. Its words always have two meanings, one that has a positive relation to truth and presence, and another that has a more ambiguous or even negative relation to truth and presence. Further aspects of this duplicity are given in section B.2.

### A.3 Identity

The subject identifies with the other as a communicant, dialogical other rather than as a perspectival other. The other is not just the supine object of the subject's gaze, but is instead an *inter-active*, *inter-subject*. The other becomes the subject. Alternation in the roles of speaker/hearers in acts of communication constitutes the figure of *alternation/oscillation*. This dialogical notion occurs in a variety of forms in the literature of the other. With varying interpretations, it is conversation (Blanchot), communication (Levinas, Habermas), the *entre-deux* (Merleau-Ponty), or dialog (Tedlock). The major differences, as for example, between Habermas and Levinas, focus on the question of will and intentionality. Wherever these two are implicated in the process of communication, the subject is privileged over the other. Intersubjectivity, for example, merely converts the other into a subject and thus reestablishes the priority of the subject over the other. Habermas' argument for the importance of speaker's intentions in communication is clearly an instance of privileging the subject. The speaker is identified as the subject, and the role of the hearer/other, the spoken to, the object, is to understand the speaker's meanings by divining the speaker's intentions. All the focus here is on the speaker/subject's intentions. The hearer/other understands the speaker/subject by, in a sense, becoming the

speaker/subject and identifying what is present in his mind. The alternation of roles between speaker and hearer does not guarantee a kind of equality between the speaker/subject and the hearer/other, it merely asserts the hegemony of the speaker's role. Even the rules of "good listening," are oriented toward understanding the speaker's intentions, rather than the enhancement of the hearer's understanding of something outside of the immediate context of the speaker's saying. In contrast with Habermas, the *saying* of Levinas is not an external dialog, even though Levinas claims for it the power of enabling all communication. The internal/external contrast here is partly illusory since Levinas lodged the other "inside-beside" the subject, which is the act the external hearer has to perform in order to divine the speaker's intentions in Habermas' account. The *interiorization* of the subject's intentions by the hearer and the interiorization of the hearer's capacity to understand the speaker's intentions have already been accomplished in Levinas' idea of the proximity of the one-to-the-other in the saying. Levinas, on the other hand, still operates partially under the aegis of the perspectival other. This is manifest in his discussion of *face*. What the *I/eye* encounters is the face of an other, which draws near but never arrives. The presence of the other's face interrupts consciousness, disrupts reason, and is a command, a heteronomous call from outside that overwhelms the egotism of the *I* (1981:88-93)

#### B.1 Replacement

The self does not constitute itself. The subject is understood as the other of the other, and that other is not a subject. The subject is replaced by the other, it becomes a sign in and for the other, Being-for-self is always being-for-other. The subject responds to the other by accepting itself as posited by the other. This response is *passive* rather than active. The responsibility of the subject is to be *altered* in a movement toward the other that is never recuperated in identification. In contrast to the imperial ego, the self's movement toward the other does not return to its point of departure. Going toward the other involves an "expenditure without return," holding nothing back, being designated to suffer in a movement without return, to become a hostage. (Levinas 1981 15, 19, 74).

#### B.2 Dissolution

The subject *disappears* into the system of signs, into language. This theme occurs in variety of sources, ranging from Blanchot's "I do not write, it writes" to the more conditioned phrasing of Heidegger's "language is the house of being" (1971:132), but is probably most effectively represented in the works of Derrida where the self is relegated to a kind of illusion of authorship and intentionality. The self is simply in the system of signs,

already implicated and provided for there. It is not outside in an exteriority where it could master the signs and govern their concatenations in the fullness of creative spirit. According to Derrida, every text is a double text, but only one of the two is the object of classical interpretation, which always favors presence, meaning, reason, and truth. The second text is never deciphered, but is made at least partly available through fissures and traces in the first. Every reading is thus a *double science* in which there is no fusion of the two texts into a single, unitary reading that would surmount or resolve all the differences between them. In effect, the first text is only *itself-as-other*, its own simulacrum. The veil of difference between the two texts signifies both difference and non-difference, which is an identity indistinguishable from the Hegelian identity of identity and non-identity. When difference can thus become identity and identity difference, no one can decide if this is difference or identity. The outcome is undecidable, and no one can master this duplicity.

Somewhat different is the *nomadic* subject of Deleuze and Guattari which is constantly being deterritorialized and reterritorialized. It has no permanent character, and no necessary attributes. Always at the mercy of others, the nomadic subject is a structure that is constantly crumbling and remaking itself as the functions of its components cross-cut, overlap, and diffuse over infinite lines of flight that propagate new rhizomatic structures. The subject oscillates between radical difference and radical identity, preserving itself (its past) even as it leaves itself behind when it thinks infinitely of the future, but this preserving repetition is not the return of the same through the reiteration of identity. No experience can confirm a single, substantial self as a totalization and as a cause of its totalization. Repetition is understood instead as the production of difference (1994:207-212).

Despite all the talk about difference and the nomadic, non-identical subject, Deleuze is still primarily concerned with the subject as a starting point. His critique of the subject merely dismantles the subject in the same way the Hegelians dismantled the object. Note, particularly in this context, that he locates difference not between the representation and the thing, but between faculties of representation, between the faculty of concepts and the faculty of intuition. Difference is in between the faculties of the subject. The subject's dehiscence of the other in Hegelianism becomes the dissolution of the subject in this Nietzschean turn. The other is "the accursed share of the self," and as Baudrillard observes, "Anything that purges the accursed share in itself signs its own death warrant" (1992:106). Baudrillard asks, "What became of otherness?," and responds that we are running out of otherness in an "...orgy of political and psychological

*comprehension* of the other"(1993:124-125). This absence of otherness makes the subject spectral. The other of no one, it is unresponsive even to its own subjectivity. For Baudrillard, otherness is not the same as difference (refer here to the position of *difference* in thought picture one). Otherness is the ineradicably foreign, while difference is only the simulation of otherness. Difference is the humanist substitute for otherness. It can be negotiated, manipulated, controlled, and brought within the realm of reason, but otherness cannot. Difference is the instrument by which the West has sought unsuccessfully to eliminate otherness, but despite all attempts to eradicate it, it survives as a *radical otherness* (1993:122-133). Its survival derives from the "...impossibility of encounter, fusion, and the exchange of differences" (146).

Baudrillard urges us to seek the other's cruelty, unintelligibility, and foreignness, to seek "radical exoticism" rather than the "pimping of differences" (147), but we should never try to encounter the other, or communicate with it, or seek it in the "terrifying illusion of dialogue" (148; 174). We should instead "follow" the other," and "allow ourselves to be seduced by being the other's mirror without his knowing it" (158). We are not responsible for our lives and rather than seek to know who we are and where we are going, we should be open to "determinants from elsewhere", for it is better to be the object of someone else's control than to be controlled by oneself, and better to be "oppressed, persecuted, and manipulated by some other than by oneself" (165). Consistent with this *passivity* toward the other, Baudrillard argues that all figures of otherness are really just one-the object, the "irredeemable object," which is an enigma. "It is not itself and does not know itself" (172). The subject is no longer interesting because we know it too well. Baudrillard concludes, "I am definitely other....I answer only to something non-human" (173). Baudrillard's insistent refusal of will, and his identification (if that is the appropriate term here)with the other signifies in unequivocal terms the return of the repressed object and the repression of that absolute subjectivity of the enlightenment and of empiricism.

### C. The Middle

The third thematization of the other is the middle. It is neither subject nor object and corresponds more or less to the grammatical idea of the middle voice in which subject and object mutually implicate or act inseparably on one another. Derrida, for example, claims that *différance* is akin to the middle voice. The suffix *-ance* in *différance* is neither active nor passive, nor the action of an agent on a patient nor of a subject on an object., nor does it derive from the positing of these as its sources

(1982:9). This conception of the middle voice differs from most purely grammatical accounts in that it does not posit subject/object, agent/patient, source/goal as existing prior to the action or operation in which subject and object are mutually involved. What the Derridian middle voice says is the non-priority and non-separation of subject and object. It corresponds in these senses to Levinas' *saying*, which "signifies before essence, before identification," and occurs before the grammatical operations of "sentencing" (Levinas 1981:59). In contrast, all grammatical analysis, because it starts from language-as-sentenced, privileges the nominal functions of subject/object, agent/patient, source/goal, and defines the operation of the verb relative to them (Cf. Kemmer 1993, Barber 1975, Webster 1958). In effect, linguistic analysis assumes that the *being present of things* is prior to any process or activity, that processes and activities are always separable from things as if they were mere attributes of some kind, that the things themselves are always divided into something corresponding to subject and object, and that between these two, the subject takes precedence over the object--except in the deviant grammatical structures of the passive, the reflexive, and the middle voices, which are all deformations or secondary derivatives of the paragonic active form of the sentence in which the subject acts on the object. The active voice is normative. Nothing so clearly confirms this prejudice as the fact that the middle voice is often understood as a peculiar kind of reflexive, as if in a sentence like "the corn ripens," the "*corn*" is simultaneously subject and object and acts reflexively on itself, as if, in other words, this sentence was short-hand for something like "*the corn ripens itself.*" We might, perhaps more interestingly, say "*corning ripens,*" implying that ripening is only a sub-process of the more general process of "*corning,*" or *vice versa*, and that the entity "*corn*" is but a momentary interruption in an on-going process of "*corning*" that includes the whole cyclic movement from seed-to-plant-to seed in which the *same* "*corn*" may reappear, but the *identical* "*corn*" never does.

This example is not intended as an actual prophylaxis of speech, but is instead meant to illustrate why the "thinking of difference as difference" seems obscure and difficult. "Thinking difference as difference" requires us to violate our ordinary understanding and think in a way that is for us not normative. Small wonder that such ideas as "speaking of the unspeakable," or of a saying that is "before the sentence in the proximity of the other," or of signification as "the one-for-the-other....an identity that does not coincide with itself," the "beyond of being and of not being" (Levinas 1981:5-11), or of a *différence* that cannot be named, is neither present nor absent, but is

the condition of the possibility of presence and absence (Derrida 1982:13-14), or of a "non-absent present" (Blanchot 1973:104) should strike us as odd and obscure. They do not conform to our accustomed way of thinking and speaking, and that is, of course, their purpose. They are intended to de-thematize our taken-for-granted ideas, and to shake us out of our complacency, all the while withholding any utopian illusion that they will perform the miracle of ridding language of its duplicitousness in some paroxysm of final truth and certainty. Instead, they more modestly propose to *evoke* the unnameable and the unspeakable as a *pharmakon* for our *hubris*.

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#### NOTES TO THOUGHT PICTURE ONE

Direct linguistic derivation is indicated by solid lines. "stranger" is thus derived directly *ex-* plus *\*-tero*. The exceptions are "between," "opposite," and "negate." "Between" is indirectly derived from *intra* through the definition of *intra* as "between," and since "against" functions in the definition of both "negate" and "opposite," they too, are only indirectly derived, in this case through the derivation of "negate" and "against" from *\*gegn*. Associative relations are indicated by dotted lines. "Second" and "double," for example, are associated with *anteros* through the definition of *anteros* as "second of two." Similarly, "difference" is associated with "double" and "alternate" through their shared features of "one side to the other" and "back-and-forth."

## NOTES TO THOUGHT PICTURE TWO

Thought Picture Two A represents the system of Hegelian dialectic plus - "identity." The relation between thesis and antithesis is "difference," "opposition," and "negation" as is the relation between thesis/antithesis and synthesis. The synthesis itself is simultaneously *both* thesis/antithesis and *neither* thesis *nor* antithesis. The synthesis makes an identity out of the difference of a difference, and thus transforms difference into identity. Thought Picture Two B represents Heidegger's idea of the rhythmic joining and separating of differences which constitutes a "same" that is not an identity. The neuter "it" is not a unity of differences, but is the alternation or oscillation between differences. The cleaving, the joining and separating of language is the duplicity that inhibits the consummation of identity.