

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, that 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.

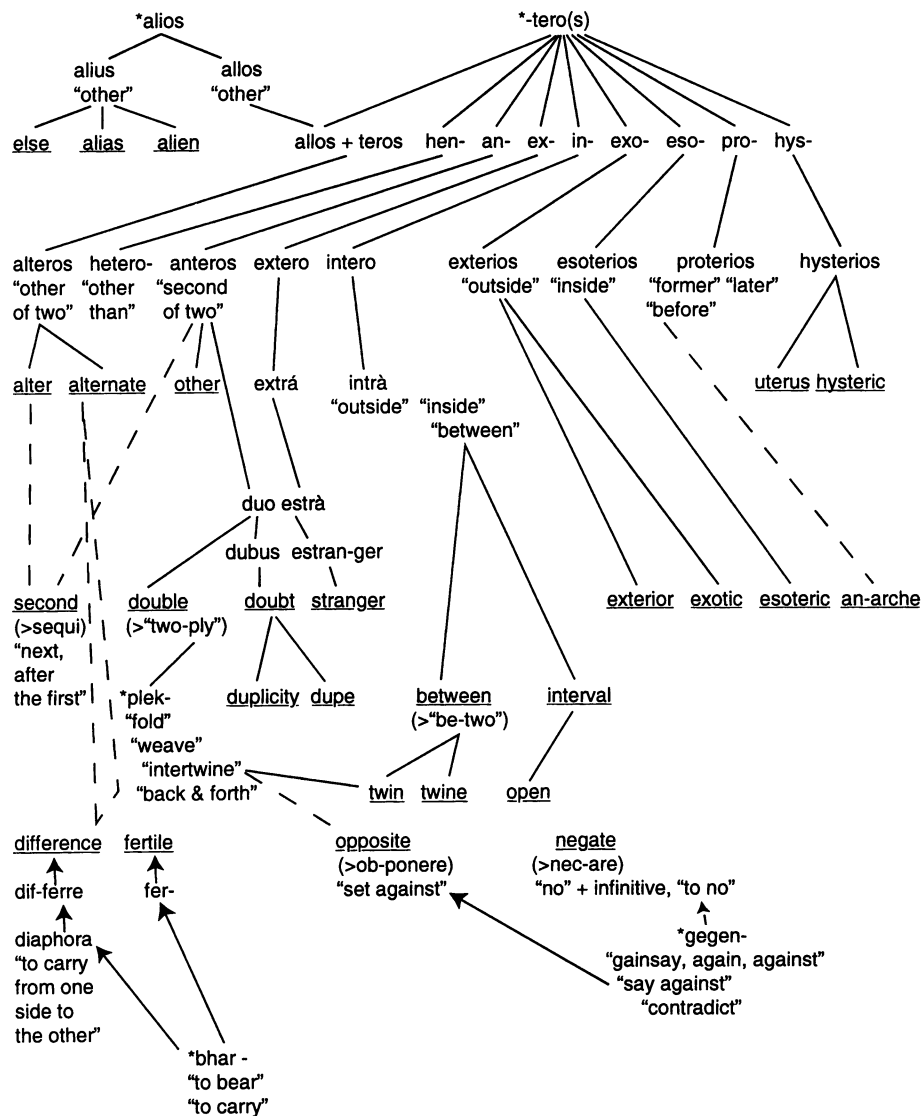
We should liberate the other and let them be, by sensing the other's difference and allowing them to stand apart from one's home culture on their own. The feeling of contrast is primary, and its challenge is to place the *strangeness* opposite some bit of our lives and, as it were, *go to work on it to make sense of the difference* (my italics). 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 italics; 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 ordinary 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



Thought picture one

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 **gegen*. 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."

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 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 notions *doubt, duplicity, dupe*, all of which are important in understanding how the notions of *strangeness* and *fear* referred to in the quote of 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* evokes possibilities of uncertainty, deception, 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 in the constructions *ex-teros* and *in-teros*, are necessary components of the whole discourse of subject and object. Note too, that the tropological 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, as Whorf might have said. 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 I:

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. Moreover, since it is the difference of the other that enables our own identity, the decay of the other's difference through our identification of the other as the other-understood-by-and-for-us ultimately undermines our own difference-dependent identity. The more the other is like us, the less we are like ourselves. This is theorem two.

Theorem II:

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

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 modernist techno-cosmopolitanism 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 sameness, and also to divine the problems it creates. Categories create sameness 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 sameness by a kind of falsification. *Plant*, for example, categorically includes *tree* and *bush*,

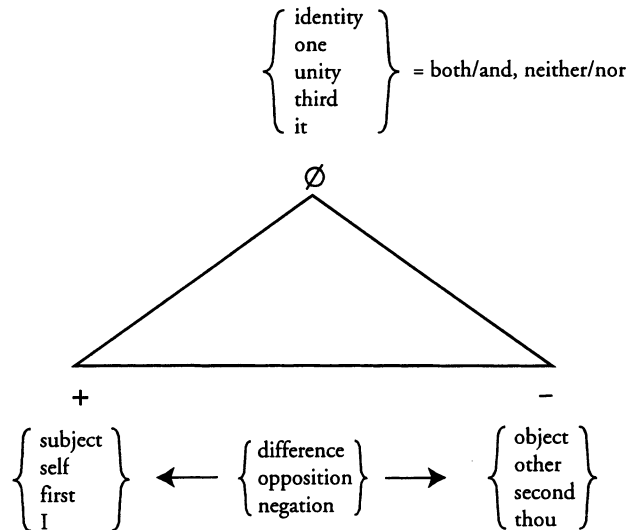
but is neither a *tree* or a *bush* at the same time as it is both *tree* and a *bush*. As Foucault has said:

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* (Foucault 1971: 186).

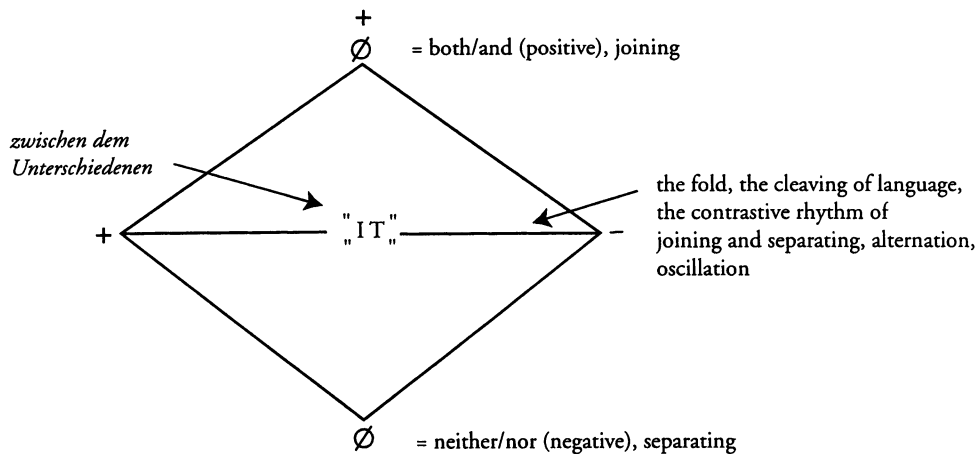
Categorization is the essential essentializing means of the *Logos*, the instrument by which the *Logos* "... gathers all present beings into presencing and lets them *lie* before us" (Heidegger 1975: 76, my italics). Still, the desire of philosophy, or of reason generally, has been to track down what 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 (1971: 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" (Levinas 1981: 9–11, my italics). 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 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 A



Thought picture two B

Notes to thought picture two:

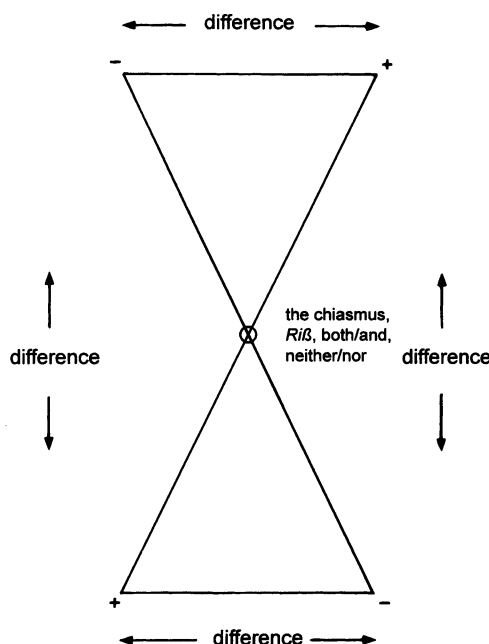
Thought picture two A represents the system of Hegelian dialectic plus "identity." The relation between thesis and antithesis is "difference," "opposition," and "negation" as is the relation between thesis/antithesis and synthesis. The syntheses itself is simultaneously *both* thesis/antithesis and *neither* 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.

Thought picture two B is a rendering of Heidegger's attempt to reorient 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 (Heidegger 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 (Heidegger 1969: 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 *poeisis* is *cleaving*, the alternating rhythm of joining and separating that counters the unifying force of the *Logos*.

A more revealing figuration of Heidegger's solution can be constructed by first inverting the two structures of opposition and then joining them at their apices, rather than at their bases, as was done in thought picture two. This inversion produces a figure of total difference and is illustrated in thought picture three.

In thought picture three, the moment of joining is also the moment of separation, and this simultaneous separation and union of the two structures produces a chiasmus (X), a figure that also symbolizes Siva's drum and the dance of time in the cyclic rhythms of cosmic construction and deconstruction.

Although Heidegger's picture of infinite oscillation between self and other effectively interrupts the *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian dialectic, it also eliminates the creative aspect of dialectic. In the back-and-forth of infinite oscillation there is seemingly no change either in self or other. They remain unchanged in their infinitely indeterminate identities. The pulsational movement of oscillation is not creative. It is only a ceaseless back-and-forth motion that changes nothing and goes no-where, like an endless irresolvable irony that situates difference within the identity of a fixed and bounded regime of repetitive motion. It does not, in other words, think difference as difference, for it is, after all, only a story of *being* that tells us nothing about *becoming*. Heidegger's idea of oscillation accounts for only half of the meaning of difference. Recall that *diaphora* (<*dia-phora*) and difference are derived from Indo-European **bhar-*, which means not only to "carry from one side to the other," as in the sense of oscillation, but also means to "bear," in the sense of giving birth, as in *bearing* a child, for example. Significantly, this latter sense of **bhar-* is the source of the cognate

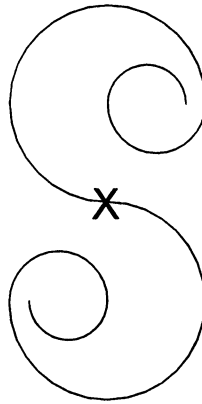


Thought picture three: The moment of identity at the chiasmic apices is also the moment of dissolution, transformation, and difference.

English word “fertile.” This sense of **bhar-* thus implicates *change, growth, development, and creativity*, the very ideas excised from the dialectic in the Heideggerian notion of oscillation.

What is needed in place of the metaphor of oscillation is a figuration that interrupts the *Aufhebung* without simultaneously inhibiting the creative work of the dialectic. We need a dialectic that is not just negative in Adorno’s sense, but one that allows and accounts for accommodation, growth, decay, change, and creativity, a dialectic of *becoming* that does not necessarily imply the overcoming of difference or a progressive movement toward a final utopian resolution of difference in identity.

Such a figuration can be schematized as the union/separation of continuously intersecting sinistral and dextral spirals, each of which changes at the moment of intersection in the chiasmus that instantaneously joins/separates them. We can thus reconfigure the conjoined triangles of thought picture three as two intersecting spirals, as depicted in thought picture four.



Thought picture four: Intersection of dextral and sinistral spirals. "X" indicates a chiasmus at the point where the two $\rightarrow \leftarrow$ meet.

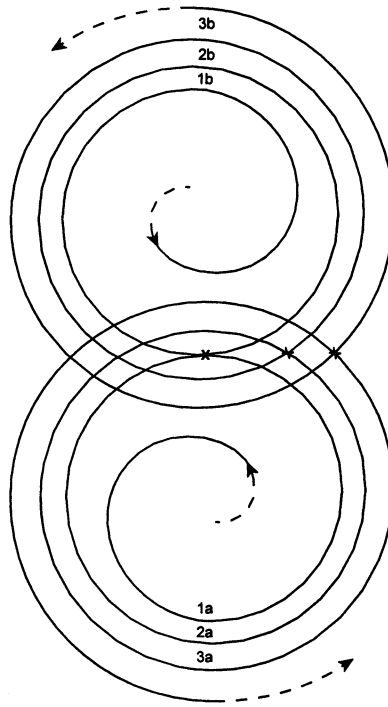
In thought picture four, the chiasmus is the moment of simultaneous union/separation and represents the "it" of Heidegger and others. As the spirals continue to unfold and intersect one another, they produce the effect illustrated in thought picture five.

The individual spirals in thought picture five are not cycles of identities. The cycles are not repetitions, and this is not a figuration of recurrent identities. Because of the chiasmic crossings the first spiral is not the same as the second, and the second differs from the third, and so on. Each spiral is transformed in some way by each chiasmic crossing. The whole is a "phase space," an assembly of symbiotic singularities that is not reducible to a thematization of perduring essence (cf. Deleuze 1995: 95). These transformations are represented in thought picture five as the moving point of the chiasmus.

The aim of these spiral figures is to illustrate the production of difference. Here there is no simple "back and forth" or oscillation between the components of a single identity, a static figure vibrating ceaselessly between opposite poles. Instead, there is a sequence of momentary heterological singularities that are produced only to be transformed in the next chiasmic encounter with "them others" in a ceaseless production of "mutant" subjectivities (ibid.). Thought picture five is a Levinasian infinity, and is not figured by the closure of spirals as in the usual sign of infinity (∞). Since the spirals are figured here as intersecting at a different place each time, we can understand this geometric fact as a kind of metaphoric movement that inscribes a "life-line" or a "time-line," or as a Deleuzian "line of flight," as in thought picture six (ibid.).

These thought pictures are, of course, over-simplified, for they depict the interaction of only two singularities, and while I can have an intimation of the intersection of multiple singularities, I cannot figure that thought. But that, after all, is only a limitation of inscription and says nothing about our understanding of multiplicity.

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



Thought picture five: Continuously intersecting sinistral and dextral spirals. “X” indicates a chiasmus. The union of directional \longleftrightarrow and the paths of the spirals create “*,” an astral figure or, in Hittite script, the *dingir*, the symbol of the king.

tend to dominate in the attempt of others to “think difference as difference” (Heidegger 1969: 47). They 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



Thought picture six: Imaginary “line of flight” abstracted from the chiasmic intersections in thought picture five.

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’s “endless alternation that eludes binary opposites.” For further comparison of attempts to “think difference as difference,” 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
 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 difference of *la parole*
 resists unity
 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,” (cf. *proteron* < *pro-teros*) 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 contrast to their asymmetry in the ontotheological tradition
 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 grammatical structures 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 a *moving oscillation*, *a-middling*.

A.1 *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 as twin or double that has been lost, withheld or displaced into another realm that is largely 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" (Baudrillard 1993: 113). The double is a shadow, a soul, a mirror image, a *Doppelgänger* 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 its shadow becomes materialized and can no longer be dismissed as an unsettling figment of the imagination, it signifies the imminence of the subject's death. Cloning, according to Baudrillard, materializes the figure of the double, and in so doing, eliminates the difference between the subject and its double (Baudrillard 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" (Baudrillard 1993: 115). In place of others, there is only "... the hell of the same" (Baudrillard 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 (Baudrillard 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 soul is the supplement that makes us divine and insures our immortality.

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 expression 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's 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 1973), communication (Levinas 1981, Habermas 1979), the *entre-deux* (Merleau-Ponty 1968), or dialog (Tedlock 1983). The major differences, as for example, between Habermas and Levinas, focus on the question of *will* and *intentionality*. Since will and intentionality are always activities of the subject, their implication in the process of communication signifies that 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's 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. Levinas argues that the other is other only if its alterity is absolutely irreducible. To make the other an alter ego is to neutralize its absolute alterity (1969: 99). Derrida, on the other hand, has argued that Levinas's absolute other denies the status of an ego to the other, and if the other is not recognized as an ego its alterity would collapse. "The other as alter ego signifies the other as other, irreducible to my ego, because it has the form of an ego" (1969: 104). The other is both/and, both identity and difference, sameness and alterity. Derrida argues that there is a reciprocity between the I and the other where both stand under an obligation to seek to transcend their egoism in understanding the alterity of the other. In contrast to the absolute other of Levinas, Derrida's other, at least in the context of his discussion of Levinas, is a relativistic other.

Positing the other as an ego, however important as a ground for a kind of ethics of dialogical reciprocity, runs the risk of assigning an identity to the other that is no different from my own. The other is not really other, it is an ego just like me. To say that we must recognize the other as ego has a nice ring to it, but what could it mean outside the context of our understanding? The idea of "ego" is already an item of cultural explanation, or at least pseudo-explanation, no less than "subject" and "self," and it is difficult to know what it might mean in the context of the other. Are there "ego's" in the worlds of them others? It does not help to transform ego into something like "human" since that idea, too, is caught up in our own cultural understanding and may have no meaning to others, absolute or otherwise. Derrida's reciprocal other is quite close to Habermas's dialogical other. Both make the other a subject in the form of the speaker and both thus take away its difference, and this is so even if we double the other's identity as speaker/hearer, subject/object. The internal/external contrast here is partly illusory since Levinas lodges the other "inside-beside" the subject, which, in Habermas's account, is the act the external hearer has to perform in order to divine the speaker's intentions. 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's idea of the proximity of the one-to-the-other in the saying.

Levinas, however, does not entirely escape from the grounding authority of the gaze. He 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* (Levinas 1981: 88–93). Thus, it is not really in the saying that this interiorization takes place, but in the eye confronted by the exteriority of the other's face.

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 respons-ability 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 towards 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). Here the self is possessed by the other.

B.2 Dissolution

The subject *disappears* into the system of signs, into language. This theme occurs in a 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" (Heidegger 1971: 132), but is probably most effectively represented in the works of Derrida, where 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" (Baudrillard 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 ineradicable 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* (Baudrillard 1993: 122–133). Its survival derives from the "... impossibility of encounter, fusion, and the exchange of differences" (Baudrillard 1993: 146).

Baudrillard urges us to seek the other's cruelty, unintelligibility, and foreignness, to seek "radical exoticism" rather than the "pimping of differences" (Baudrillard 1993: 147), but we should never try to encounter the other, or communicate with it, or seek it in the "terrifying illusion of dialogue" (Baudrillard 1993: 148, 174). We should instead "follow the other," and "allow ourselves to be seduced by being the other's mirror without his knowing it" (Baudrillard 1993: 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" (Baudrillard 1993: 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" (Baudrillard 1993: 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" (Baudrillard 1993: 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 (Derrida 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's *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 ongoing 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 *différance* 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, what we might say is their purpose. We may well conclude that they de-thematize our taken-for-granted ideas, and 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 *evoke* the unnameable and the unspeakable as a *pharmakon* for our *hubris*.

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