

LAW'S ORIGIN IN DESIRE

(FIRST VERSION)

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'Normativities' sets the stage for its argument by working out an analogy or proportionality between three relationships: science / society; law / society; law / science.

It is through the construction of this proportionality that the question about the firmness / infirmity of normativity arises. I would like to elaborate on an aspect of normativity in which the normative enters into an entanglement with something which precedes as well society as science. This other term of a fourth relationship is desire, as it is projected in psychoanalysis since Freud as something intrinsically ambivalent and whose ambivalence is at the root of guilt, and through the mediation of guilt at the origin of law.

In my paper I try to construct a theoretical space in which different approaches become in a way commensurable and enable us to question those very complex proportionalities of obviously incalculable terms. I begin with the introduction of a device of thought reflecting precisely the possibility of observing analogies of ratios between terms. Denomination, as I call it, is a major method of intellection congruent with the very high standards of scientific object resolution which we have – under conditions of late modern learning – to stick at. I then quickly remind how science is contingenciated by its "denomination" by society (the putting of society at its denominator). The contingenciation of law produced by the "fraction" of law by social communication being evident, I try to inverse the fraction and to show how society itself can be denominated by law as a term engulfing and generating it. Law has therefore to be shown at its own emergence in the symbolic realm opened by desire at the dawn of society, culture and meaning.

At this juncture a methodological / epistemological consideration has to be inserted in order to maintain the approach at the level of our de-constructivist standards. Discourses of the origin are most problematic in this respect and an elucidation of what is at stakes when we reconstruct origins is necessary. De-narrativisation is a

general necessity within contemporary science – as well social as exact science. A concept of a second order de-narrativisation is elaborated by means of which my argument can be advanced in direction of a knowledge of the origin without adopting any speculative nor structuralist narratives.

The relation of science to law is grounded in an original relationship of knowledge to thrust. The entanglement of both can be observed by means once more of the denomination of science over law. What such a denomination shows is an interpenetration of both terms at the level of their respective original figures. Knowledge is structured by the internal consistency and the leading distinctions of an episteme and law has its origin in desire.

To put episteme over desire opens a very stimulating access to Foucault's theory of power and of the reflection in episteme of all original restrictions of bodily desire. The elucidations of the structure of desire which I work through make possible the position of some strong theses conflicting with Foucault's premises. The argument reaches a stage at which the question of castration and of a possible unchaining of bodily desire can be formulated.

Denomination

In **traditional logic** terms are conceived of as identities and unities that can be simply put or posited as such. God, man, bed, white, mortal... are such terms. They can take their place in enunciation as subjects (substantives) or as predicates (attributes).

Their **entity** is not touched, **not influenced by co-position** of other terms. When multiple terms occur in a position of thinking - while they are thought of, in a act of noein – they do not interfere as to change something in one another.

When multiple terms occur in a position in which they are thought of as belonging to the same **multiplicity**, than a space is imagined which is that of a set that has a number of elements. An abstract operation allows the building of a set that has no other element than one term. Still more abstract is the construction of a set that has no element at all.

This extremely short reminder of Aristotelian and set theoretical basics are intended to introduce to the making of one **operation**, that of **putting a term at the denominator of another one**.

We are proceeding with so much precaution because there are different ways to operate a de-nomination. Most generally it is to put one designed term into relation to another designed term. Such a relation can be totally external, i.e. leaving unaltered the terms entering into relation, like that of building sets mentioned above. It is then the very elementary relationship of belonging to a set.

Other relations can be **more complex**. Multiplication brings together a term designed to be multiplied and another term designed to be its multiplicator. The terms remain unaltered: they however give advent to a third term, which is their product. There are lots of mathematical operations applied to mathematical entities like numbers which **give birth to third terms** as a result of their bringing to operation two or more terms at the places left and right of their operators.

Most complex are **operations of relationning** (putting into relation) **which alter the terms** in a way that these lose their self-identity. They cannot anymore be supposed to "endure" as that what they are. The relation is no more external to its objects: it is immanent to them and constitutive of their **dynamic identity**. Such are the operations of **dialectical logics** where no term can be anymore supposed to exist as self-identical. Every term is immanently relational and refers to a dialectical counterpart with which it is dynamically intertwined. **Terms** have or **are then histories** into which they are **bound to unfold**.

Mathematical and philosophical interests brought up an **evolution** that **desubstantified terms** or positions through a broadening of the set of objectivities that could be termed or posited. So terms (substantives) could not anymore be set in opposition to relations (verbs), because relations, functions, operations etc. were put themselves as terms or **arguments of higher order relations**, functions, etc.

Most revolutionary were recent attempts to **de-ontologise logic** in a way as to make it shift from a logic of identity to a logic of difference. George **Spencer Brown's** Laws of form are paradigmatic of such attempts. By triggering discussions and debates in the sphere of human and social sciences it could influence modes of thinking how such a shift could be accomplished within these sciences.

The mark Spencer Brown made use of to posit an element (form) did not pass between two pre-existing terms but through a single element giving thus birth to it against the background of all that it is not. A **form** (a term) is thus **two-sided** with a designated, "indicated" and a non-indicated side. **Self is a separation mark between self and non self**. Since self is the separation as well as the separated, than self is **always re-introduced in itself as the difference that it is**. It is **infinitely self-recurrent** in itself.

Jacques **Lacan** developed a very idiosyncrasic mathematics of desire build around short formulas which he called **mathèmes** ("mathemes"). Central to such a mathematics is a mark called "**barre**" under which denominators could be put in relation to nominator terms. The meaning of the lacanian "barre" is variable in relation to the terms that it separates. Sometimes it crosses, "bars" a single term and means its spiltting.

Now I would like to introduce a particular use of the dividing mark (bringing two terms into a relation of division). This use is not dialectic. It builds on the logics of Spencer Brown and the mathemes of Jacques Lacan, in the sense that it is **strictly de-ontologising**. What is put at the bottom of the fraction¹ is the term that would **engulf itself and the nominator** in an entanglement that ruins all discontinuity and identity between the terms.

The argument of our workshop hints to analogies between relationships involving **three terms: science, society, law**. Reading carefully I noticed that a sort of **proportionality** was being postulated between them. I then tried to formalise this proportionality and observed that the **terms at the bottom** of the three relationships stood there to fill a typical function. They where so to say **incalculable** or "irrational" denominators that made it impossible to reach a "rational" product of the operation of division at stakes.

¹ "Our word *fraction* did not originally have a mathematical sense. It goes back ultimately to the Latin verb *frangere*, "to break." From the stem of the past participle *fractus* is derived Late Latin *fractiō* (stem *fractiōn-*), "a breaking" or "a breaking in pieces," as in the breaking of the Eucharistic Host. In Medieval Latin the word *fractiō* developed its mathematical sense, which was taken into Middle English along with the word. The earliest recorded sense of our word is "an aliquot part of a unit, a fraction or subdivision," found in a work by Chaucer written about 1400. One of the next recorded instances of the word recalls its origins, referring to the "brekyng or fraccioun" of a bone" (Webster's Dictionary).

Denomination is a **productive intellectual operation** which lives from the tension produced by the introduction of a difference between nominator and denominator and the reintroduction of this difference within the denominator as the term engulfing the other, that means the term able to reflect its difference to the nominator in itself. It is a **major figure of thought in our present epistemic constitution** giving rise to a form of post-ontological intellection parting from intuition and comprehension, soliciting improbable constructions with very high potentials of cognitive surprise. The exposure of a term to the effects of its fraction by another is a sort of metaphorising which inflect its original paths of signification and reshape the whole chart of its expansion.

Society / science

Putting normativity in its ratio to society and its ratio to science in an analogical relationship to the ratio of society to science is a **deconstructionist device** which brings normativity in a "**goedelising**" or **paradoxical entanglement** with two terms of a special type. Society and science as they have to be understood in their position as denominators at the "bottom" of each other and of law are **terms engulfing themselves and everything that enters in a ratio with them**. This is what recent science studies have shown.

In the perspective of science studies – as well as of a systems theoretical sociology of science -, there can be **no site of observation of science from which science could be observed before its entanglement with society** or from which such an entanglement could be neutralised or its effects reversed or discounted. The engulfment of science by society reveals **science** to be a **contingent effect of processes of social communication** which cannot cease to operate in any operation of observation, especially not that operation by which the relationship of science to those processes themselves is observed. Insofar, there is no site beyond these processes where a theory of the entanglement of science and society could establish itself. The **observation of the entanglement itself is entangled in it**.

Another relationship involving society as its denominator is shown to be analogous to the latter. It is the relationship of law to society. The case is here a similar one: the **entanglement of law and social communication** is of such a nature that makes

law a contingent effect of social processes. There is a greater disposition to acknowledge the historical and cultural relativity of norms than that of science. However and paradoxically, it is the more relative which is maintained against factual disappointment of expectations and the non relative which is given up at the first gathering of some evidence against it. The normative is counterfactually upheld and the cognitive is renounced at the emergence of the first conflicting factual evidence.

In a theoretical and cultural setting determined by an irresistible recognition of the overwhelming power of paradoxising or **goedelising figures engulfing all orders of meaning** there is **no possibility to distinguish in the iterated reversals of sameness and otherness an inside and an outside** of these orders. This is a **major avenue of de-ontologisation** transforming as well the world of cognition as the substance and architecture of social normativities.

Society / law.

There seems to be no way in which the relationship of law and society could be inverted so that law could be put at the denominator of society and engulf it as well as itself. **Society is always "broader" than law**, it is the whole of social communication and engulfs cognitive as well as normative meaning projections and communications. In addition to this inclusion of the part in the whole, the **proportion of the part to the whole is declining**. The process of **cognitivation** of the normative make constant progress. Classical normativity seems to shrink ever more to the advantage of factual, explorative, tentative, provisional processes of relative normation, conditioned by empirical evaluation and periodical re-evaluation – all processes being dependant upon the influx of cognition into their information basis.

There is a sense in which law is a *conditio sine qua non* for the subsistence of human society – since without any congruence of expectations no society could be ordered and endure. This would be the **functionalist thesis**: a society is an ordered whole that cannot function in chaos and anarchy. It needs a chart to guarantee and enhance the congruence of individual expectations. There is an irreducible normative or legal function which make possible the coexistence of manifold individual wills, projects, values, perceptions, styles of action,... It guarantees the expectability of courses of action.

It is in another sense that proto-sociological² and anthropological approaches put law and the normative in general law at the emergence of society as such. From their vantage point the normative ordering of social communication is not only a matter of a functionalist probabilisation of an originally highly improbable state of the world. It is a matter of symbolic representation and efficiency. The functional argument remains tautological as long as it does not identify the place of improbability in the system. Biological social species are regulated through instinctual mechanisms: individuals concur, so to say without knowledge nor consensus, to the realisation of the complete set of social goals – without the slightest degree of anomy. The dynamic of interactions between members of such social species is characterised by a sort of pre-established congruence. The whole compact is auto-organisationally perfect but also more rigid than **human societies**. These **regulate themselves through the medium of meaning** which is structurally different from any other biologically anchored medium of regulation.

The anthropologist would still be unsatisfied by such a conjecture. **Meaning** for him is **from the beginning an emphatic articulation of a "legein"** of a perception of the world in an endless deepening of its horizons. Man as a meaning handling species is always aspired into the depths of horizons, into openings and closures of space. Such a "Einräumung" is a structural moment of that event which Heidegger called "world". Heidegger contrasted it with environment as "Umwelt", in which all other species live without "legein". Strip this short reminder of its heideggerian accents, what remains is that kernel of what meaning is at the beginning. It is a **symbolic power**, that leaves behind it symbolic contents; as such a power it is psychically speaking an **imago**, an **active source stirring psychic energy and regulating its flow**³.

Why is the anthropological approach to meaning, as we are designing it, so old fashioned as to stick to concepts like that of symbol, symbolic forms, symbolic contents, etc? We have learned with enough accuracy from Luhmann that any prospect of scientific observation of an object to be constructed by it must take the path of **systemist equifunctionalisation** in order to stick to a minimum level of

² Proto-sociological are in our terminology approach like those Durkheim, Mauss and Girard.

³ Jung

resolution capacity of scientific observation. Functionalism as such is nothing else than a necessary stage intermediary of multiplication of points of observation and ways of observing out of which a self-incongruent object should emerge. Once such an object is reached, its integration into a system framework can proceed by entering the operations by which it comes to equifunctionalising apprehension into the network of system operations. That is how a highly resolute observation of objects can be assured.

To put it briefly: between symbol (by Durkheim, Cassirer and others) and meaning (by Luhmann) there is a gap; if we want to cross it back – from meaning to symbol – we will have to give some account of the reasons pushing us to do it. Why are we renouncing the benefits, more exactly the necessities of high resolution of objects in a theoretical – i.e. purely scientific - approach of the domain of law? The answer is simple: because **law** at its origin can be **constructed from such a highly resolute site of observation**; if we **put desire at the denominator of law** we are able to get a **goedelised figure of law** that can on its part be put at the root of science as well as of society and engulf them and itself in the specific manner we described above.

Bringing massive forms of meaning like symbols back into our approach is not designed to lead us back to any Kulturphilosophie nor a cultural anthropology lying behind more refined potentialities of contemporary theory. The project is not to draw on such sources of speculative theory reconstructing the mythical stage of the origin and deriving from it the elementary figures of self- and collective understanding⁴. What is at stake is not the **origin as mythical**, but the origin as **structural**. The emergence of meaning in the luhmannian sense of a totally improbable device of enrichment of the potentiality of being has to do with the emergence of a device the anthropologists call culture or also law as something that brings forth new specific forms of quest with highly complex structures.

Anthropologists like Lévi-Strauss situate the **rupture**, in the evolution of humanity, between the realm of nature and the realm of culture at the emergence of a **counter-instinctive prohibition**, i.e. the prohibition related to sexual intercourse with close kin (biological or classificatory). This prohibition signs the **advent of human society**

⁴ We are not to fall back to something like *Totem and Taboo*. It is possible however to read the latter in a de-objectifying, structural manner.

out of law. In effect, such a prohibitive law is the entry of potentiality in the realm of necessity and instinctual mechanism. It is the **foundation of all symbolic orders**, that means structurally of language (legein). It is the matrix of that **deepening of the world into horizons of potentiality** – that potentiality whose enrichment defines quite exactly meaning in the systemist understanding.

The paradox here is that **potentiality** is **enhanced**, and not curbed, by the **restriction of possibility**. The congruence of expectations and behaviours in biological species is extremely high. Human species falls out from this biological setting of spontaneous congruence. Law brings with it the necessity of selections. The space for selections is not given from the beginning. It must be opened up by explicit **rarifications**, "scracenings" **of the range of possibilities**. Instinctual selections are not rarifying selections, but eliminations of selection as such. And this in two respects:

a. taking the example of mating, the **biological pre-selections** of temporal windows, relatively precise coaptation of behaviour, congruence of object and goal of activity, **exclude variations**. That means that factual variations cannot be described as such, because they **lack** any **significance** of being a variation on something allowing variability and giving to variants a status and a relevance as such. Variations can't then be seen as refining selections made on the basis of instinctual pre-selections.

b. Whereas the **non existence of restraints** on behaviour alternatives, in the case of mating for example, the non existence of prohibitions of possible mates, does **not open a space of significant variation**, i.e. selection. It is a sort of in-difference – a difference not really making a difference – of choice nullifying the selective effect and the potentiality of the act.

Law at its origin breaks its way into something that is not ordered by meaning, but is governed by nature / biology / instinct. It is originally a **prohibitive selection** that **rarefies biological possibilities and creates a symbolic order**. Symbolic order is the result of a rarefying, stringent, penibilising selection. As long as selections are simply instinctual, they do not bring into existence the new order of society and culture. Such a new order is based on the incongruence of exchange (of women) and desire (of ones own genitors).

How does this ordering work in terms of selection and potentiality? A range of in-different choices is thought as originally given: it is the realm or **regime of nature** in

which, as we have seen above, **selections** are **not really rarifying** nor does the lifting of a selection constitute an opening of a range of variation. **Prohibition** does not only restrain a range of selection, but it **make selections meaningful** or signifying. With prohibition selections begin to make a difference. The question that has to be put then is: is there another way by which selections could become meaningful? My contention in this paper would be: There is **no other entry into the realm of meaning** than this one.

With law as that restraint put on the in-difference of nature we enter a realm of difference which is the matrix of all differences and potentialities. The deepening of horizons of potentiality is not something that emerges with meaning as abstract difference and reference. The "neutral" cognitive aspect of meaning is a derivative one. The **difference that meaning makes** is not simply one between two alternatives of complexity reduction in a given world horizon. It is a difference in the **resonance in the human psyche of different articulations of bodily demands** whose trajectories are drawn by drive and cathected by affects. **Difference is an incidence** (of something occurring, that could also possibly not occur) **upon desire**: what makes a difference is something that interferes with desire in its urge for satisfaction. Prohibition creates desire: law and desire come into being in the same operation. In the natural, pre-legal status there are only instinctual drives and imaginary coaptation. Law opens the realm of desire as that of difference, significance, meaning, powerful selections, ever deepening potentiality. It is that **original restriction that transforms biological need into a demand** that has to go through the straits of rarified options to **engender desire**.

The problem of the social, of its cohesion and constitution is then not that of the improbability of reconciling a multitude of individual wills, pursuits, expectations, behaviours..., but that of the **improbability of pacifying types of individual demands which become, while getting significance, structurally conflicting**. The simple numbers of individuals are in themselves not relevant. A very big multitude of people is not improbably unanimous because they are so many. One would argue that it is empirically obvious that people have very different inclinations, tastes, goals, ways of enjoyment..., and that put together they can only form a compact if there is a law forbidding transgressions of individual spheres of prerogatives and rewarding self restraint and altruist behaviour. This is of course the

wrong approach. **Individual divergences** are **not fundamental**: they are not at the origin of the necessity of special dispositives to hold together human consociations. A particularly wide native individual variety cannot be postulated in the human species. It is the effect rather than the cause of the emergence of indirect regulations and a fundamentally horizontal-ek-static, potentiality generating, meaning based world presence.

There is no reason to assume that a biological species begins, out of nothing, to produce such an enormous individual variety as to constitute the only social species whose collective existence cannot be regulated on basis of common genetic instinctual equipment. This **fundamental particularity of the human species** is thought of, since the advent of evolutionary diachronic thinking in science, in terms of a history, a succession of events with a rupture somewhere indicating a trespassing of the regime of nature into a radically new one. This passage is **not a sudden efflorescence of individual variety** in the species, the sudden endowment of its members with individual personality features and a sense of freedom which enhances a sort of cacophony when a great number of humans get together. The opening of the scene of culture in the plains, the forests, the deserts and on the islands of early prehistory has to do with a mark, an "encoche" tracée on the body as well as on instruments or belongings telling the fact that one is counting himself as one of many, facing a big Other who is telling him this **tale of self-counting as inflicting unto himself the wound of a mark** by which he **renounces the pursuit** of a central range **of pulsional satisfactions**.

The diachronic scheme of thinking which has established itself since the success of evolution theory in the sciences of life gives to any attempt to reconstruct the advent of culture a narrative profile. It is hard, as soon as we reject biological accounts of a smooth transition from hominidy to humanity, not to imagine a **"scene of the origin"** in which decisive events take place that determine the leap into the new dimension. The argument to reject a purely biological account is that a species evolutionary transition can be stretched as far as one likes, it can come to cover millions of years, there is no single chance to explain how on strictly biological terms a human specimen can leave an environment and enter a world, how it can **refine instinct with meaning**, can **deepen space** and time in a manner as to **generate potentiality** endlessly ahead of its own being and thought. How to figure out what happened and

led to the **entry of a difference-difference or a significant selection** into the universe of natural life without imagining a stage on which an act is played inaugurating the new drama of human culture?

De-narrativisation

The task is then to de-narrativise such accounts in order to stick to our standard of high object resolution. This is possible and I had the opportunity to present a **method of de-narrativisation** in a paper on the evolution theory⁵. Generalising the angle of approach I showed that the scheme of a world time with ontic segments constituting a past or successive portions of the past is to be revised and de-ontologised. Thus the projection of states of the world as having been (the case), building pre-states in relation to our present state and in many respects determining the latter causally, must be deconstructed. What should then appear is the **making of the observation** of those states of the world in the present of the observation itself and under the determination of its then leading distinctions. **There are only present observations of the world**, and never an observation that could be effectuated from an independent site beyond that which is **constituted by presently operating, living, vivid "differences"**: there is always, in each world presence, a set of distinctions having presently a non destructible incidence upon present interest or desire. **World past is an ontologising fiction supposing an ontic givenness of the world**. What is there are presently vivid "differences" which loose more or less rapidly or progressively their vividness and obviousness. They fall prey to a process of aging, paling and fading, to something I called the yellowing (having in mind old photographs). **De-narrativisation** consists of articulating all projections of scientific evidence as ontic states of the world along two reductions re-centring the observation around its own present. The **double reduction** is a process of emergence within the observation of a double movement of **actual and anticipated fading**: one will have to situate oneself at a point at which vividness is withdrawn from the actual onticising observation and directed onto the awareness of a **yellowing of the yellowing**. The only vivid impulse is thus that of the appresentation of the phantomal character of any past observation as well as of the present one (observing the fading of the past one).

⁵ Die Emergenz von Evolutionstheorien. Frankfurt.

There is no line of demarcation making it possible to isolate any observation from any other. They are all equally motivated, in their present effectuation, by their respective basis of vividly evident distinctions and vividly affecting interests or incidences upon given constellations of desire.

Our epistemological consideration enables us to handle speculative approaches working with diachronic schemes, projection of events in prehistoric times, figuring an original scene on which mythical or historical dramas are being played whose contingent outcomes inaugurate new eras and incomparable universes. It allows the highest level observer not to reject from the onset such **narratives** as speculative and mythical and leaves open an **option to de-narrativise them**. It makes readings of Freud's *Totem*, of Girard's mimetic desire and other scientific narratives of the violent origins of culture possible and plausible which otherwise would have been stuck in a mythical logic with no exit paths. Both **Freud and Girard** cope with problematics of mass psychology. Both are trying to isolate a structural mechanism which explains **why human consociations are so labile** and which entails certain respects that any theory should consider while describing forms of containment of socially destructive impulses.

What Freud's and Girard's fictions are telling is the advent of a constellation which opens the specific tension field of human psyche and human society and makes them both unpacifiable. The **de-narrativisation** refers **not only** to their **mythical version but also** to their **structural one**, that means to that version of the origin which has already stripped all its narrative attire and been reduced to its structural components. De-narrativisation is in our sense a **second order shift** corresponding to a **higher resolution of object substantiality**. To shift

- a. from a narrative of the origin which postulates a (pre)historic scene with real events triggering real evolutions as unfoldings of a new psychic structure coming to consistence through those events,
- b. to a derivation of it focussing exclusively on the facts of structure lying behind the narrative

is not so much uneasy a procedure.

Freud's *Totem and Taboo* has ever been read like this, most of its commentaries stressing the fact that any search of scientific confirmation of the alleged events is idle. Freud's **intention** has, in their eyes, to be **split from** Freud's whimsical

construction and exaggerated reliance on his **speculative sense**. The postulation of a real original scene reveals itself to be anything but necessary. What is at stakes and should be upheld without restriction is the structural kernel of the "myth". It is Freud's ultimate vision of a law of the father entering the world as a prohibition and inaugurating human society and its symbolic orders⁶.

The range of **second order de-narrativisation** engulfs not only such massively speculative reconstructions like the Freudian etiology of the Oedipus. It straddles the domain of all evolutionary-diachronic constructions, acquiring a theoretical **impact upon all scientific narratives**. Scientific observation entails, as we have stressed it above, the projection and supposition of ontic reality as an abstract totality of that which is the case in the world. Every time that scientific observation succeeds in describing that reality it effectuates the position of an ontic segment which bearing in itself partial or total determinations of subsequent ones. De-narrativise such observations is not only to proceed to a methodical reduction of their speculative or naive elements of linear causality or etiological narrativity. It is to **de-ontologise the fabric of their observation as such**. That means that the facts that such an observation would present at the end of a first de-narrativisation procedure as strictly structural must themselves be de-narrativised once more. It is only when we reach this second order reflection of narrativity that de-ontologisation can succeed.

Applied to the case of an original scene which elicited the rupture between two orders of being, namely nature and culture, **de-narrativisation** would not only question and phantomalise any historic / speculative narrative of such a rupture, but would also **de-onticise any position of reality** relating to those strongly structured and individuated realms of objectivity. It would entail the negation of any ontic position of those realms: there is neither such a thing like nature nor such a thing like culture. Neither constitutes a portion of **ontic reality**. They are **only points of resistance of a description or observation** that encounters at their places a **specific difficulty to imagine** (fingere) **alternative ways of thinking**. De-narrativisation holds open the **principlial possibility of another observation ruining the ontic supposition of reality**. Simultaneously with the effectuation of the observation that gives vivid emergence to the reality of the object (in our example, nature and culture)

⁶ An interpretation of the articulation between prohibition and the advent of the social compact has been proposed by myself in "Ader gegen Ader...".

the possibility of other ways of observing must be co-conceived, entailing a sort of **co-current epochè** (suspension) of any reality position in relation to the object.

The difficulty is that of simultaneously upholding two opposite courses of thought: on the one side the course going along the obviousness of the self-presentation of the object, reflecting the quasi impossibility of thinking of it in another way than that in which it presents itself so vividly to our observation; on the other side the course of **maintaining the principal alternative** of another type of observation which could **resolve the resistances of the current observation and its correlation in objective firmness**. The **capacity of resolution** is thus in such a **de-narrativising mode of scientific observation** at its maximum. High resolution of scientific observation does not only mean a capacity to approach so closely the object as to enlarge its observable aspects to extreme proportions. It is not only an observation from unfathomable proximities – through huge microscopes, telescopes, grids of analysis, multiple differentiation, iteration of equifunctional calculi, etc. It is mainly the maintaining of an alternativity of observation which **breaks the linear correlates of current observation in ontic objects** – beyond its first order de-narrativisation.

Such a co-current co-conception of alternatives resolves the substantial and substantialising consistencies of observation by viewing reality as the kernel of resistances to observational or constructionist alternativity as such. **Highly resolute scientific observation** is thus **de-narrativising at a second level** which **impedes any position of ontic states of the world**, as un-historic and structural as they might be conceived. Such a resolution of objects as immanent resistances to alternative modes of observation is ultimately resolute of any scientific narrative.

De-narrativisation implies that the formal and usual **diction of science** must be changed. The following phraseology, which is most usual in scientific communication, is thoroughly inadequate to the standard of scientific object resolution. The late modern form of highly resolute science does not reflect any state of knowledge of the world.

"We today know that if a stone is not able to maintain itself in suspension in the air, it is not because it is attracted to its natural place in the universe which is the co-natural element earth at the middle of the world; but because there is a force of attraction / gravitation which is exerted by a physical mass in its vicinity and which is proportional to it and the square of the distance lying between both massive bodies.

"We today know that the aural radiation around (let us say a planet like) Jupiter is not caused by the existence of a satellite to this planet, but is due to the exertion of a certain type of gas whose chemical formula could be established recently in a western laboratory".

"We today know that a genetic feature of a given species is responsible for a given fact of behaviour in its members."

"We today know that etc..."

We know nothing of all that. **We just know that all such knowing is already fading into non obviousness and non evidence** and that the only thing that could be asserted with a sort of high order certainty is that **all objects surrounding us in the world are made of a fluctuating resistance of observation to itself**. The vividness of observation which is a reflection of such resistances is most intense not on the level of first order observation of objects, but at the level of a second order observation where the **constructed nature of any objectivity** is revealed and its consistency (higher degree of firmness / being) seen as that of an **immanent congruence of quasi alternativeless modes of construction**.

Science / law

What was at stake in the preceding sections are the chances and ways of knowledge of the origin of society and culture as a domain of indeterminacy beyond the narrow selections of nature. We learned how to manipulate the denomination of a nominator as an operation of division of two terms put in a relation of "fraction" of one by the other. Terms like society and science, put at the bottom of any term, i.e. with any term as nominator, appear as self-engulfing as well as engulfing their nominator and their difference to it. We saw that **law** is on its part such a term which when put to fraction society reveals itself as **engulfing itself as well as society and its own difference to it**. I would like to show now that the same effect is produced by a **denomination of science through law**. This inverts the question we have started from, which was that of a knowledge of the origin as emergence of a universe of indeterminacy grounded in the event of law as prohibition. The new inverted question is then: **how does knowledge originate as a part of the universe of indeterminacy** which we referred to as **culture or society**? The **second order de-**

narrativisation of any scientific (naïve narrative or structural narrative) knowledge of the origin led us to a **re-centring** of the whole problematic **on the eventual aspect of knowledge as difference-difference** or a present and **vivid incidence of cognition** (of a cognitive surprise) **upon interest or desire**. This is also the track along which the denomination of science through law has to be carried out.

"Pantes anthrôpoi tou eidenai oregontai phusei. sêmeion d' hê tôn aisthêseôn agapêsis: kai gar chôris tês chreias agapôntai d' hautas..." (All men naturally desire (*oregontai*) knowledge. An indication of this is our esteem for the senses; for apart from their use we esteem them for their own sake...⁷). At the root of knowledge there is a **impulse**, a **thrust towards the acquisition of the awareness of something**. One is **moved to know** and seek knowledge by a thrust, a **desire (orexis)** which is not incidental in itself nor repressible or substitutable in its function. One has to take seriously the "orectic" aspect of cognition: orexis in greek is a substantive deriving from oregô, oregesthai, and means tension, stretching (of oneself towards something) – showing the same radical as lat. regô, or germ. recken). The phonetic similarity with hormaô, hormainô, ornumi is misleading because one is tempted to ascribe the etymon of oregô to a radical of this group (*or, like lat. oriri), thus integrating into the semantics of *orexis* the very marked verbal aspect of inchoation, of rapid, vehement or mighty egression to action. There is thus a **strong connotation of thrust** in the greek word denoting desire. It is combined with the idea of tension, of being bent towards a goal.

This thrust and tension towards knowledge has to be situated in the **economy of desire** whose description and theoretisation is the task of psychoanalysis. What is that impulse that moves man to know? Where does it originate from? What is the **spur urging man to seek cognition**? The biblical myth of the genesis of mankind tells the advent of the *status iste* of man as a drama involving an original prohibition to know. The fruits of the tree of knowledge were the only ones forbidden to the first humans. Once more it is a prohibition, a **law making untouchable objects of natural consumption**, which **opens a new universe** with unforeseen structures of potentiality. Melanie Klein, while developing the concept of a psychoanalysis of children, could establish a **correlation between the stile of infantile curiosity / lack**

⁷ Metaphysics, A, 980 a 22-24. The translation is that of Tredennick in the Loeb Library edition .

of curiosity, inquisitiveness / lack of it, search to see what is behind artefacts and constructs, learn behaviour and performances,... **and the fluctuation** in the child **of anxieties** linked to the different phases and positions he goes through before it acquires the wholesome and reparative attitude towards the first objects of its desire.

The anxieties involved would have been incomparably weaker if the inhibition to know what is involved in the aggressiveness or the withdrawal of the object could be suspended. The **source of anxiety** is the **secret itself** and the **object of anxiety** is the **disclosure itself** of what is protected by the secret. The veiled nature of what is behind all sources of anxiety is determined by the fact that the substance of desire cannot be stared on. The veiling protects not only the secret, but the staring person herself – the staring of her desire. Desire cannot encounter its own origin in the desiring conjunction of the big Other without being swept away into the hole in which the conjunction takes place.

An immanent inhibition is thus put on desire: it cannot face its own origin. **Desire** is always **stirred from a place guarded by anxiety and source of all anxiety**. This structure of veiled and veiling origin is at the root of that "orexis eidenai" (a desire to see / understand). Such a **veiling guards the secret** of the origin **but also gives the impulsion to look behind it**. It is also the intensity of this impulsion which makes the guarding of the secret necessary. That means that we here have a structure analogous to that of a **prohibition opening a space of potentiality and eventuality**. Law and desire are co-originary in the sense that on the one hand **prohibition creates desire** as the complicated structure it is, **and** that on the other **desire is the modus of demand bearing an immanent inhibition** – which Lacan describes topologically as generative of highly paradoxical figures.

Veiling and unveiling are thus central impulsions of desire. That means that desire from the onset is related to knowledge. It has the structure of a knot like interlocking of three circles, that of real need, of imaginary fusion and of symbolic distancing through prohibition / castration⁸. In relation to its manifest objects desire does not come to a halt in the consummatory possession of those objects. Desire describes a circuit around its object and returns from the hole of the object drawn by himself around the latter onto itself. The **constant elusion of any squaring of desire in its**

⁸ We are quite evidently referring to the borromean knot as Lacan designed it in his last seminars.

object, how thorough its possession by the desiring subject may be represented, refers to the element of **castration** which holes out all fulfillings of desire.

Within this element, the dimension of knowledge is engulfed, because **castration** is primarily the **veiling** of something desire is directed upon, which is its **origin and paradigm**. What is impulsing desire is a mimesis of something desire has an unconscious knowledge of. Both that which is unconsciously imitated as well as the unconsciousness of this imitation itself are veiled in operation and direction of the orectic impulse itself. Such an impulse engulfs consequently the **paradigmatic origin of desire** as something **hidden in it and to it**. The projection of desire upon objects in which it would attain fulfilment blurs the fact that desire is always on the search of its origin, of the fundamental *movens* which keeps it under non abiding tension and objective projection. The origin of desire is veiled for it and as long as desire is pulsating in the psyche – that means as long as the psyche is actually such – there takes place an attempt to unveil it. In every single desire there is a **fundamental motive of gaining knowledge of the origin of desire** which is paradigmatically a **moving force in it**⁹.

The original prohibition / castration¹⁰ is known in its effects, but not in its causes. The prohibition marks a range of actions as not permitted, but does not give sight into what is prohibited in them. To face the causes of desire is unbearable. Looking into the origin, gaining knowledge of it is not prohibited as such. **Explicit prohibition is related to objects**, which then are marked by horror and thus defended by very strong affectual mobilisations. The horror of the prohibited as explicit possibilities of action and intention is doubled by a **horror of the implicit and "unfaceble" causes of prohibition** which is much more powerful. A double stage is thus involved in the structure of prohibition: what condemns desire to structural failure is not that it always have to resist being attracted towards objects of natural need or imaginary

⁹ The moving by the veiled origin enter into composition with the unconscious memory of the first breachings or facilitations of the drive which gave it in early infancy its first, most fulfilling, most intense and vivid satisfactions.

¹⁰ We equate prohibition with castration following Lacan's use of the term. Castration does not immediately refer to the castration complex as that structuring bundle of real or imaginary events taking place at a certain stage of the sexual development of the child, implying the feeling of a parental threat directed upon the genitals of the child and producing a complex of very intense anxieties and affects of exposure. Castration is more generally the "barring" of demand by a prohibition giving desire its specific paradoxical, inconclusive "Bahnungen" (breachings).

demand; those objects are marginal and can easily be out weighed by alternative ones – the biblical myth describes the prohibited as a sole, quasi residual object among a infinity of permitted other ones. It is the fact that **in any desire** the **moving impulse** is directed towards the **re-enacting of the "primary scene"** of the origin of desire¹¹.

Desire always tends towards the body parts and the schemata involved in this "primary scene". The effect of such an underlying motive of all desire is ultimately an **inversion**: it shifts from such **motivation by a veiled origin** and the subsequent thrust in every desire to partially unveil its own originary movens; **to a desire to unveil any thing** whose encounter in the world is split into a manifest outside and a latent inside. Since all world objects are always split in such a manner in their presentation to human apprehension, the desire to unveil takes the appearance of that "orexis tou eidenai" we are trying to contextualise within the originary structuring of the psyche. Knowledge becomes thus a theatre for an **enacting of the unveiling gestures** which are involved **in the veiled gestures of the origin**. The search for knowledge takes the forms of entering into bodies of objects and bodies of possible knowledge as one would do by sneaking into the primary scene which is itself an interpenetration of subjects acquiring "knowledge" of each other¹².

The bases of such a gestic of the desire of cognition have been explicated by **Melanie Klein** in her psychoanalytic interpretations of infantile play and the anxieties which it enacts. Along with play **infant and child** develop more or less conscious, articulated and reflected **cognitive interests**. Those can be set into correlation with various fields of inquiry, various modes of inquiry, and various types of personal investment in both. A successful child analysis can thus quite plausibly explain the development of cognitive interests and their repercussions on the child's learning. Those have to do with crystallisation, decline and resolution of psychic positions and regimes determined by the **proximity** of the child **to the primary scene** of desire and its disquieting, often terrifying effects.

¹¹ Of the ornunai of orexis so to say.

¹² We are referring to the biblical use of hebr. () and the neo-testamental use of gr. gignôskô to denote the taking place of intimacy or sexual intercourse.

Episteme / desire

Let us try **to transform** our **psychological theses** into their **sociological** counterparts by way of an assumption of their results on the level of collective orderings. We have seen how knowledge is always denominated by desire and how it is always engulfed by an orrectic thrust of which it appears to be an aspect or a direction. How are we now to represent the denomination of the globality of a collective knowledge at a time and in a culture by something like desire? How can we represent an **episteme** as a **universe of discourse** constructing the world in its distinctions and projections as **relating to** the initially abstract and confusing term of **collective desire**?

We will have to start **isolating episteme** from any other term and trying to represent it as if it were an autonomous entity. Episteme appears then as a given whole of knowledge elaborated, conserved, transmitted, applied and more generally being disposed of in a certain society. It is an **encycling whole with limited extension**. An episteme is always represented as such a possibility of a whole and not the only one. There are variable, different **epistemai** which however all denote a character of encyclicity: they are **complete wholes** from the interior of which one can build the idea of other, different epistemai, but which as complete wholes cannot be simply left behind nor be used as a space of knowledge in which to move while simultaneously moving in others.

Episteme is thus a complete whole from which alternative, different epistemai can be conceived of, but cannot be substituted to the one one is situated in. One can conceive of a **plurality of epistemai**, to be sure: one has to do it as far as one is building the concept itself of a episteme – because highly abstractive conceptualisations always implies a serialisation of the referent. However an episteme must be represented as a whole with limited extension and not as a *hen kai pân* with no opening on other wholes as such.

How do we have to conceive of this **limitation of episteme**? Is an episteme bound within borders because it is finite, because it disposes of a limited cognitive apparatus restricted by the number of men and institutions working in the fields of knowledge, acquiring, conserving, transmitting it? Is it limited **by** the **resources** of research, memory, attention and capital given in a culture of which it determines the whole of knowledge and the mode of construction of all its objects? Is that which is

beyond the limits of a particular episteme **contingently excluded** of it in a way which makes a future **inclusion just a matter of the progress** of knowledge in such an episteme? Is the cumulative integration of the not-yet-known bound to ever increase the extension of the episteme at stakes?

The lines of separation of what is inside and what is outside an episteme are never those of the "extension" of the latter. They are those of its "intension", that means of its own modes of comprehension and projection of its regional object domains and of the construction of their relational logics. The **limitation of an episteme** are the **dead angles of its potential total extension**: that means that while imagining the quantitative and qualitative increase of an episteme as being unfolded to an indefinite maximum on the bases of unlimited cognitive resources, such a total episteme would still have beyond itself innumerable contents of knowledge falling into a sort of transfinite knowledge as such. One can in effect always build the idea of an infinity of the knowable transcending any concrete infinite whole of knowledge. However this is still an aspect of extension which does not reflect the real and **drastic limitations of an episteme as its being locked in its own primary selections**. There are whole series - whole wholes - of most concrete, eventually not much remote, but epistemically different contents and ways of knowledge which cannot be integrated in an episteme within which knowledge of their possibility or their real existence has been acquired.

That is why totalising an **episteme** – either in a sort of thought experiment or through a real tremendous extension of it along its own lines of development – is the best initiation to the perception of its limitations. While **expanding in all directions**, the narrowness of its scopes, the scarcity of its dimensions, the constraining cohesion of its structure reveal a binding **internal logic** which **precludes** the emergence in full intensity of **alternative, "other" ways of observing** and constructing objects. Some epistemai reach a **level of reflection** enabling them to see themselves as limited and relative wholes of knowledge¹³ operating with a set of contingent, non alternativeless leading distinctions. These distinctions structure their domains of objects and the

¹³ We could coin a concept to hold together the structural features of such a form of completeness: The feature of a globality encompassing a totality of elements which however allows the perception of its limitedness; the feature of its relativity which makes possible the conception of other analogously structured wholes; the feature of the definitive anchoring of such a perception as well as of any other constitutive element of the globality in one concrete globality excluding any vagrancy of situation in a plurality of wholes.

angles and aspects under which objects become knowable, reflectible, changeable, amendable, etc.

This feature of **strong internal consistency of an episteme** induces at first an interrogation about the necessity / **contingency of its leading distinctions** and categories. It is the question about the **relative truth**, correction, legitimacy of world construction by an episteme along its internally constraining semantics and schemes of action. Can an episteme **open** itself, despite this its strong internal consistency, to other, alternative distinctions and categories? If yes, how far reaching would such a global or fragmentary **integrability of other epistemic orderings** be? Is it possible to extend an episteme beyond itself in an attempt to supplement its deficiencies, shortcomings, dysfunctions, etc. and what would such an extension mean in terms of epistemic **flexibility and variability** versus or in compatibility with high consistency? How **sensible** is an episteme to its own blind spots, and how much irritable is it by immanent critique? How **mendable** is it by way of integration of other epistemic pieces?

The global consistency of an episteme is its hard edge: **the fundamental selections** of an episteme – those of its distinctions and categories – are **rigid** not only because of the constraining effect of their internal logic. A very high awareness of the contingency of those selections does not make it much easier to modify them nor to alleviate the effects of their internal logical cohesion. It is not the harmony and very sharp fitting of those distinctions to each other which build a sort of mutually enhancing systemic body of relations. The fundamental selections are **contingent but not immotivated**. The **limits** put on their variability are those of their motives in a **structure of interests and desires**.

Foucault's elaboration of the concept of episteme underscores the contingency of epistemic selections and their social motivation in a microphysics of power. There is a correlation between those selections and their grounding in social power: episteme is then organised as a discourse, a **global discursive structure with rigid, sharp and strict logic of constraining inclusion inaugurated by primary exclusive gestures**. The grounding of an episteme as a discourse in differentials of power reveals the **pervasiveness of the correlation of ways of thinking, knowing, describing, handling** objects **with their motivations in collective desire**. We shall

try in the following to link Foucault's conceptualisation of power to our appropriation of the psychoanalytic concept of desire in the preceding sections of the paper.

Foucault's own discourse is that of a critique articulated within western episteme at a juncture of its history which is marked by a very **specific sensibility of that episteme to the impact of its own distinctions** upon its social settings¹⁴. Those distinctions are brought by Foucault's critique to be felt as **gestures of separation** having immediate and heavy impacts on society and the individual submitting them to a "pathein" of the stricture and the rigor of their orderings. "Pathein" is the title for an experience marked by the feeling of passivity and overpowering. It is an experience of something inflicted or done to us and containing bodily desires of ours. For Foucault distinctions are immediately **carved in bodies**. Episteme is established and unfolds in bodies and on bodily destinies. The **body** is the title and the **symbol of algesic "pathein"** itself. It is the form and condensation in the real of that "pathein". Foucault's discourse is the most thorough realisation within western episteme of that sensibility, irritability for (the immediacy of) the impacts, the reflections, the correlations of any epistemic distinction upon individual and social desire.

Any stabilised perception of the world has then a pathetic cruelty stemming from the divides it has to draw in the matter of the world. **World as such**, world as a univocised form of individual and collective existence **becomes algesic in itself**. Every univocised form in the world is cut by sharp edges leaving outside it parts of an other which is the body itself. World cuts always through bodily desire and throws away, with power and violence, parts of its flesh. The process has the stillness, discretion and **inaudibility of discourse**, of the making of **epistemic obviousness and evidence that no one can challenge**, so fundamental and irrefutable they seem to be. Foucault's discourse has the liquidity of that complaint which is flowing from the flank and wound of contemporary western episteme itself. The awareness of the contingency of selections of this episteme made all entrenchments of desire against episteme and of episteme against desire non necessary. The **death and lack of a big Other in the big Other** made the **anancastic character of all concisions** –

¹⁴ It can be doubted if Foucault was only a contemporary of that sensibility, rather than its initiator or inventor. I would claim that such a sensibility was already there – documented in an increasing interest in the social conditionings and consequences of science. However, Foucault's "Tat" was so tremendous in its effects that one can identify it with a Copernician revolution blowing up the whole categorical apparatus of the human and social sciences. In that sense, Foucault would be the founder of a science of man operating on the site of this sensibility.

which hitherto was born of the "Not des Lebens" (the necessity and distress of life) – **incomprehensible**. It created that irritability towards necessity which took the form of a hugely enhanced empathetic sensibility for all effects of epistemic distinctions on the whole of society, on specific social groups and on individuals. Foucault's speech weeps out of this wounded sensibility and its insistence is that of the **relentless revelation of the operation of distinction as the work of aching in bodies put to the cuttings and carvings of chained desire**.

Such a discourse airs the immense **scandal** of any epistemic grasp of the world and gives the **illusion**, the scandal not being able to be aired without the pathos of **refusal and rebellion**, that the state of an episteme is changeable – towards the alleviation of some of its misfortunes. Some commentators of Foucault claim, while trying to read him closely, that he was quite aware of the **fatality of bodily anchored desire** in the sense that all attempts to heal its wounds and to lighten its yokes have to end in a **re-empowering of** some sort of new **episteme** or sub-episteme. This new episteme would to be sure be centred around the distinctions and categories which were most crucial in the critique of the invalidated (parts of) episteme. It would still, while driven by the best deconstructivist and reparative intentions, **reproduce modes of exclusion** typical of the old regime of selection.

The paradigmatic example of such a re-empowering of epistemic cuttings is the category of sexuality emerging out of that state of western episteme which was to produce a thorough critique of all repressive constructions of human sexuality. The whole flowering of an epistemic-critical "**sexual revolution**" tending to deconstruct the array of primary selections upon which the regime of sexual repression was founded is doomed to drift on its part towards new invisibilisations and delegitimations of bodily desire – for example the one which articulates itself in the so-called perversions. Revolutions tend to **occult their own repressed** and to establish themselves in the quietude of their extensive destructions. The task of discourse analysis and critique seems thus to have no end: it has to constantly revisit its own premises and to show how **insidious emancipatory discourses** are. Real outcroppings of a form of bodily existence freed from the marginalising and constricting effects of distinctions cutting down into the substance of the body could eventually be lived as extreme (so to say non-discursive) experiences of specific sexual enjoyments in small groups of initiates.

What is **missing by Foucault** is, I think, a **reflection upon the conditions** and the meaning of **placing desire**¹⁵ **at the denominator of episteme**. My approach along an analysis of desire does agree with Foucault's premises that knowledge has to be put into a relation of engulfing determination by desire – what I termed a relation of denomination. However, while Foucault is quite explicit about the upward determination of the nominator by its denominator, he pays little attention to the fact that such a determination is always established around a tension between the terms. Would the denominator be an infinite magnitude engulfing its nominator, the latter would be swollen by it and disappear in it. It would not have any weight in front of it and would not make any difference with it. As I said at the beginning of my paper, **denomination** is a **productive intellectual operation** living from the tension produced by the exposure of a term to the risks of its fraction by another. The latter would denominate the initial term and engulf it in its own movement, opening breaches in it along the lines emerging from its own sup-position to it.

Foucault does not see that bodily anchored desire is not just polymorph, tending in a plurality of directions and dimensions and being restricted by power in these its own tendencies. The **power** or powers affecting desire, inflicting on it their rigorous strictures, exacting from it renunciation and compliance are to be seen as **immanent to desire**. They are **not external to it**, but its own forms of articulation. It is wrong to represent desire as being there like a native substance, a bodily force and thrust, encountering at some moment of its exertion a prohibition which takes the form of a norm or **normative limitation** born by non challengeable certainties of an internally most consistent episteme. In such a frame norm would be an element of culture supported by a discourse and **grounded in a episteme** providing it with its intuitive clarity and obviousness. The **enforcement** of the norm would take then place in the general social medium of power using a variety of **disciplinary** devices and techniques going into the very fine structure of primary motor behaviour. The

¹⁵ I am trying to find a level of congruence between Foucault's understanding of power and desire and the one I am developing here. Differentials of power operate in and on the body submitting it to an operation of tension and counter-tension in which it tries to articulate its own desire. Power – political, economic, biologic, sexual, physical, intellectual, physiological (of habit) – pushes the bodily anchored desire into straits in which it has to be "straightened". This would be a mixed conception integrating elements of both approaches enabling transitions from one to the other and making the main concepts involved commensurable.

restricting norm would then have to be placed upon desire as a non bodily entity submitting the body to foreign exigencies.

Power

Power itself is desire or more precisely the **tension of desire** born from the horror **guarding desire from any illimitation** which would confront it with its own origin. Against Foucault's explicit theses and more decisively against the whole diction of his discourse one should maintain the immanence of power to desire as the affirmation of desire in its own formed exertions. **Power is the order of bodily desire** in the sense that desire, be it as polymorph as it be, is an ordered exertion of bodily anchored libido structured by definite trajectories formed by a relation of desire to its unfaceable origin. This has nothing to do with an immanent normation of desire similar to that imagined by mainstream psychoanalysis along a biologically predetermined maturational cycle of sexual development. Desire is ordered in the sense in which Lacan means that it has a structure articulated around its object (a), the desire of the Other, the demand of self and other, the reflection of ego in other,... At the centre of such a structure, at the source of the tension living in it lies the **horror of self-encounter** entailing the **fall of whole patches of desire into a blind spot** from which they can only emerge when the tension at the core of the structure diminishes. The decline of tension creates a margin of contingency at the skirts of the order of desire. When drawn out of this margin and introduced into the core order new modes of bodily desire become conceivable and can be experienced. They are then integrated to the core and rebuild tension in it.

Thus, **power** should **not** be mistakenly represented as an **external medium of disciplination of brute desire**. **Nor** is it, if one goes along with my thesis of power as desire, the **desire of a more powerful other** imposing itself upon my own. Power is the internal tension of desire as co-originary with prohibition: it is the tension of a desire going to its utmost, stretching to its own satisfactions, realising or not realising them. A desire realising its saturation is no less strained by internal prohibition than one inhibited from attaining such a saturation. The **border** does **not** run **between satisfied and frustrated desire, but between desire and the unconceivably desirable** or that which is not desired because it does not and cannot occur to be

conceived as a desirable. **Desire is restricted by internal inconceivabilities** born out of that which cannot be faced by desire and which lies at the origin of desire itself. Between the origin of desire which cannot be faced by desire itself and desire there is the **screen of prohibition**. Prohibition, as we have seen, guards the origin like a secret or a veiled archê and guards it with secrets, that is with veils. Thus, prohibition is not the norm nor the norms as external restrictions or limitations put upon desire. It is that which is co-originary with desire and which, together with desire, is reflected in the relations of power in which the complete whole of episteme is motivated. The physics and micro-**physics of power** correlated with a certain episteme and a state of social relations organised around gestures of (constraining) inclusion and (restricting) exclusion are themselves the **reflection of a tension resulting from the relation of possible epistemic** (that is cognitivo-normative) **contingency to that (origin) which cannot be encountered by desire.**

This **tension** is then **distributed over the social body** in varying proportions following the position of individuals and groups within this body. Some positions seem to allow greater licence, mobility, easiness in the access to orectic satisfactions while others seem to be allotted with very narrow margins of access to such satisfactions. Such an **inequality** is however delusive because it lures theoretic elaboration into a diction emphasising the **scandal** of such a distribution and occulting the **irrelevance of this variance** in comparison to the global, constant and so finally **equal stalemate of desire in any of its possible epistemic embeddednesses.**

What do in effect such a distribution and variance teach us in respect of the power / desire problematic? Let us have a closer look at its possible configurations. A first one is that in which **social roles** are distributed in a way ascribing clearly disciplining missions to clearly identifiable groups which would sometimes tend to discipline others more than themselves and thus realise a blatantly **unequal distribution**. It is the most scandalous possibility of distribution of power because it supposes a structural hypocrisy at the foundation of the social order. Such a configuration provokes regularly **two types of dynamics** in the social order at stakes: a **restorative** and a **revolutionary** one.

In the case of **restorative** responses, we can observe parts of specific elites being mobilised in the name of discipline and power itself to re-establish the law in its purity

and its most rigorous applications by the empowered elites to themselves. The scandal is perceived as that of the **deficient application of the discipline at the social top of discipline itself. Power wants to be applied with uncompromising and extreme consequence to itself.** Being the **castration tension of desire** it **requires to be paradigmatically visible** in those who have the responsibility for its social upholding. Such is the power dynamics in most polities in the Greek and Roman worlds, in the reformatory movements within the church in the Middle Ages, in the struggle for the khalifat in the Muslim world.

The **revolutionary** responses are directed against the particular order of tension obtaining in society. They seek its destruction, but are **far from seeking the destruction of power** tension as such. **Tension** – which is power as it is based in the double structure of desire and prohibition – is **rebuild around new values**, new semantics and new sharings of social advantages. Very often revolutionary movements bring about new forms of exigencies whose disciplinary tension is **higher than that of the old regime.**

It seems as if all **political dynamics** are bended towards the **increase of power** as the general tension of desire prevailing within society. **Power struggles** are directed concretely towards the acquisition of power by parties. They may change the roles of holders and subjects of power and eliminate abusive positions and excessive power pretensions. They however are **never directed against power as such.** All have their goal in the **empowerment of representations anchored in epistemic wholes** and bearing in modern times the title of ideals or values. Both restorative and revolutionary dynamics seek a **re-empowerment of power**: power is nothing else than the tension and rigor of cuttings to which bodily desire has to be submitted. It is in a way nothing else than the tension towards ideals and values themselves.

Desire is thus **always a demand for power and discipline to embody** and illustrate **its own tension.** In all possible configurations the problem is not that of having power to restrict desire on the one hand and struggling to have power in order to escape such a restriction on the other. Nor is the problem that of the "falsehood" of epistemai on which such orderings are grounded – there is as we have seen no site outside any episteme to observe epistemai and to decide which (or which of their components) are "true" (or "correct", "legitimate") and which are not. It is the fact that desire / prohibition are always in a relation of tension to a third term which is that of

the self-encounter of desire in its own origin; the fact that power is always necessary, always the medium itself of the satisfaction of desire. **Satisfied desire as well as frustrated desire are made possible by the tension of power** binding desire to the possible selections given within the episteme and excluding other selections as inconceivable. Frustrated desire is never frustrated by power itself, but by misuses of power emerging from concrete power struggles. **Disciplining bodily desire is inaugurating it.** It is the opening of its symbolic dimension in acts like those of circumcision or tattooing. Beneath this dimension desire does not exist – but only need and instinct. **Bodies must be "cut", "marked" and "barred" in order to be desiring. They want to reflect power in themselves in order to unfold as desires and be realised and frustrated.**

Castration

Castration is thus that **first relation of desire to itself** by which desire is always in a relation of tension to what is possibly desirable. **Power and discipline** is that upholding of castration as the only possible passage for desire to be what it is. They are so to say the **via desiderii** herself. It is through a passage, a crossing, a passing through the **straits of castration** that desire is bent. Power and discipline are the names for the collective adherence, for the **forces of clutching of desire to the vehicle of its passage.** It is what upholds and maintains the bending of desire.

In any social and cultural context of its, **desire oscillates between monomorphy and polymorphy** and is never open on unlimited polymorphy. Extreme monomorphy at one end would meet up the rigid univocity of instinct and need. **Illimited polymorphy** would not only require a decoupling from the real and imaginary foundations of desire – which is not thinkable without conceiving of an extreme and impossible form of re-appropriation of both by the signifier and its catenations; it would also make any desire thinkable. Such a supposition of **extreme variability of desire**, in its contents and objects, is thought along lines of **analogy to knowledge.** Knowledge namely is projected as a neutral process in regard to its objects. Any non contradictory state of the world is thinkable, any grammatically correct sentence makes sense and can be thought – how chimerical its contents be. The domain of the thinkable is infinite – or transfinite in relation to any other infinite set of a specific thinkable. The only limitations conceded are those of the (transcendental) framing of

world access by the categories of human understanding anchored in the mediation of world givenness through the senses.

Such an inadequate analogy to knowledge works with a supposition of perfect neutrality and variability of the latter. Trying to adjust to the post-kantian **epistemological turn** which stresses the limitation of knowledge by showing its dependence on paradigms which narrow its scope and let alternative ways of thinking appear irrelevant, we would be able to construct a better knowledge – desire analogy. Thus we could claim that **originary prohibition narrows the scope of desire to an axis (of castration)** on which **only limited polymorphy** is possible. That means that if desire is per se polymorphous the space of its extension is not open in any direction, but constricted around this axis. Most chimerical or aberrant forms of desire are what they are in relation to that axis and in a "signifying" dependence on it. They have their meaning of being especially polymorphous, particularly contingent, unmotivated, random like, purely possible, extremely spaced out in the open space of possible desire from their **remoteness from that axis**.

And this correlation is not only logical: it is not tautological in the sense that the arbitrariness is doomed to appear a posteriori as remoteness from a reference point because such a point has been posited by us as our site of observation. An **absolutely polymorphous desire would cease to be one: it would be a global demand** (of proximity, care and fusion) **with imaginary saturations** infinite in form and number. As long as such a demand does not mark the body by a signifying specification cutting into its parts and creating zones of differential, constantly regenerated significance, it would remain purely imaginative. Its corporal satisfactions would be unspecific, the body extending itself in an oniric manner into an indistinct floating site of quasi-hallucinatory satisfactions. The **absence of the castrating cuttings in bodily desire** would thus entail an **indifferentiation of the body** to a sort of polymorphously excitable and satisfiable matter with uncertain limits and ends.

The analogy should then be reversed. It is knowledge which in the limitations of its extension is similar to the binding of desire by castration. One should even go beyond analogy and ascertain our thesis: that **epistemic limitations** are themselves not only reflections of the finitude of a paradigm based structure of observation; they are **reflections of orectic axialities**. If epistemai are finite closed wholes with

indefinite stretches of blind spots, it is because desire is marked by an axial tension of castration.

There is thus a tension immanent to every universe of cognition and normation. A universe of human discourse and action is such a state of tension, more or less intense. Cognition and its crystallisation in an episteme is structurally limited in its scope and in its possibilities to integrate cognitive contents. Blind angles are spaces in the back of episteme in which one has to locate an unthinkable. **Options of thinking**, that is of having access to thinkable thoughts, opinions, ideas, views,... are **always restricted by incapacities to confront some type of desire**. The fallacy is then to believe that knowledge is neutral and that its contents are thinkable per se. Thinking presupposes in fact drastic reductions and transformations within an extensive, complex excitational economy of desire.

Nobody is able to maintain himself in a state of **cognitive openness beyond the limits of the excitational tension** of his desire. Such an openness-beyond would suppose that prohibition has been lifted and that desire is no more marked. It would let emerge the **figure of an unlimited episteme** which would be able to look in its own back. Within such an episteme no thinkable and no single prospect of knowledge would be hard or impossible to think, since it is no more guarded by primary anxieties protecting the secret of the origin. No single species nor vision would stir anxiety and madness¹⁶. In reality **episteme** is a **structure of concomitant veiling and unveiling reflecting the tension of the ability to face and not to face pieces of knowledge and desire within a social order**.

Foucault's diction induced, as we have seen, a reading of power along which the power based denial of openness for orectic variance and deviance could be in a way lifted or alleviated. My contention has been that such a supposition meets up with an abolition or **cancellation of castration**. Such a cancellation is obviously **not constructible** within the theoretical space we have worked through, combining high exigencies of scientific object resolution with a re-elaboration of the psychoanalytic concept of desire and of the foucauldian concepts of episteme and power. If castration is always power based and if it is coextensive of desire, then there can be **no**

¹⁶ Most pure knowledge like mathematics, apparently so strictly independent of social interests and desire, is curiously enough one in which madness is often looming large.

position ever **which would completely erase the difference** within the whole polymorphy of desire **between forms of "straight"** (orthê) **and "not straight"** (anorthê) **orexis**.

There is no escape from the quasi topological necessity that **no forms of desire can appear as not related to castration** in general: how remote from the forms of castration bent desire they may be, how colourful their variations and refinements be, they are structurally situated in the space of attraction born with the co-origination of desire and prohibition. That means that most **extreme libertarianism** itself is **not able to establish an unlimited orectic contingency** and the conceivability of all desire. It is not able to abolish a specific difference, how far it may push back its event by alleviating the criteria of its emergence and characterisation. This irreducible difference relates to the separation of all that falls in and all that falls out, be it as tiny as it be, of the range of bent desire. There is no position of desire that could indifferenciate the latter in a manner that all possible fulcrums would be lost from which some desire would appear as "perverse" and some as not.

In **Sade's** world, which could figure such an orectic position, an **inverted difference** must be made: a form of non desire called **innocence has to be provided in order to unchain** and lift all limits for the exertions of **polymorphous desire**. The provision of innocence must in itself be unlimited, that means that the innocent flesh upon which sadic desire is launched must be indefinitely regenerated and ought not show any signs of erosion, damage or fatigue.

To sum up: the extension of the limits of orectic variance to the utmost, enabling them to embrace any form of polymorphous desire, cannot abolish the difference to some desire that always falls under some sort of inconceivability; it leads to an **inversion** of the position of desire in which **perversion** (or unlimited polymorphous enjoyment) **becomes the categorical imperative** entailing a (sadic) power based bending of desire against the non desire of (ever regenerated) innocence. Lacan has shown that inversion, in *Kant avec Sade*, and tried to make plausible the figure of a mutual convertability of the imperative of castration and the imperative of enjoyment. To eliminate the discrimination of any desire is to **eliminate the possibility of characterising it as perverse**. It implies the ceasing of any cutting in bodily desire. But such an absence of cutting cannot be reached. What is reached is a **cutting of**

the cutting and through it into new bodies and two types of flesh, noxious and innocent, reproducing the dynamics of castration in an inverted form.

Ambivalence

Law's Origin in Desire (a draft) Jean Clam (CNRS, Paris / Berlin)	1
 Denomination	2
 Society / science	5
 Society / law.....	6
 De-narrativisation.....	12
 Science / law	16
 Episteme / desire.....	21
 Power.....	27
 Castration.....	30
 Ambivalence	34