

SCORE

Annotation

The first thing that comes to a mind in connection with this text is a scene (a state of mind) from Antonioni's film *The Adventure* where an ink sketch, depicting an ancient arc, is spoiled by spilling the ink over the sketch (where a particular possibility, *intention*, collapses because of the condition of possibility of possibility, *imagination*).

Overall, this text is a musical and modern rendition of the *original or most original scream*. Straightforwardness of this *divine claim* might recall, for instance, some of Plato's later dialogues.

Note

At first sight, all this might seem – for a subject as trivial as walking – more than overthought. Nevertheless, the reason is simple: this subject is in fact *fascinating*.¹

Form

Dialogue	3 – 12
So-called science	13 – 49
Myth	50 – 90

Situation

Direction	3 – 12
Scene	13 – 49
Detour	50 – 90

Content

Discontent	3 – 30
Content	31, 2, 1
Discontent	32 – 90

¹ In other words, *being fascinated* (τὸ θαυμάζειν) means *being carried away* and results in *going too far*.

θαύματα ὄντες τὸ πολὺ, σμικρὰ δὲ ἀληθείας ἄττα μετέχοντες
being puppets for the most part, but participating in some small portions of truth

Plato, Laws VII. 804b3-4

part one: direction

A: In that case, what do we do when we walk?

B: Easy question. We move on foot from point A to point B and we do that slower or faster.

A: But that is obvious.

B: You don't like my answer? I have others. When we walk, we might also smoke or talk, listen to music, think or do something else.

A: But that sounds so random.

B: Essentially, every enumeration is random.

A: And it's not about walking *itself*. I want to know what walking *is*.

B: And *why* do you want to know that?

A: Why? It seems to me important.

B: It seems more like a gut feeling.

A: Are you making fun of me?

B: Maybe you ask me about the *meaning* of walking?

A: How's that?

B: Do you know what meaning is?

A: Meaning is about *communication*. But I am not going to define it.

B: And neither am I.

A: That seems like a dead end.

B: But I know something *about* meaning. It is synonymous to all sorts of things – intention and reality and synonymy – but, more importantly, it is synonymous to *importance*.

A: How's that?

B: Sometimes we say things like “This picture means so much to me.” or “That actor meant for me *a lot*. It's a shame he OD'd.” and by saying so we stress importance of something or someone, don't we?

A: That's right. So why do you think that walking is important?

- B: It is *more* than important. If we had not been able to move from one place to another, there would have been no reason, no language, no culture, no Fast and Furious 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, no SNL, no world, and we would have been akin to *plants*. Vaster than empires, and more slow.
- A: Wow.
- B: Not only that walking is meaningful but walking *creates* meaning.
- A: I'm certain that it is *judgement* that creates meaning.
- B: Tell me one thing: do you think that theaters are important?
- A: Why, yes.
- B: And do you go there often?
- A: I'm not a fan. I can't stand the actors. And I *hate* the audience.
- B: Do you see? You talk the talk but you don't, as they say, *walk the walk*.
- A: Are you calling me a *liar*?
- B: I am only saying that it doesn't matter what you *think*.
- A: But still...
- B: Now imagine some wasteland: desert, jungle or glacier. What do you see?
- A: Some sort of nameless terror.
- B: Sort of. The landscape is *sublime* and this sublimity comes precisely from the lack of meaning, from the lack of articulation, from the lack of *limits*. Now imagine an ancient city. The city – for instance, Rome – is most meaningful because it is most articulated: the city itself is more important than the countryside, the center is more important than numerous suburbs, avenues are more important than alleways and backstreets.
- A: But you don't describe Rome but some map of Rome. When you say *Rome*, I see Sforza Chapel and one awesome techno club called INIT.
- B: This world is articulated by all sorts of ways and these *communications* were created by walking. Avenues are where the crowds of people walk *repeatedly*, alleyways are where a handful of people walk time to time and wilderness is where no-one ever walked.

- A: Maybe but don't forget *cars*. Already for decades, cars are much more important than people. Like, ten times. Also, don't forget *fascists*. They like to build avenues and boulevards from scratch.
- B: Cars are basically *toys* and people are getting more and more infantile. Now if the articulation of this world is created by walking, walking therefore surpasses meaning. It *connects* meaninglessness and meaningfulness, feet and hair, earth and heaven, darkness and the sudden flash of recognition, amphibians and man.
- A: You speak in riddles. And I don't mean that as a compliment.
- B: Walking connects you and the world. Sometimes you confer meaning on the world and sometimes, as if you were a stone that is eroding, the world confers meaning on you and makes your likeness.
- A: I think I read about this. They said there was some smart software in CCTV cameras that could recognize you from your gait. Beware!
- B: May I inquire where exactly did you obtain this information?
- A: On the Internet.
- B: You don't *read* on the Internet. You cannot read that which makes no sense. Or too much sense, for that matter. On the Internet, you *browse*.
- A: Interesting. But I don't see any connection.
- B: For the time being. But back on track. You can be recognized from all things that are capable to be vehicles of your past, that is, from all things through which you are capable to act and be acted upon. But – because walking is the *first and foremost action* – your gait is the *first thing* that makes you recognizable. If you are too far, I only see somebody, I only see some *body*, and this changes with the gait. And this makes it a *threshold* between darkness and the flash of recognition.
- A: What if I'm short-sighted?
- B: *Darkness* is a generic term. It covers also distance, fog, short-sightedness, disguise, absent-mindedness, crowd, imagination, image resolution...
- A: I ask because I am short-sighted. And it *does* make me focus on how people walk.

- B: You don't wear glasses?
- A: Spectacles? They might get broken. And then, I need to pay attention. Because people hate to be overlooked. Or like to be remembered.
- B: More precisely, *acquaintances* need to be *acknowledged*.
- A: That's it. These polite gestures are so subtle. If you make them, it feels like nothing, but if you fail to make them, people will eat you alive. Like, literally.
- B: And this sort of subtle gesture, at what distance it takes place?
- A: About 5 to 50 yards?
- B: This distance is not measured in yards. Imagine talking to a friend who seems abstracted, *distant*. Imagine *distancing* yourself from someone who acts strangely. This distance is most significant because it represents the borderline between *us* and *them*.
- A: Allow me to doublecheck. Are we still discussing walking?
- B: We haven't even started! We are discussing your *question*. It needs to be discussed because questions determine their answers to a massive extent. I can play or refuse to play but *what game* we play depends on your question. I need to hear more about it because I need to know what *rules* to follow.
- A: So what do you want to know?
- B: You want to know what we do when we walk. Tell me, who are *we*?
- A: Easy question. We, humankind.
- B: Is that so obvious? This word is different to singular pronouns because it denotes some set, that is, some concept. And this makes it ambiguous.
- A: What if some crowd is shouting *we*? Like, on a demonstration?
- B: There is *one* crowd or *one* chorus or a *unit* and they act as one person. And if this subtle word is used by a single person, it represents an *interpretation of the current situation*. This one person explicitly or, in most cases, implicitly points out an *imminent threat* – we who are poor and exploited, for instance – and it is up to the others if they join in or not. The more they are involved in the situation, the more likely they are to join in.

- A: And what is *our* situation? Who are *we*?
- B: We are many things because we are involved in many situations *at the same time*. For instance, this word stands for *humankind*. You were right. We are involved because we are afraid of becoming less or more than human beings: daemons, gods, AI, objects or fans of musicals.
- A: Are you talking about *Match Point*?
- B: Correct. I am talking about the scene of murder where the audience is effectively asked to follow two situations *at the same time*.
- A: I already wish I had not asked.
- B: And I wish I had not been born. It hardly matters, does it?
- A: Alright. So how did you get from walking to human nature?
- B: If a single instance of walking tells everything about a single person, everything that is needed to recognize, say, John as John, it seems that walking in general tells everything about humans in general, that it is *characteristic* of humankind.
- A: But all sorts of animals are walking as well.
- B: As well? I don't think that every *single* cat or every *single* horse has a unique manner of walking from which it is recognizable, do you?
- A: Are you saying that two legs are better than four legs?
- B: I am only saying that walking on two legs is more complicated and therefore requires less awareness.
- A: You mean *more* awareness.
- B: Sometimes more but sometimes less. Having complicated movements – for instance, dancing moves – completely under your control is close to impossible. You need something to lean on: practice, habits, automatisms.
- A: I see.
- B: I don't think you do. It will be better to start at the beginning. One's identity consists in fact of a large number of different voices that somehow cooperate towards a common goal. Would you agree with that?
- A: Often they don't cooperate at all.

- B: In that case, there is no identity. It's called *death by hesitation*.
- A: What voices do you have in mind?
- B: Off the top of my head... voices of boredom, Cavafy, double espresso, dumb commercials, infernal legions, Mir ist so wunderbar, Possente spirto, violence and ultraviolence... But there are *thousands* others.
- A: It can get very crowded, right?
- B: You know what they say: it is crowded so it must be good.
- A: Or cheap. But who are you? Are you dumb as some dumb commercial?
- B: Sometimes, I am indeed myself. But what does it mean being oneself? Being oneself means being *alone*. Are those voices gone? Have they been silenced? Not at all. They are still there but they speak in one voice: *mine*.
- A: And what makes them speak in one voice?
- B: Isn't it obvious? *I do*. But the question is different: what makes me do that?
- A: What makes you do that?
- B: *Situation*.
- A: You keep talking about situations. What is a situation?
- B: Situation is – for instance – *preparing for a party* or *arriving to a party* or *dancing* or *reunion with an old friend* or *flirting* or *a rainbow* or *seduction* or *prostitution* or *a problem* or *an overdose* or *a secret* or *daily routine* or *getting stoned* or *marital argument* or *violent flashback* or *sexual submission* or *a phone call* or *death* or *a confession* or *taking a walk*... I cannot define it because it is among those concepts that are indefinable.
- A: Getting stoned?
- B: This is easiest to explain by telling a joke. A killing joke. In Arab countries women get stoned when they commit adultery, in Western countries they commit adultery when they get stoned...
- A: Excellent. But what about a phone call?
- B: Phone call is an *interruption*. It *cancel*s distance and thus changes everything. At this point, everyone is living with real voices at their side and that is

positively insane. At this point, there are only small pieces of situations because situations have been shattered into small pieces.

A: You are still talking about situations. What is a situation?

B: I can tell you something *about* situation. Sometimes we speak about “current situation“, about “international situation“, about “architectural situation“, about “financial situation“, about “situationists“...

A: About “sitcoms“...

B: But sometimes we speak about situation itself. What does it mean when we say “We have a situation.“? It means that we have a *problem*. It means that some *collision* is imminent. Situation consists of two parts: there is a *threat* and there are *we* who have to respond to it. And these parts are of course interdependent. On the one hand, we perceive the threat as different or radically different to us. It is, as it were, coming from *outer space*. On the other hand, in order to survive we need to cooperate, we need to become *we* in order to face what is coming. In short, our level of activity and our level of organization is directly proportional to our level of exposure.

A: Example.

B: A paradigmatic case is an asteroid on a collisional course with the Earth.

A: Is it true?

B: It is certainly a real threat. If it wasn't *real*, there would be no films about it.

A: Makes sense.

B: Or, take the military. The military faces two greatest threats, and *therefore* becomes a paradigm of order and action.

A: Roger that. Situation means you need to be active. But are you active *only* when you are afraid? You can, for instance, *want* something and go for it.

B: All fears have their corresponding desires and all desires have their corresponding fears. “We want to live“ is effectively the same as “we don't want to die“, “he wants to own a fast car“ is effectively the same as “he doesn't want to be without a fast car“. Situations can be explained via *fear* – that is, giving an initiative to the threat – or via *desire* – that is, giving an initiative to us – but these explanations ultimately coincide.

- A: Who wouldn't want a fast car? But how do I get my hands on a fast car? For instance, Chevelle '69?
- B: If you participate in the situation and for the right reason, if you are *present-minded*, you are active. This also means that you are yourself because what does it mean to be oneself? It means that you *are* yourself: that you are *present*. If you don't participate in the situation or not for the right reason, if you are *absent-minded*, you are passive. And you are passive because you are listening to the *past*. And if you are passive, there is no situation, only some sort of *spectacle*... Now, have I answered your question?
- A: You explained another part of it, yes. What do we *do* when we walk?
- B: Correct. Sometimes I am active and sometimes I am passive. Sometimes I possess myself and sometimes I am possessed. Sometimes I speak and...
- A: Sometimes you hear voices.
- B: In short, sometimes I *know* what I am doing and sometimes I *do not*.
- A: I don't know. Is it really impossible to be active at all times? Because some people seem to be larger than life. Take, for instance, *The Rock*.
- B: Some are indeed larger than life – swift-footed Achilles, an Indian on a racing horse... – but for us, *mortals*, it is completely out of question.
- A: All right. Could you take a step back and relate all this to walking?
- B: We walk because we want to go somewhere, to achieve some goal. At the same time, walking proceeds, very much like thinking, to a large extent on its own, sometimes to the point of carrying us elsewhere than we have intended to arrive. Interplay between our activity and our passivity is, with the exception of thinking, nowhere more obvious than in walking and walking therefore displays who really are we. Clear enough? Good. And now for something radically different. A game of riddles. Which creature of *one name* is *four-footed* and *two-footed* and *three-footed*? No need to answer. Everyone knows that. But what is the *meaning* of this ancient riddle? What is the meaning of this *monstrous* riddle that awaits all who are passing by? Of course, that ageing is similar to walking. But what does it mean to walk to some point? It means that the ultimate point is already here. At least, to some extent. It is present in our *direction*. More precisely...

Walter Benjamin: This is what ages us – this and nothing else. The wrinkles and creases on our faces are the registration of the great passions, vices, insights that called on us; but we, the masters, were not home.

B: More precisely, in our *moving* in one direction, and moving is precisizing. In other words, there are scores and scores of subliminal deaths. We are, as it were, standing in a music store and choosing which score shall we buy. Take waiting, for instance. Waiting is nothing but death in disguise. Sometimes boring, sometimes sensational and exciting like *Sphinx*, like the re-appearance of *Sphinx*, *Sphinx* sits still on the still point of the arc. And there, she is forced to commit suicide. Where? *Behind the scene*. She is, as it were, *the very first celebrity*. Now imagine a fantastic footballer. What makes him fantastic? Instant reaction. To anticipate somewhat, he *foresees*. Applies laws acquired in hard training with a spectacular speed of thought. *Ravishing music of invisible choirs*. It, like a walking stick, keeps us going. But *consider Phlebas that was once handsome and tall as you*. And *thus*, absent-mindedness leads to complete absence.

part two: scene

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What Do We Do When We Walk?

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Declaration

Hereby I declare that I wrote this thesis by myself, that all used sources and references were indeed used and are either listed, duly quoted or obvious, and that the thesis was not used in another university study, or to acquire another or the same title.

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Abstract

In short, this thesis presents walking as absent thinking. It constructs one situation via deconstruction of scores of spectacles. To stage this thought as a dialogue: *What do we do when we walk? We seem to be thinking.*

If I would be, in subsequent conversation, asked about the scientific merit of this thesis, I would reply – at once politely, providing pointers for orientation, and provocatively, raising a deliberate red flag to incite attention – that it successfully demonstrates the applicability of Benjamin's *ideas* of messianic communism and turning art into philosophy *and*, against Plato's intentions, the *unity* of Plato's philosophy.

Keywords

situation, present-mindedness

1/ INTENTION

In order to discover the meaning of walking I intend to analyze four situations where walking, as it were, shows itself and conceptualize two paradigmatic manners of walking. The situations are *Marching*, *Pilgrimage*, *Tightrope Walking* and *Detour*. The paradigmatic gaits are *Karlie Kloss' moody gait* and *John Wayne's swagger*. This order of proceedings starts with plurality and generality and continues towards unity and identity and in this sense represents RISING or arising.

The intention of Chapter One, analyzing (a) *Marching* and (b) *Pilgrimage*, is to prove the *importance* of walking. The basic idea is straightforward: these situations show that walking is important – more precisely, *vital* – because walking is here used for a total transformation of one's character or one's way of life.

A. *Marching* has no destination: marching is for the sake of marching. *Marching-drill* transforms individual subjects, so-called “civilians“, into a unit of soldiers and *marching-parade* displays this unity to the civilian populace. Unity comes with order, order comes with obedience and obedience is a habit. All sorts of habits therefore serve to support this habit of obedience – in the military one learns anew how to dress, how to shower, how to make a bed – but one habit rules them all: one learns anew how to walk. The situation of *marching-drill* contains two constitutive parts: a group of recruits and a drill sergeant. The threat here is obvious: *falling*. Falling out of step. If one falls out of step, one becomes different, that is, singled out by the wrath of the drill sergeant. Those who march in step and display no difference will escape this quasi-divine wrath and become a unit of soldiers.

B. *Marching* is for the sake of marching. In contrast, *pilgrimage* is completely determined by its destination. The purpose of *pilgrimage* is to set aside thousands of small worries and devote oneself completely to one goal. The threat here is obvious: *falling*. Falling short of one's goal, not reaching the destination. If you endure and reach the destination, it proves that this goal is important to you, it proves that your life has some direction because this goal outweighed thousands of meaningless worries (each of these worries is meaningful in itself but together they become meaningless because they point to thousands of different directions and eventually cancel themselves out). The situation of *pilgrimage* contains two constitutive parts: you and your life. If you succeed, it means that you are in charge of your life. If you fall short, it means that your life is in charge of you, it means that your life has no direction and is literally pointless.

Pilgrimage is *completely determined* by its destination which means, surprisingly, that reaching the destination is not that important after all. It is of course a necessary condition but in hindsight it is clear that *the way was the goal*: the patience, the endurance.

The intention of Chapter Two, analyzing (a) Tightrope Walking and (b) Detour, is to explain walking in terms of *activity* and *passivity*. Tightrope Walking is walking at its most active, Detour is walking at its most passive.

A. Tightrope walking is walking at its purest: there is nothing but a life-and-death drama of balance. This situation contains two constitutive parts: the tightrope walker and the crowd. The tightrope walker risks his life with every single step and the crowd, gathered down in the marketplace or behind their TVs and PCs, enjoys this spectacle with bated breath and open purse. The threat here is obvious: *falling*. But this falling does not mean falling 50 or 150 or 411 meters to the ground and crushing all 206 bones in the body. Rather, it means becoming a nobody who never leaves his comfort zone and lives his life through others. If the walk is a success, the tightrope walker becomes famous and the crowd is reassured that impossible is nothing. And if the walk is a failure, it is as if it would have never happened and the crowd dissolves in confusion.

B. Walking at its most active takes the path of the greatest resistance, walking at its most passive takes the path of the least resistance, that is, the path that is easiest to walk, the path that has been walked most often: the route of the routine.² We make a detour when we want to go somewhere but instead of going where we intended, we follow our routine and arrive elsewhere. But this we learn only after the fact. Suddenly, we come to our senses and find that our mind was absent. We rise, as it were, from dead and find that we obediently performed our everyday rituals. We were lost in thought but somehow and somewhere we have found ourselves. The threat here is obvious: *falling*. Falling too deep in the routine, making too long a detour to come back. And coming back (retracing one's steps) means asking yourself the following question:

what the hell was I thinking?

Because the instances of detour are not only everyday (and seemingly innocent) moments of absent-mindedness but all crimes and misdeeds and sins (that one commits with a radically different mindset, as if possessed) are detours as well. In other words, following a route sooner or later necessarily leads to detour and following a law sooner or later necessarily leads to violence. And that is the law of the laws.

These situations were chosen to make this theory of walking as universal as possible. Marching is communal and secular, Pilgrimage is individual and religious. Tightrope Walking is most artificial, Detour is most quotidian.³

² A *route* is synonymous with a *path* or a *road* or a *way* – or, more generally, with a *law* or a *rule* – but the former designation is the most useful because of its obvious connection with *routine*.

³ There are innumerable other situations where walking shows itself but those situations can be, with smaller or greater degree of generalization, subsumed under the foursome that was chosen. Every walk that

The intention of Chapter Three is to conceptualize two paradigmatic gaits: supermodel's stomp and cowboy's swagger. These gaits were chosen for two reasons. First, particular and unique gaits are of course *particular and unique* and therefore resist conceptualization. For this reason, I chose two gaits that are *generic*. Second, all gaits are to some extent artificial, that is, to some extent results of imitation. For this reason, I chose two gaits that are *ideal*. Karlie Kloss' walk,⁴ embodying typical feminine virtues of sinuosity and indifference, is a model for women and John Wayne's walk, embodying typical masculine virtues of indifference and self-confidence, is a model for men.

2/ STATE OF RESEARCH

For this or that reason, I decided to start from scratch and pretend as if nobody ever noticed that we walk. But that is not completely true. In fact, there are countless texts on walking and some small amount that is concerned with *the meaning of walking*. In this section, I will interpret four of these texts: from P. Vergilius Maro, Wilhelm Jensen, Edgar Allan Poe and Thomas Bernhard. This continuous interpretation starts with an ideal gait and proceeds towards non-existent detour and thus represents FALLING.

2.1/ Virgil – *Et vera incessu patuit dea*

Virgil's verse is an eternal image of fleeting beauty that is recognized only on her departure. The situation of gait recognition is described in these verses:

*“Dixit et avertens rosea cervice refulsit,
ambrosiaequae comae divinum vertice odorem
spiravere; pedes vestis defluxit ad imos,
et vera incessu patuit dea. ille ubi matrem
agnovit tali fugientem est voce secutus:
'quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis
ludis imaginibus? cur dextrae iungere dextram
non datur ac veras audire et reddere voces?’
talibus incusat gressumque ad moenia tendit.”⁵*

displays some unity (religious marches, demonstrations, pageants, Gay Pride) is similar to marching-parade. All walks that are directed towards some destination (that is, all walks apart from those that are taken for the sake of walking) are similar to pilgrimage. All walks that are somehow dangerous (first steps of a child, walk-the-line sobriety test, walk on stilts, walk on high heels) are similar to tightrope walking. Every walk that is more passive than active (wandering, flanking, sleepwalking, drifting, cruising...) is similar to detour.

⁴ Karlie Kloss might not be as familiar to the general audience as John Wayne but that is intentional: she is interesting precisely because of her status of *nascent celebrity*. Also, she is dating Joshua Kushner.

⁵ Virgil, *Aeneis* I, 402-410. In: R.A.B. Mynors (ed.), *P. Vergilii Maronis Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 115. Translated in prose as: “When she had finished speaking and was turning away, her neck shone with a rosy light and her hair breathed the divine odour of ambrosia. Her dress flowed free to her feet and as she walked he knew she was truly a goddess. After he recognized his mother, as she was hastening

Venus, who is recognized in this scene, is a twofold character: a goddess and a mother. Venus is at the same time most remote and most intimate, and the paradox of this unity is represented with a notable and rather loud caesura. The truth about Venus arises out of her opposite: she was disguised as a virgin huntress, an image of Diana and a twofold symbol of death. Venus, in one word, is *life*.

This virgin huntress didn't dress for a graceful walk but for running and riding horses: she went bare-kneed, with her dress kilted up.⁶ But the dress is untied and flows to her feet. This move, as it were, hides the gait from our sight. Venus is recognized from her gait but this gait is not described. *Instead*, it is represented with a *montage* of three distinct images: glow of rosy light, fragrance of ambrosia and flow of the dress.

But why this ambivalent character, *life*, can be recognized only on its departure? This is precisely the question that Aeneas addresses to leaving Venus in vain. The answer is implicit. To encounter life face to face is on one hand most desirable, on the other hand the reality of such an intimate scene, hearing of real voices (*veras audire... voces*), would be most horrific. As for Aeneas and his seductress-mother, it would be nothing but an *incest*. For this reason, it is not allowed or not granted (*non datur*), we have to limit ourselves (*ad moenia tendit*) and make do with a delusion of false images (*falsis ludis imaginibus*).

2.2/ Wilhelm Jensen – *Gradiva: A Pompeiian Fancy*

Wilhelm Jensen and his *Gradiva*⁷ might not be as familiar to the general public as other works interpreted in this section. It is therefore useful to start with an encyclopedic note, moreover, when it contains a delightful insight:

*“The Gradiva, The woman who walks, has become a modern 20th century mythological figure, from the novella Gradiva by the German writer Wilhelm Jensen, as she has sprung out of the imagination of a fictional character she may be considered unreal twice over.”*⁸

The story of *Gradiva* is centered completely around gait recognition. Young archaeologist Norbert Hanold is devoted to his science⁹ and overlooks social life as well as women (he literally overlooks his acquaintances when he meet them on the street).¹⁰ One

away, he pursued her with these words: "Why fool your son so many times with false images? You too are cruel. Why can't we join hands? Why can't we exchange honest talk? Why isn't that allowed?" So he reproached her, and moved towards the walls." (trans. David West).

⁶ Virgil, *Aeneis* I, 314-320.

⁷ Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva: A Pompeiian Fancy*. New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1918.

⁸ *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Gradiva", <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gradiva> [accessed July 31, 2017].

⁹ "...alloy [of archaeology] had effected a remarkable amalgamation with Norbert Hanold's nature..." Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva*, 19.

¹⁰ "...it was known that at such gatherings he was present without eyes or ears for his surroundings, and as soon as it was in any way permissible, he always took his leave, under some pretext, at the end of the lunch

day, Hanold becomes attracted to a bas-relief that depicts a peculiar female gait, described as a “flight-like poise, combined with a firm step”,¹¹ as “lente festinans”¹² and “buoyantly reposeful”.¹³ Hanold names this female figure *Gradiva* and becomes persuaded that she must have lived in Pompeii. This is soon confirmed by a dream showing *Gradiva* in Pompeii, on the night of its destruction. Hanold leaves for unplanned vacation and later finds himself, against all his intentions,¹⁴ in Pompeii. While travelling, he is bothered to the extreme by swarming of two elements: honeymooning couples and common house-flies. Hanold’s interpretation of this twofold threat is more than extreme: wedding trip to Italy is a paradigmatic case of meaninglessness of human actions¹⁵ and common house-fly shatters all psychic life, being “*the Ding an-sich in which absolute evil had found its incarnation*”.¹⁶ After arriving to the Pompeii excavations, Hanold encounters an apparition of woman and recognizes her from her unique gait as *Gradiva*. In their next meeting, she reveals that her name is Zoë. Next day, she reveals that her name is Zoë Bertgang and she lives in the very same street as Hanold, in fact, knows him most intimately because as children they were best friends and sweethearts. Soon, Zoë accepts Hanold’s apologies as well as his advances, they kiss, and the reunited couple starts to plan a wedding trip leading nowhere else but to Pompeii. But this ending is not as happy as it seems at first sight. In fact, the final kiss resembles a repulsive nightmare: Hanold sees a common house-fly on Zoë’s lips and captures it with his own lips.¹⁷ This most intimate scene represents *the horror of reality*. Zoë – which is of course Greek word for *life* – is kissed by Hanold and their lips capture a common house-fly, the *Ding an-sich*.

or dinner, and on the street he greeted none of those whom he had sat with at the table. That served, especially with young ladies, to put him in a rather unfavorable light; for upon meeting even a girl with whom he had, by way of exception, spoken a few words, he looked at her without a greeting as at a quite unknown person whom he had never seen.” *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁴ “Thus Norbert Hanold, contrary to all expectations and intentions, had been transported in a few days from Northern Germany to Pompeii...” *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁵ “...he reflected for many hours on the strange impulses of human beings, and came to the conclusion that of all their follies, marriage, at any rate, took the prize as the greatest and most incomprehensible one, and the senseless wedding trips to Italy somehow capped the climax of this buffoonery.” *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ “From the common house-fly, however, there was no protection, and it paralyzed, disturbed, and finally shattered the psychic life of human beings, their capacity of thinking and working, every lofty flight of imagination and every beautiful feeling. Hunger or thirst for blood did not impel them, but solely the diabolical desire to torture; it was the ‘*Ding an-sich*’ in which absolute evil had found its incarnation.” *Ibid.*, 33–34.

¹⁷ ““There on your cheek!” and immediately the man, as he answered, suddenly twined an arm around her neck and snapped, this time with his lips, at the insect so deeply abhorrent to him, which vision juggled before his eyes deceptively in the little dimple. Apparently, however, without success, for right afterwards he cried again, “No, now it’s on your lips!” and thereupon, quick as a flash, he directed thither his attempt to capture, now remaining so long that no doubt could survive that he succeeded in completely accomplishing his purpose...” *Ibid.*, 114.

Before we interpret this fantastic story further, it is important to note that it is not as fantastic as it seems. Jensen explicitly indicates that it can be read as a remarkable enlargement of a simple situation that happens every so often: one young man – puzzled by some difficult problem, for instance, the meaning of walking – becomes lost in thought and overlooks some female acquaintance on the street. Sigmund Freud famously called Jensen’s story “a perfectly correct psychiatric study”¹⁸ but also added that “*the frontier between states of mind described as normal and pathological is in part a conventional one and in part so fluctuating that each of us probably oversteps it many times in the course of a day.*”¹⁹

And this is important because it enables us to read the story of *Gradiva* as a perfectly correct study in *everyday life*. Moreover, there is one word, one Freudian slip, that is more than important and that is of course “*oversteps*” [überschreitet].

It is remarkable that the object of gait recognition is once again *life*. This was only implicit in case of Venus (accordingly, the intimate scene remained implicit as well) but in this case, it is entirely clear. *Gradiva* reveals that her name is Zoë and she shows herself to be a twofold character, at once intimate and remote. She reveals her real name, her identity, but she also reveals *the meaning of life*.

According to Zoë, “to live” means “to adapt oneself to the inevitable” (*in das Unabänderliche sich zu finden*) or “to accustom oneself to being dead”.²⁰ These excellent definitions help to explain the intrinsic connection between detour and gait, because detour is on a par with death and gait is on a par with identity. It seems that the particular gait comes into being with one’s adapting to the detour, adapting in the sense of accepting, taking as true, literally finding oneself (*sich zu finden*). We have seen that Zoë-*Gradiva* is an ambivalent character, more than a hallucination but less than a real person, and this makes possible the following thesis. *Gait is the truth of detour*.

This thesis was, in different words, put forward by Freud and pursued by Derrida. Freud writes – and this diagnosis is completely correct – that:

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s Gradiva*, in: James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume IX* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959), 43 (translation altered).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁰ ““Who is *Gradiva*?”

“I have named the bas-relief that, because I didn’t know your real name and don’t know it yet, either.” This last he added with some hesitancy and she faltered a moment before replying to the indirect question:

“My name is Zoë.”

With pained tone the words escaped him: “The name suits you beautifully, but it sounds to me like bitter mockery, for ‘Zoë’ means ‘life.’ “

“One must adapt himself to the inevitable,” she responded. “And I have long accustomed myself to being dead...” “Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva*, 71.

“there is a grain of truth concealed in every delusion [in jedem Wahn steckt auch ein Körnchen Wahrheit], there is something in it that really deserves belief and this is the source of the patient's conviction, which is therefore to that extent justified. This true element, however, has long been repressed. If eventually it is able to penetrate into consciousness, this time in a distorted form, the sense of conviction attaching to it is over-intensified as though by way of compensation and is now attached to the distorted substitute of the repressed truth...”²¹

Derrida – in his essay *Archive Fever*²² that is concerned with the analogy between psychoanalysis and archaeology – follows in Freud's footsteps and explains what exactly is the truth of this delusion. First, he points out the following passage from Jensen's novel that takes place immediately after Hanold recognizes Gradiva from her gait:

“As soon as he caught sight of her, Norbert's memory was clearly awakened to the fact that he had seen her here once already in a dream, walking thus, the night that she had lain down as if to sleep over there in the Forum on the steps of the Temple of Apollo. With this memory he became conscious, for the first time, of something else; he had, without himself knowing the motive in his heart, come to Italy on that account and had, without stop, continued from Rome and Naples to Pompeii to see if he could here find trace of her – and that in a literal sense, – for, with her unusual gait, she must have left behind in the ashes a foot-print different from all the others.”²³

According to Derrida, this trace in a literal sense is (literally) an archaeologist's dream: a unique instant where the impression and the imprint is not yet distinct, “a single body of Gradiva's step, of her gait, of her pace, and of the ground which carries them”.²⁴ In more general terms, it is “the instant of the pure auto-affection... the indistinction of the active and the passive, of a touching and the touched.”²⁵ This instant is absolutely distinct precisely because it contains no distinction: “No longer distinguishing between themselves, this pressure and this imprint differ henceforth from all other impressions, from all other imprints, and from all other archives.”²⁶ Derrida concludes that this instant is ultimately unfindable because “its immanent divisibility, the possibility of its fission, haunted it from the origin. The faithful memory of such a singularity can only be given over to the ghost.”²⁷

What is more important: a way (ὁδός) in the sense of road, route or a way (ὁδός) in the sense of manner, style? What is more original? It seems that the individual style comes first because it creates characteristic traces (roads, routes) but this individual style is in turn

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *Delusions*, 80.

²² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. *Diacritics* 25/2 (1995), 9–63.

²³ Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva*, 47.

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 62.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 62 (underline stands for the original cursive).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

shaped by touring and detouring via characteristic routes. It is impossible to say what is more original or what is more important. To account for this intrinsic connection between *style* and *trace*, between *gait* and *route*, we need to postulate the moment of singularity wherein style and trace coincides, wherein activity and passivity is indistinct and words *way* or *ὁδός* are unambiguous. Postulating this moment of singularity is the same as saying that gait is the truth of detour. This thesis, in simple words, means that gait comes into being with *finding oneself in one's traces*, in accepting one's traces as true.

Detour means losing oneself in routes of one's routine and these routes are nothing else but one's traces. This explains the possibility of finding oneself while being lost because one is being lost in *one's own traces*. One can therefore find oneself by accepting these traces as one's own. It is evident that this instant of finding oneself in one's traces is indeed the moment of singularity wherein one's self and one's trace are not differentiated. This moment of singularity must have happened (if one is now alive and present) but its reality is at the same time unreal: it happened in the past that was never present. In other words, finding oneself in one's traces is always also taking them as *true traces* (traces in a literal sense), that is, not only accepting these traces as *one's own* but also accepting these traces as one's *traces*, accepting their difference, their irreversibility (*das Unabänderliche*) – accepting their pastness. And accepting one's pastness results not only in finding oneself present but also in becoming older.

2.3/ Edgar Allan Poe – *The Man of the Crowd*

To start with, *The Man of the Crowd*²⁸ is a short story from Edgar Allan Poe. This statement is not as harmless as it seems because the notion of *short story* is somewhat puzzling. What does it exactly mean that the story is *short*? It means that – as opposed to the novel that stands always in need of correction – it has a potential to be *perfect*. And *The Man of the Crowd* is perfect. It disregards all that is accidental and speaks nothing but the truth itself. Walter Benjamin called this text “*the X-ray picture of a detective story*”²⁹ and it is indeed superhuman in its ability of seeing through people.

The plot is at once simple and complex. The narrator, coming to his senses after a long illness, sits in a coffee shop in London and observes the crowd behind the window, characterizing and scrutinizing its elements through their figures, airs, gaits and habiliments. Suddenly, a decrepid old man emerges from the crowd. His countenance is ambivalent, indescribable and all-absorbing. The narrator desires to uncover his secrets and starts following him. The pursuit lasts for unbelievable 24 hours and its meandering

²⁸ Edgar Allan Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Volume II* (London: A. & C. Black, 1899), 314–323.

²⁹ Walter Benjamin, *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire*, in: *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 48.

course leads from the heart of London to remote peripheries and back and forth and back again to the heart of London. Eventually, the narrator abandons his effort because it is extremely exhausting and leads nowhere. He stops at the same spot where he began his journey and delivers a judgement:

*“The old man is the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He is the man of the crowd.”*³⁰

The intention of this text is, so to speak, to provide a definition of *the man of the crowd*. That is indeed important because the concept of *crowd* is rather loose and stands in need of further determination. Nevertheless, the point of this story obviously is that no such determination is possible. There is only one judgement available, namely, that the man of the crowd is *bad*. No further determination is possible because the concept itself is paradoxical. The concept of *the man of the crowd* (an idealized unit of the crowd, as it were) is paradoxical because, on the one hand, the crowd is obviously made of men and women, on the other hand, these men and women are no longer individual beings but become dissolved in the crowd. Further, no determination of this man is possible because the logic behind his movement is irrational. His movement is irrational because he simply goes to those places that contain most people, to those places that are, *currently*, most active and most alive. In other words, his movement is again the movement of *life*.

The following interpretation will be broken into two parts, (i) one focusing on *the man* and (ii) the other focusing on *the crowd*.

I. To start with, it is rather obvious that the follower and the followed are, until the moment of judgement, one and the same person. There are several *clues* that E. A. Poe provides for this conclusion:

– When the narrator first sees the old man, his face is pressed to the window.³¹ It is therefore possible that the decrepid old man is the narrator himself, mirrored in the glass.

– The elements of crowd are characterized by their isolation and this isolation is characterized by the division of self. Simply put, the people in the crowd are talking to themselves.³² This indicates that the narrator’s self might be divided as well.

– If the follower and the followed are one and the same person, it necessarily means that the pursuit in the streets never in fact happened. And, indeed, several facts

³⁰ Edgar Allan Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, 323.

³¹ “With my brow to the glass, I was thus occupied in scrutinizing the mob, when suddenly there came into view a countenance (that of a decrepid old man, some sixty-five or seventy years of age)...” *Ibid.*, 318.

³² “Others, still a numerous class, were restless in their movements, had flushed faces, and talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around.” *Ibid.*, 315.

point precisely to this conclusion. First, the pursuit ends at the same spot where it started. Second, it ends precisely at the same time when it started. Third, nothing happened. Fourth, nothing was learnt. Fifth, the narrator alludes to the Lucian's poem Περὶ τοῦ Ἐνυπνίου (*The Dream*).³³

– If the follower and the followed are one and the same person, it necessarily means that the pursuit happened not in the streets but in the imagination, in one fleeting moment of the narrator's absent-mindedness.³⁴ And, indeed, when the narrator sees the old man for the first time, an *inner crowd* starts forming within his mind.³⁵

– It might be that the follower and the followed are not one and the same person but they are certainly *indiscernible*, as if they were identical *copies*. As for the textual evidence, E. A. Poe indicates that the elements of crowd are precisely copies, facsimiles, imitations of absent models.³⁶

– Finally, the follower and the followed seems to be one and the same person because both are guilty of the *same crime*. What exactly is this *deep crime*? At first sight, this mystery seems to remain unsolved in the story. Nevertheless, all readers of Poe know that solutions to most difficult cases are often hidden at most obvious places. The character of deep crime is in fact described in the judgement itself: “*The old man is the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He is the man of the crowd.*” Deep crime is the refusal itself. Deep crime is, for instance, to sit in a coffee shop and be stupefied by the never-ending spectacle of the (inner or outer) crowd.

Now we have established the identity of the follower and the followed (or, more precisely, assessed the likelihood of), it is necessary to establish their difference. First, we shall speak about (a) *the narrator*, second, we shall speak about (b) *the man of the crowd*.

A. The most important fact about the narrator is that he is *absent-minded* and this absent-mindedness exhibits itself in two significant forms. First, the narrator is living

³³ “...women of the town of all kinds and of all ages — the unequivocal beauty in the prime of her womanhood, putting one in mind of the statue in Lucian, with the surface of Parian marble, and the interior filled with filth...” Ibid., 317.

³⁴ This point was put precisely by Charles Baudelaire. According to him, the narrator is “mingling, through the medium of thought, in the turmoil of thought that surrounds him [se mêle, par la pensée, à toutes les pensées qui s’agitent autour de lui].” Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, in: *The Painter of Modern Life, And Other Essays* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 7.

³⁵ “As I endeavored, during the brief minute of my original survey, to form some analysis of the meaning conveyed, there arose confusedly and paradoxically within my mind, the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense- of supreme despair.” Ibid., 319.

³⁶ “There were the junior clerks of flash houses (...) the manner of these persons seemed to me an exact facsimile of what had been the perfection of *bon ton* about twelve or eighteen months before. They wore the cast-off graces of the gentry;” Ibid., 316.

completely in the present moment. Second, he is not living in real world but rather in art and literature.

The narrator is coming back from the long illness and finds himself in a peculiar mood. In conceptual terms, this mood might be called *mindfulness* or *living in present*. In the narrator's own words, it is described as follows:

“For some months I had been ill in health, but was now convalescent, and, with returning strength, found myself in one of those happy moods which are so precisely the converse of ennui – moods of the keenest appetency, when the film from the mental vision departs – the ἀχλυσ ος πριν επηεν — and the intellect, electrified, surpasses as greatly its every-day condition as does the vivid yet candid reason of Leibnitz the mad and flimsy rhetoric of Gorgias. Merely to breathe was enjoyment; and I derived positive pleasure even from many of the legitimate sources of pain. I felt a calm but inquisitive interest in everything.”³⁷

At first sight, it might be surprising that living in present is a form of absent-mindedness. It might be even more surprising, almost *shocking*, that the reason of Leibniz (deconstructed via Voltaire's critique) does not essentially differ from the madness of Gorgias. Nevertheless, that is the case.

The narrator himself indicates that such a non-discerning attention – finding interest in *everything* – is a sort of absorption. Namely, absorption in *pleasure*. Put otherwise, the narrator is completely in the power of his environment. First, he is interested in the interior of the coffee shop. After the evening falls and the lamps are lighted, his attention is shifted to the outside scene and he becomes “*absorbed in contemplation*“.³⁸ Next, he observes the spectacle of the crowd with minute interest and this observation proceeds as a systematic *fall* from nobility to baseness (from gentlemen to monkey-exhibitors).³⁹ Significantly, the *decrease* of the nobility of observed objects coincides with the *increase* of attention. Incredibly, while scrutinizing the crudest members of the crowd (sweeps and organ-grinders), the narrator is able to read *with one glance* one's entire history.⁴⁰ This fantastic logic finds its fulfillment with the appearance of the old man whose fiendish look is literally all-absorbing.⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid., 314 (underline stands for the original cursive).

³⁸ “But, as the darkness came on, the throng momentarily increased; and, by the time the lamps were well lighted, two dense and continuous tides of population were rushing past the door. At this particular period of the evening I had never before been in a similar situation, and the tumultuous sea of human heads filled me, therefore, with a delicious novelty of emotion. I gave up, at length, all care of things within the hotel, and became absorbed in contemplation of the scene without.” Ibid., 315.

³⁹ “Descending in the scale of what is termed gentility, I found darker and deeper themes for speculation.” Ibid., 317.

⁴⁰ “The wild effects of the light enchained me to an examination of individual faces; and although the rapidity with which the world of light flitted before the window, prevented me from casting more than a

Having said that, it is necessary to add that the narrator does not perceive reality as it really is but perceives it through the filter of *art and literature*. The entire text starts with the motto from La Bruyère and continues this course with allusions and quotations and mentions and hints and paraphrases (in one word, *traces*) of various classical sources: Dickens, Homer, Leibniz, Voltaire, Gorgias, St. Luke, Lucian, Dante, T. S. Eliot, Goethe, Tertullian and others. In order to make this point clear, it suffices to repeat the first thought the narrator entertains upon seeing the indescribable old man:

“I well remember that my first thought, upon beholding it, was that Retzsch, had he viewed it, would have greatly preferred it to his own pictural incarnations of the fiend.”⁴²

To make a long story short: the narrator does not observe men but reads *books*. The metaphor of man as a book indeed dominates the opening and the closing of this short story.⁴³ And this metaphor is of course true. Not because men *are* like books but because men *see* world via detour in art and literature.

B. The most important fact about the man of the crowd is that he provokes *fascination*.⁴⁴ And this is Poe’s masterstroke. At first sight, it seems that an idealized unit of the crowd will be a mixture of everything, and therefore average and dull and vague. But the opposite is true and the unit of the crowd is literally *idealized*. The man of the crowd is indeed a mixture but a mixture of the most peculiar kind: his expression is fascinating because it is absolutely *idiosyncratic*.⁴⁵ In short, the man of the crowd is not uninteresting like an arithmetic mean but fascinating like a *celebrity*.

His countenance is eye-catching because it is full of unresolved contradictions. First, we shall cast a closer look on the veritable train of thought that forms the narrator’s first impression. The first thing that enters the narrator’s mind is the above-mentioned depiction of Mephisto from Moritz Retzsch. The following enumeration ensues:

“As I endeavored, during the brief minute of my original survey, to form some analysis of the meaning conveyed, there arose confusedly and paradoxically within my mind, the ideas of

glance upon each visage, still it seemed that, in my then peculiar mental state, I could frequently read, even in that brief interval of a glance, the history of long years.” Ibid., 318.

⁴¹“...suddenly there came into view a countenance (that of a decrepid old man, some sixty-five or seventy years of age,) — a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention,” Ibid., 318.

⁴² Ibid., 319.

⁴³ The opening: “It was well said of a certain German book that “er lasst sich nicht lesen” — it does not permit itself to be read.“ The closing: “The worst heart of the world is a grosser book than the ‘Hortulus Animæ,’ and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of God that ‘er lasst sich nicht lesen.” Ibid., 314 and 323.

⁴⁴ “I felt singularly aroused, startled, fascinated.” Ibid., 319.

⁴⁵ “...a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention on account of the absolute idiosyncrasy of its expression.” Ibid., 318-319.

*vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense- of supreme despair.*⁴⁶

The logic behind this enumeration is the logic of *association*. And association is a process between clouds and architecture. Simply put, we can see this enumeration as entirely random or we can read it as forming one arc, one intention. For instance, as forming a *sketch of Mephisto*: a prototype of a celebrity.

Further, it suffices to look at the clothes of the man of the crowd to see that this is no ordinary man but *an actor* wearing a costume:

*“His clothes, generally, were filthy and ragged; but as he came, now and then, within the strong glare of a lamp, I perceived that his linen, although dirty, was of beautiful texture; and my vision deceived me, or, through a rent in a closely-buttoned and evidently second-hand roquelaure which enveloped him, I caught a glimpse both of a diamond and of a dagger. These observations heightened my curiosity, and I resolved to follow the stranger whithersoever he should go.”*⁴⁷

These clothes are obviously designed to attract one’s attention and one’s attention is attracted via contradiction. This attention is unable to resolve the contradiction and encounters an impasse: a *diamond*, a stone of the highest density of all known materials. The next step seems to be inevitable. The narrator overcomes the impasse of reason with an act of faith, a suspension of disbelief, and in doing so invests the man of the crowd with a quasi-divine status.⁴⁸

Further, there is another clue that allows us to interpret the man of the crowd as a celebrity. Namely, his intrinsic connection to the *commodity*. This connection is described in the following scene taking place in a large department store:

“A few minutes brought us to a large and busy bazaar, with the localities of which the stranger appeared well acquainted, and where his original demeanour again became apparent, as he forced his way to and fro without aim among the host of buyers and sellers.

*During the hour and a half, or thereabouts, which we passed in this place, it required much caution on my part to keep him within reach without attracting his observation. Luckily I wore a pair of caoutchouc over-shoes, and could move about in perfect silence. At no moment did he see that I watched him. He entered shop after shop, priced nothing, spoke no word, and looked at all objects with a wild and vacant stare.”*⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid., 319.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Cf. Luke 9:57 (*King James Bible*): “And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* [τις] said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”

⁴⁹ Ibid., 321.

The last two sentences cannot be clearer: the man of the crowd is being watched with precisely the same *intense stare* with which he himself observes the objects on display. This means that he is placed on the same level as the commodity and, more importantly, that he is placed on the same ontological level as *things*.

Further, the movement of the man of the crowd can be interpreted as the movement of a celebrity because the man of the crowd is at all times *at the center of the crowd* and that is precisely the position of a celebrity. Nevertheless, this is no relation of cause and effect. It is a relation of *expression*. An expression that is followed by *imitation* in never-ending correlation. What does it mean? How does it look like? Such a never-correlation of expression and imitation is, for instance, *stalking*.

The movement of the man of the crowd is truly fascinating. At first sight, it seems that the direction of this movement is *forward and only forward* because the man of the crowd never looks back.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, E. A. Poe shows that this movement – which is at all times going with the flow, going to those places that overflow with life⁵¹ – is ultimately *circular*. First, the course of the pursuit leads back and forth and back and forth between the center of London and the periphery. Second, the crowd is likened to a *sea*⁵² and the course of the man of the crowd to a *meandering river*.⁵³ But the third instance is the most fascinating. In this central scene (more precisely, *on* this central scene) the man of the crowd is literally going in circles:

*“A second turn brought us into a square, brilliantly lighted, and overflowing with life. The old manner of the stranger re-appeared. His chin fell upon his breast, while his eyes rolled wildly from under his knit brows, in every direction, upon those who hemmed him in. He urged his way steadily and perseveringly. I was surprised, however, to find, upon his having made the circuit of the square, that he turned and retraced his steps. Still more was I astonished to see him repeat the same walk several times – once nearly detecting me as he came round with a sudden movement. In this exercise he spent another hour...”*⁵⁴

The meaning of this brilliant scene will become clear with a short digression. There is, incredibly enough, one modern work of art which corresponds to the smallest

⁵⁰ “Never once turning his head to look back, he did not observe me.” Ibid., 320.

⁵¹ “A second turn brought us into a square, brilliantly lighted, and overflowing with life.” Ibid., 320.

⁵² “But, as the darkness came on, the throng momentarily increased; and, by the time the lamps were well lighted, two dense and continuous tides of population were rushing past the door. At this particular period of the evening I had never before been in a similar situation, and the tumultuous sea of human heads filled me therefore with a delicious novelty of emotion.” Ibid., 315.

⁵³ “He walked moodily some paces up the once populous avenue, then, with a heavy sigh, turned in the direction of the river, and, plunging through a great variety of devious ways, came out at length in view of one of the principal theatres.” Ibid., 321.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

detail to *The Man of the Crowd*. Namely, *Zidane, A 21st Century Portrait* from Douglas Gordon and Philip Parreno.⁵⁵ First of all, it is necessary to point out that the subtitle of this work does not mean that this is a portrait made *in* the 21st century but that it is a portrait *of* the 21st century. Further, it is necessary to describe this artwork as it might not be familiar to the general audience as opposed to (Arabic-French, young-old, serious-ironic, sublime-brutal) Zinedine Zidane himself, the embodiment of *midfielder*. Suffice it to say that Alfredo di Stéfano once described Zidane as a “*walking spectacle*“.

According to Wikipedia:

“*Zidane, A 21st Century Portrait* (French: *Zidane, un portrait du 21e siècle*) is a 2006 French documentary film focusing on the playing style of the French football player Zinedine Zidane.

*The film is a documentary focused purely on Zidane during the Spanish La Liga match played between Real Madrid and Villarreal on April 23, 2005 at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium and was filmed in real time using 17 synchronized cameras. During the last minutes of the match, Zidane was sent off as a result of a brawl.*⁵⁶

The coincidence between *The Man of the Crowd* and *Zidane, A 21st Century Portrait* is incredible precisely because the latter – although it is a documentary film capturing an event in *real time* and in *real life* – concludes as well with the moment of judgement: Zinedine Zidane receives a red card for unsporting behaviour in the 90th minute. *And that is truly an epiphany*. Notwithstanding that somewhat random.

II. As for the crowd itself, the most important fact is voiced by Walter Benjamin who paraphrases Victor Hugo who paraphrases Edgar Allan Poe who quotes Homer (or those who are represented with the name of “Homer“) and says:

“*In the crowd that which stands below man comes in connection (Verkehr) with what rules above him.*“⁵⁷

And that is precisely the meaning of the most significant image that Edgar Allan Poe employs in his depiction of the crowd – the image of a *sea*:

⁵⁵ Douglas Gordon & Philippe Parreno, *Zidane, un portrait du 21e siècle* [artwork / documentary]. Anna Lena Films, 2006.

⁵⁶ *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait”, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zidane:_A_21st_Century_Portrait [accessed July 31, 2017] (emphasis mine).

⁵⁷ [In der Menge tritt, was unter dem Menschen steht, in Verkehr mit dem, was über ihm waltet.] Walter Benjamin, *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire*, 62 (translation altered). The paraphrased sentence of Victor Hugo from *Les Misérables* (IV.8.5) is this: “on this street... what is below man discerns through a fog that which is above man [dans cette rue... ce qui est au-dessous de l’homme y distingue à travers la brume ce qui est au-delà de l’homme]”. As for Victor Hugo paraphrasing E. A. Poe quoting the very first man of the crowd, *Homer*, see below.

“But, as the darkness came on, the throng momentarily increased; and, by the time the lamps were well lighted, two dense and continuous tides of population were rushing past the door. At this particular period of the evening I had never before been in a similar situation, and the tumultuous sea of human heads filled me therefore with a delicious novelty of emotion.”⁵⁸

The point of this metaphor is not that the crowd is as chaotic as the sea but that this chaos is in both cases determined and ruled *from above*. Hence, the emphasis on *tides*. And the quasi-divine force that structures the movement of the crowd is of course *work*⁵⁹ as well as *celestial bodies*. One tide of population are those who work at day and the other tide are those who work at night.

Further, this most important fact – that some god or gods are at work in the midst of the crowd – is made entirely clear via the Homeric quotation. The narrator describes his current state of mind, saying:

“For some months I had been ill in health, but was now convalescent, and, with returning strength, found myself in one of those happy moods which are so precisely the converse of *emui* – moods of the keenest appetency, when the film from the mental vision departs – the ἀχλὺς οὐ πρὶν ἐπῆεν — and the intellect, electrified, surpasses as greatly its every-day condition as does the vivid yet candid reason of Leibnitz the mad and flimsy rhetoric of Gorgias.”⁶⁰

This quotation (somewhat imprecise as Poe is certainly quoting *out of memory*) refers to the scene in the *Iliad*, wherein flashing-eyed Athene answers the prayer of wounded Diomedes and encourages him to rejoin the battle, telling him:

“And the mist moreover have I taken from thine eyes that afore was upon them, to the end that thou mayest well discern both god and man.”⁶¹

Athene then forbids Diomedes to attack gods, save for Aphrodite, whom he should attack with a thrust of his spear. Diomedes, good at the war-cry, thereafter rejoins the battle and goes on a fantastic killing spree, in course of which (sic!) he wounds Aphrodite as well as Ares with his spear, drawing loud or superloud⁶² screams from both gods (*Ilias* 5.127-864).

⁵⁸ Edgar Allan Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, 315.

⁵⁹ Note that the entire description of the crowd is systematised via (less or more dishonest) *professions* and that most of the members of the crowd display “a satisfied business-like demeanour”.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 314 (underline stands for the original cursive).

⁶¹ *Ilias* 5.127: “ἀχλὺν δ' αὖ τοι ἄπ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἔλον ἢ πρὶν ἐπῆεν, / ὄφρ' εὖ γινώσκῃς ἡμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα.” Homer, *The Iliad. With an English translation by A. T. Murray* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1928), 204-205.

⁶² *Ilias* 5.859-861: “Then brazen Ares bellowed loud as nine thousand warriors or ten thousand cry in battle, when they join in the strife of the War-god;” *Ibid.*, 257.

It is not necessary to follow Diomedes further. The important thing is that this quotation of Homer – apart from the fact that it testifies to the divine presence – presents the innocuous movement of the crowd as a modern version of an epic *battle*. That is to say, as an *inversion* of battle. The common denominator is the fact there *is* an enemy and the inversion is that the goal in battle consists in *collision* or *confrontation* whereas the goal in the movement of the crowd consists in *avoidance*. And the movement of avoidance is nothing else but *detour* because detour, in the simplest sense of the word, means nothing else but avoiding an obstacle: going *around* or thinking *about*.

The movement of the crowd is described by E. A. Poe as follows:

“By far the greater number of those who went by had a satisfied business-like demeanor, and seemed to be thinking only of making their way through the press. Their brows were knit, and their eyes rolled quickly; when pushed against by fellow-wayfarers they evinced no symptom of impatience, but adjusted their clothes and hurried on. Others, still a numerous class, were restless in their movements, had flushed faces, and talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around. When impeded in their progress, these people suddenly ceased muttering, but re-doubled their gesticulations, and awaited, with an absent and overdone smile upon the lips, the course of the persons impeding them. If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers, and appeared overwhelmed with confusion. There was nothing very distinctive about these two large classes beyond what I have noted.”⁶³

First of all, it is important to note that this passage represents a *complete description* of the overwhelming majority of the crowd as there is *nothing distinctive* about them apart from these *minutious observations*. This also means that every word of this passage *counts* but, for the sake of proportion, it is necessary to focus only on the most important aspects.

Second, it is important to note what exactly is this overwhelming majority doing. *They seem to be thinking*. The greater number *seem* to be thinking and the smaller number – but still large – are *seen* thinking (“*others... talked and gesticulated to themselves*“). On one side, the greater part of the crowd displays *no* symptoms of thinking (apart from the minor gesture of adjusting one’s clothes), on the other side, the smaller part of the crowd displays *re-doubled* symptoms of thinking.

Third, it is important to note what exactly they are thinking of. They seem to be thinking “*only of making their way through the press.*“ That is to say, their only goal is to ex-press themselves. And this movement of *expression* takes places simultaneously on several interconnected levels:

⁶³ Edgar Allan Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, 315.

– First of all, it is essentially an *escape*. One part of the crowd escapes with the means of *speed* (“*adjusted their clothes and hurried on*“⁶⁴) and the other part escapes with the means of *awaiting* (“*awaited... the course of the persons impeding them*“). Speed and awaiting seem to be complete opposites, but (within the movement of the crowd) they serve the same goal: *to avoid all situations* (collisions). In other words: if you are moving with speed (if you are in a hurry), you are thereby making sure that no situation (no opportunity for entering the situation) ever arises, and if you are awaiting, you are thereby awaiting until such an opportunity for entering the situation literally *passes*.

– Second, expression is essentially a *disorder of attention*. One part of the crowd expresses itself or escapes with the means of *ignorance* (“*when pushed against by fellow-wayfarers they evinced no symptom of impatience*“) and the other part expresses itself or escapes with the means of humour or, more precisely, *mock adoration* (“*If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers...*“). Ignorance and mock adoration seem to be complete opposites but both are (within the movement of the crowd) moments of the impossible movement of avoidance. The movement of avoidance is *impossible* because the presence of the crowd is a *fact*. Nevertheless, this presence is as powerful as nature itself and to confront this force is beyond human means. Therefore, the individual members of the crowd choose to *disregard* this unbearable fact and *pretend* as if it does not exist or *pretend* that it is something different than it really is (for instance, that the jostler is the jostled).

To express this thought as an image: these people are saving themselves from drowning by pulling on their own hair. And the point of this image is shocking: they are ultimately *successful* and this image is, by the same token, *true*.

– Third, the movement of expression is essentially a desire to *become famous* (make “*way through the press*“). Note that the expression of the greater part of the crowd (“*Their brows were knit, and their eyes rolled quickly...*“) is identical to the expression of the man of the crowd (“*his eyes rolled wildly from under his knit brows*“⁶⁴). The greater part of the crowd desires to become famous because they are afraid they are nothing but *copies of copies*. This fact – that the movement of the crowd is copying of copying, in other words, that the movement of avoidance is *completely determined* by the obstacle that is being avoided – is displayed in the following, rather innocuous scene:

“*When impeded in their progress, these people suddenly ceased muttering, but re-doubled their gesticulations, and awaited, with an absent and overdone smile upon the lips, the course of the persons impeding them. If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers, and appeared overwhelmed with confusion.*“

⁶⁴ Ibid., 321.

This scene represents one situation that captures the very essence of the crowd. Namely, *mutual giving way* that results in an *impasse* that results in a *collision* or an *acknowledgement*. That sounds complicated but it is something altogether familiar.

First of all, mutual giving way obviously results in an impasse: *You go first. No, you go first. No, you go first. No, you go first. No, you go first. No, you go first. No, you go first...*

Alternatively, both members of the crowd might abandon all attempts of politeness and simply proceed forward. But there awaits another impasse: *He goes left and I go left. I go right and he goes right. He goes left and I go left. I go right and he goes right...*

The result is inevitable: either collision or silent acknowledgement. In other words, both members of the crowd are clearly copying each other and this copying eventually results in that they *recognize* themselves as copies of copies and, for this reason, become confused. There is no difference, in other words, there is *confusion*. More precisely, there *is* confusion. The jostled bows profusely to the jostler as if the jostler were the jostled because there is no difference and the jostler in fact *is* the jostled.

2.4/ Thomas Bernhard – *Walking*

Thomas Bernhard – who is neither an artist, nor a philosopher, but an *imitator of voices* – claims, and constructs the entire novel *Walking*⁶⁵ upon this claim, that walking and thinking are basically identical.⁶⁶

To start with, the connection between walking and thinking is this: activity in walking is passivity in thinking and activity in thinking is passivity in walking.⁶⁷ Bernhard is concerned with thinking at its most active and he writes about walking at its most passive. Accordingly, the form of the novel – representing *thinking* – is extremely complex and the content of the novel – representing *walking* – is extremely banal. The content of the novel (the actual plot) is banal to the point of being unnoticeable and also in this respect succeeds to represent walking.

The form of Bernhard's novel is this: an unnamed narrator reproduces (imitates) the voice of Oehler who reproduces (imitates) the voices of Scherrer and Rustenschacher

⁶⁵ Thomas Bernhard, *Gehen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015. The translation into English (Thomas Bernhard, *Walking: A Novella*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) is fine but not without errors. Wherever the English translation is loose or wrong or wherever I want to emphasize some particular point, I provide also the German original.

⁶⁶ "...walking and thinking are two completely similar concepts (...) The science of walking and the science of thinking are basically a single science." Ibid., 72-73. Cf. also "...inner and outer are identical for natures like Hollensteiner and Karrer." Ibid., 38.

⁶⁷ "If we walk more intensively, our thinking lets up, says Oehler, if we think more intensively, our walking does." Ibid., 72.

and Rustenschacher's nephew and Karrer who reproduces (imitates) the voice of Hollensteiner who might have been a true genius.

The content of Bernhard's novel is this: the narrator and Oehler walk through Vienna and talk about all sorts of things. They wanted to feed the birds under the Friedensbrücke but they forgot. After they suddenly realized they forgot to feed the birds under the Friedensbrücke, they fed instead the birds on Klosterneuburgerstrasse.⁶⁸

Bernhard's novel is in essence *detour* because detour connects its form and content (thinking and walking). Most of the time, the unnamed narrator is seemingly absent from the novel. He speaks a couple of words at the beginning of the novel (at the beginning of the walk) but after that he falls silent. He only listens (thinks). Only after he realizes that he and Oehler forgot to feed the birds under the Friedensbrücke, after he finds himself (in Klosterneuburgerstrasse), he speaks (becomes present) for the second and last time.⁶⁹

Bernhard explains in very simple words why thinking is, in fact, listening to voices. The reason is this: whenever one observes one's own thinking, he changes his thinking by this very fact of observation (similarly, whenever one observes one's own walking, he thereby changes his walking). Hence, self-observation and self-reflection are false concepts. Whenever we observe ourselves or listen to ourselves, we always observe or listen to someone else than we intended.⁷⁰

The narrator was lost in thought and he was thinking about the very same subject (about others becoming lost in thought). There are in fact four more detours that take place within the detour of the unnamed narrator and these detours are: (i) Karrer's falling insane, (ii) Hollensteiner's suicide, (iii) Oehler's betrayal and humiliation and (iv) Karrer's falling asleep.

⁶⁸ "In fact, we now intend to visit the park on Klosterneuburgerstrasse; after four or five minutes in the park on Klosterneuburgerstrasse, Oehler suddenly says, we still have some bird food we brought for the birds under the Friedensbrücke in our coat pockets. Do you have the bird food we brought for the birds under the Friedensbrücke in your coat pocket? To which I answer, yes. To our astonishment both of us, Oehler and I, still have, at this moment in the park on Klosterneuburgerstrasse, the bird food in our coat pockets that we brought for the birds under the Friedensbrücke. It is absolutely unusual, says Oehler, for us to forget to feed our bird food to the birds under the Friedensbrücke. Let's feed the birds our bird food now, says Oehler, and we feed the birds our bird food. We throw our bird food to the birds very quickly and the bird food is eaten up in a short time. These birds have a totally different, much more rapid, way of eating our bird food, says Oehler, different from the birds under the Friedensbrücke. Almost at the same moment, I also say: a totally different way." Ibid., 78.

⁶⁹ Cf. previous footnote.

⁷⁰ "Whereas, of course, we can observe someone else without his knowledge (or his being aware of it) and observe how he walks or thinks, that is, his walking and thinking, we can never observe ourselves without our knowledge (or our being aware of it). If we observe ourselves, we are never observing ourselves but someone else." Ibid., 74.

We have outlined the threat in the situation of detour as falling *too deep* in the routine, making *too long* a detour to come back, and Bernhard says, in different words, exactly the same. According to him, the threat is to think *too far*.⁷¹ When we think about what we are doing, we cease to be doing that.⁷² Therefore, thinking too far means complete immobility and complete lack of change. In short, *complete prevalence of routine*.

Bernhard's novel is a complex book which can be read in a simple fashion. Namely, as a tale of two places: the Friedensbrücke and Klosterneuburgerstrasse. The Friedensbrücke is a utopia where all the tensions and paradoxes of human existence and co-existence are reconciled whereas Klosterneuburgerstrasse stands for the claustrophobic horror of reality. We have seen that Klosterneuburgerstrasse prevailed in the detour of Oehler and the narrator and it similarly prevails in other four detours: all characters (Karrer and Hollensteiner and other interchangeable –ers)⁷³ are forced to return to Klosterneuburgerstrasse as if they were nothing but emanations of one impersonal will.

Oehler and Karrer and Hollensteiner all grew up in Klosterneuburgerstrasse⁷⁴ and Klosterneuburgerstrasse determines all their thoughts and ideas.⁷⁵ Klosterneuburgerstrasse is a place ruled by *unreason*. The place of unreason is characterized (similarly to the swarms of flies and newly-weds in *Gradiva*) by multiplicity – by hundreds and hundreds of *children*.⁷⁶ But what are children? Children are mindless products of mindlessness,⁷⁷ that is, children are an endless *repetition* of mindlessness. In other words,

⁷¹ “Go on thinking more and more and more with ever greater intensity and with an ever greater ruthlessness and with an ever greater fanaticism for finding out, says Oehler, but never for one moment think too far.” Ibid., 9-10.

⁷² “When we do something, we may not think about why we are doing what we are doing, says Oehler, for then it would suddenly be totally impossible for us to do anything.” Ibid., 20.

⁷³ “If we are talking about a person, as we are at the moment about Hollensteiner (and if we are talking about Hollensteiner, then basically about Karrer, but very often basically about Hollensteiner and so on), we are nevertheless speaking all the time about a result.” Ibid., 37.

⁷⁴ “I think now that I went walking with Karrer on Klosterneuburgerstrasse for twenty years, says Oehler, like Karrer I grew up on Klosterneuburgerstrasse, we both knew what it means to have grown up on Klosterneuburgerstrasse, this knowledge has underlain all our actions and all our thinking and, especially, the whole time we were walking together. (...) For, says Oehler, you have to have gone to elementary school, to secondary school, and to the university with a man like Hollensteiner, as Karrer did, to know what he is. (...) In the nature of things, Scherrer should have shown an interest in the time Hollensteiner and Karrer spent together at school, says Oehler, in their common route to school, their origins and so on, in their common, and their different, views and intentions and so on, says Oehler.” Ibid., 17, 32, 43.

⁷⁵ “You went to school here and you survived your father and your mother here, and others will survive you as you survived your father and mother, said Karrer to Oehler. It was on Klosterneuburgerstrasse that all thoughts that ever occurred to you occurred to you (and if you know the truth, all your ideas, all your rebukes about your environment, your inner world they all occurred to you here).” Ibid., 82.

⁷⁶ “At this moment, as we are walking along Klosterneuburgerstrasse, the situation is that there are so many, indeed hundreds of, children on Klosterneuburgerstrasse, and this prompts Oehler to continue his remarks about the making of children.” Ibid., 14.

⁷⁷ “And the fact that all children who are made are made mindlessly [kopflos], says Oehler, is a fact. And whatever is made mindlessly and above all whatever is made that is mindless should be punished.” Ibid., 13.

Klosterneuburgerstrasse is a place where things are always *the same*. It is a *sealed tomb*.⁷⁸ Klosterneuburgerstrasse is therefore synonymous with Human Nature which is described as “*the most horrible imaginable prison*“.⁷⁹ And this problem – *how to leave this place* (how to escape human nature) – proves to be unsolvable⁸⁰ (unbridgeable) in all four detours:

I. Karrer’s moment of madness happened at Rustenschacher’s clothing store. Before that, Oehler and Karrer wanted to exchange ideas on the Friedensbrücke about Wittgenstein and Ferdinand Ebner but failed to do so because of their exhaustion.⁸¹ After this conversation that never happened, they wanted to proceed to Klosterneuburgerstrasse but went to Rustenschacher’s clothing store instead.⁸² Karrer visited Rustenschacher’s store once or twice every week for a number of years and always rehearsed the same scene.⁸³ First, he asked Rustenschacher’s nephew to show him all their trousers (sturdy winter trousers) to the light. Second, he pointed out the thin spots on these trousers. More precisely, he pointed out their *complete transparency*.⁸⁴ Third, he concluded that these trousers were made of Czechoslovakian reject. At this point,⁸⁵ Rustenschacher and Rustenschacher’s nephew claimed (argued) that the trousers were made of *excellent or most excellent* English materials whereas Karrer claimed (argued) that the trousers were made of Czechoslovakian reject. This argument usually ended with Karrer calming down, thanking Rustenschacher’s nephew and leaving the store. For a few times, Karrer even *bought* a pair of trousers. But this time the result was different. Karrer came to a halt

⁷⁸ “A street like Klosterneuburgerstrasse is, for a person of my age, a sealed tomb from which you hear nothing but dreadful things, said Karrer.” Ibid., 85.

⁷⁹ “My whole life long, I have refused to make a child, said Karrer, Oehler says, to add a new human being over and above the person that I am, I who am sitting in the most horrible imaginable prison that science ruthlessly labels as Human Nature... [der in dem entsetzlichsten Kerker sitzt, den man sich vorstellen kann und den die Wissenschaft rücksichtslos als die Menschliche Natur bezeichnet...]“ Ibid., 17 (transl. altered).

⁸⁰ “It was precisely the fact that everything on Klosterneuburgerstrasse, that everything remained as it always had been and that you had to fear, if you thought about it, that it would always remain the same and that had gradually made Klosterneuburgerstrasse into an enormous and insoluble problem for him.” Ibid., 83.

⁸¹ “...because we were exhausted we were suddenly no longer capable, there on the Friedensbrücke, of saying the names of Wittgenstein and Ferdinand Ebner because we had brought our walking and our thinking, the one out of the other, to an incredible, almost unbearable, state of nervous tension.” Ibid., 71.

⁸² “We, Karrer and I, also intended, says Oehler, to go straight from the Friedensbrücke back onto Klosterneuburgerstrasse, but no, we went into Rustenschacher’s store, today I really don’t know why we went into Rustenschacher’s store but it’s pointless to think about it.” Ibid., 79.

⁸³ “...basically it was always the same scene when I went to Rustenschacher’s store with Karrer...” Ibid., 50.

⁸⁴ “Suddenly Karrer said to Rustenschacher, Oehler told Scherrer, if you, Rustenschacher, take up a position behind the pair of trousers that your nephew is at this moment holding up to the light for me, immediately behind this pair of trousers that your nephew is holding up to the light for me, I can see your face through this pair of trousers with a clarity with which I do not wish to see your face.” Ibid., 52.

⁸⁵ “I have observed the same thing on each of our visits to Rustenschacher’s store, as Oehler told Scherrer: Rustenschacher’s nephew exercised this sort of self-control for a long time, for the longest time, and in fact exercised this self-control up to the point when Karrer used the concept or the term Czechoslovakian reject.” Ibid., 46.

and merely repeated “*These thin spots. These thin spots. These thin spots. These thin spots. These thin spots....*” over and over again. He became mad and was confined to Steinhof to the custody of psychiatrist Scherrer.⁸⁶

This scene is of course grotesque but at the same time most serious: essentially, it is an argument on the nature of reality. More precisely, on the nature of *matter*. On the one hand, Rustenschacher and Rustenschacher’s nephew argue for the objective (opaque) nature of matter,⁸⁷ on the other hand, Karrer argues that everything, including matter, is produced by the subject (and everything, including matter, is therefore transparent). Usually, Karrer is persuaded by usefulness of Rustenschachers’ view and leaves his untenable position (and the store). But this time the result is different. Karrer stands still on his untenable standpoint and this standstill – at the same time a position of reason and a position of madness – is nothing else but *death by hesitation*.⁸⁸

According to Karrer, there are three rational states: unreason, subreason and reason.⁸⁹ The simplest way to distinguish between these rational states is to ask whether they stand *in accordance* with facts or *against* facts. What facts? Ultimately, there is only one fact: that our existence is unbearable and horrible.⁹⁰ Our existence is unbearable and horrible because of the fact that we can never leave ourselves, that is, our established habits. Our existence is unbearable and horrible because of the fact that all knowledge is

⁸⁶ “...Karrer once again says that in the case of these trousers they were apparently dealing with Czechoslovakian rejects, and he made as if to take a deep breath, as it seemed unsuccessfully, whereupon he wanted to say something else, I tell Scherrer, says Oehler, but he, Karrer, was out of breath and was unable, because he was out of breath, to say what he apparently wanted to say. *These thin spots. These thin spots. These thin spots. These thin spots. These thin spots over and over again. These thin spots. These thin spots. These thin spots*, incessantly. *These thin spots. These thin spots. These thin spots*. Rustenschacher had immediately grasped what was happening and, on my orders, Rustenschacher’s nephew had already ordered everything to be done that had to be done, Oehler tells Scherrer.” Ibid., 61–62.

⁸⁷ More precisely, they say it is better not to think about this question at all (not to hold up a pair of trousers to the light at all): “Whereupon Rustenschacher’s nephew says, one should not, as anyone knows, hold up a pair of trousers to the light, because all trousers if held up to the light show thin spots.” Ibid., 54.

⁸⁸ “We may not make what we are doing the object of our thought, for then we would first be the victims of *mortal doubt* [tödlichen Zweifel] and, finally, of *mortal despair*.” Ibid., 20.

⁸⁹ At this point, I am obliged to acknowledge ONE PASSERBY. The following interpretation of three rational states is in some respects indebted to the following book: Daniela Šterbáková, *Myslet. Komentář k novele Chůze a románům Staří mistři a Mýcení Thomase Bernharda* [To Think. Commentary on Thomas Bernhard’s Walking, Old Masters and Woodcutters], Prague: Trivium, 2016. Nevertheless, I am not going to engage Šterbáková in discussion for two reasons, although such a discussion might have been exciting. First, I establish this interpretation of *Gehen* exclusively on *Gehen*. Second, my conclusion is completely different from Šterbáková’s. The difference behind this difference is this: whereas Šterbáková at one crucial moment reads “walking” as “thinking”, I on the other side read “walking” as “walking”.

⁹⁰ “The fact is that our existence is an unbearable and horrible existence, if we exist *with* this fact, says Oehler, and not *against* this fact, then we shall go under in the most wretched and in the most usual manner [die gewöhnlichste Weise], there should therefore be nothing more important to us than existing constantly, even if *in*, but also at the same time *against* the fact of an unbearable and horrible existence.” Ibid., 8.

only so-called knowledge and, consequently, that everything is only *so-called*. Saying that everything is only so-called is the same as saying that everything, matter included, ultimately comes from the human mind. And, of course, this unfortunate fact is no fact but only a so-called fact.⁹¹ In other words, the statement “no knowledge is possible” undermines itself because we cannot be sure neither of our own ignorance.

In order to define what is unreason, subreason and reason, we already needed to speak about the nature of reason. This shows that unreason, subreason and reason are in fact concomitant, higher-order, reflective states (or lack thereof). Simply put, people of unreason do not think about the nature of reason at all, people of subreason at the same time do and don't and people of reason don't do anything else, as it were, but think about the (infinitely sad) nature of reason.

Unreason is the state of (over) 98 percent of all people.⁹² Such people can never go mad.⁹³ Karrer does not say whether these people stand *in accordance* or *against* facts (because such people do not think at all) but it is clear that unreason stands *in accordance* with facts⁹⁴ (with the fact that our existence is unbearable and horrible) because existence of such people simply *is* unbearable and horrible. The existence of such people is horrific to the point of not counting as human existence at all.⁹⁵

Subreason is the same as thinking.⁹⁶ It is an *art* of existing against the facts and this most difficult art⁹⁷ is composed out of three intellectual virtues: (a) *indifference*, (b) *acuity* and (c) *ruthlessness* of indifference and acuity.⁹⁸

⁹¹ “When we are dealing with people we are only dealing with so-called people, just as when we are dealing with facts we are only dealing with so-called facts, just as the whole of matter, since it only emanates from the human mind [weil sie aus nichts anderem als aus dem menschlichen Kopfe ist], is only so-called matter, just as we know that everything emanates from the human mind and from nothing else, if we understand *the concept knowledge* and accept it as a concept that we understand.” Ibid., 63.

⁹² “Most people, over ninety-eight percent, says Oehler, possess neither indifference of intellect nor acuity of intellect and do not even have the faculty of reason.” Ibid., 8.

⁹³ “Scherrer’s inability to think logically and thus to ask logical questions, give logical answers, and so forth, says Oehler, it was precisely when I was in his presence that it occurred to me that people like Scherrer can never go mad [niemals verrückt werden können].” Ibid., 42.

⁹⁴ Cf. also the footnote n. 88, particularly the words “the most usual manner“ [die gewöhnlichste Weise].

⁹⁵ “If we see hundreds and thousands of people, of whom, with the best will in the world and with the greatest self-abnegation, we cannot say that we are still dealing with human beings, he says.” Ibid., 19.

⁹⁶ “The so-called human faculty of reason, says Oehler, is, as Karrer said, always a mere underfaculty of reason, even a subfaculty of reason. [Der sogenannte menschliche Verstand, sagt Oehler, ist, wie Karrer gesagt hat, immer nur ein sogenannter Unterverstand, auch Subverstand.]“ Ibid., 10.

⁹⁷ “The art of existing against the facts, says Oehler, is the most difficult, the art that is the most difficult.” Ibid., 7-8.

⁹⁸ “It is always a question of intellectual indifference and intellectual acuity and of the ruthlessness of intellectual indifference and intellectual acuity, says Oehler. [Es ist immer eine Frage von Geisteskalte und Geistesstärke und von Rücksichtslosigkeit von Geisteskalte und Geistesstärke, sagt Oehler.]“ Ibid., 8.

A. Subreason is an art of existing against the facts. Above all, against the fact that our existence is unbearable and horrible. Our existence is unbearable and horrible because we can never leave ourselves. Therefore, in order to bear what is unbearable and not feel as horrible that what is horrible,⁹⁹ we need to leave ourselves and our self-interests behind. That is, to become *indifferent*. Being indifferent is the same as being distanced, abstracted, not involved. Being indifferent means ceasing to see the world in terms of values (importance) because seeing the world in terms of values (importance) always means seeing the world through *our own* values (through our involvements and interests).

B. Acuity of intellect means being able to *see through* things. That is, to see that all things ultimately come from the human mind. If we are aware of this fact, everything that used to be impenetrable (objective) becomes clear and transparent.¹⁰⁰

C. It is imperative to think as far as possible but never too far and to think as far as possible (to continue forward and only forward) is intellectual *ruthlessness*. To pursue the question of ruthlessness *further* we need to know this: how come that we can think too far?

This has to do with the difference between walking and thinking. If we are aware of the fact that everything is only so-called, we are aware of the fact that we are always in the world of concepts. When we walk, we are dealing with practical concepts (we go to buy a pair of trousers, for instance), when we think, we are dealing simply with concepts (for instance, with a concept *a pair of trousers*).¹⁰¹ Consequently, walking is always a matter of speed whereas thinking has nothing to do with speed.¹⁰²

In other words, the world of practical concepts is the world of values whereas the world of concepts is valueless. Consequently, in the world of practical concepts there *are* destinations that can be sooner or later reached (desires that can be sooner or later fulfilled) whereas in the world of concepts there are no destinations, no desires, and therefore no speed.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ "There is no doubt that the art lies in bearing what is unbearable and in not feeling that what is horrible is something horrible." Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁰ "What until now, until the moment we meet a person like Karrer, we found unattainable we suddenly find attainable and transparent. Suddenly the world no longer consists of layers of darkness but is totally layered in clarity, says Oehler." Ibid., 62.

¹⁰¹ "When we are walking we are dealing with so-called practical concepts (in Karrer's words), when we are thinking we are dealing simply with concepts. [Wenn wir gehen, sagt Oehler, handelt es sich um sogenannte Gebrauchsbegriffe (so Karrer), wenn wir denken, handelt es sich ganz einfach um Begriffe.]" Ibid., 77.

¹⁰² "The difference between walking and thinking is that thinking has nothing to do with speed, but walking is actually always involved with speed." Ibid.

¹⁰³ "We can also say, over and over again, says Oehler, we have now walked to the end of such and such a road, it doesn't matter what road, whereas we can never say, now we have thought this thought to an end,

No destinations in thinking means that no question can be ultimately answered. No question can be answered because every question contains an infinite number of other questions.¹⁰⁴ For this reason, to really ask any question – for instance, “Why do I get up in the morning?” or “What do we do when we walk?” – ultimately means *to die*. That is, to lose one’s identity in the valueless world of concepts, to become lost in thought.¹⁰⁵

To conclude: the difference between walking and thinking is that walking is about importance whereas thinking does not matter. In walking there are always situations and different identities whereas in thinking there is only indifference and no meaning whatsoever.¹⁰⁶

That is almost true but not entirely. Ultimately, thinking is an art of *stopping* thinking.¹⁰⁷ How should this be understood? How should we understand that there is some present-mindedness in thinking?

“...sometimes we think with a much higher presence of mind [Geistesgegenwart] than we walk with and sometimes we walk with a far higher presence of mind than we think with, but we cannot walk and think with the same presence of mind, says Oehler, just as we cannot walk and think with the same intensity over a fairly long period of time and make walking and thinking for a fairly long period of time into a total whole with a total equality of value. [und Gehen und Denken immer noch mehr auf längere Zeit als ein totales Ganzes und ein totales Gleichwertiges machen können].“¹⁰⁸

How should we understand this activity of thinking? Are there in fact two worlds – the world of walking and the world of thinking? Yes and no. Everything is based on

there’s no such thing and it is connected with the fact that walking but not thinking is connected with speed.“ Ibid., 77-78.

¹⁰⁴ “When we ask it in this way, we see that we cannot answer the question because in the meantime we have expanded it by an endless number of other questions. (...) Look, says Oehler, we can ask any question we like, we cannot answer the question if we *really* want to answer it, to this extent there is not a single question in the whole conceptual world that can be answered.” Ibid., 68.

¹⁰⁵ “If the question is taken to a logical conclusion, which means that the person who asks a question, which he takes to this logical conclusion because he takes it to a conclusion or because he has to take it to a conclusion, also takes it to a conclusion, then the question is answered once and for all, and then the person who asked the question does not exist any longer. If we say that this person is dead from the moment when he answers his own question, we make things too simple, says Oehler. On the other hand, we can find no better way of expressing it than by saying that the person who asked the question is dead.” Ibid., 26.

¹⁰⁶ “But what he has just said, the earth gradually dying out and human beings growing fewer and fewer in the most natural way and finally dying out altogether, is only the raving of a mind that is already totally, and in the most total manner, working with the process of thinking and, in Oehler’s own words, a *nonsense*. [... nur der Auswuchs eines schon gänzlich und auf die totalste Weise nurmehr noch mit dem Denken zusammenarbeitenden Gehirns und, so Oehler darüber wörtlich, ein *Unsinn*.]“ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰⁷ “The art of thinking about things consists in the art, says Oehler, of stopping thinking before the fatal moment.” Ibid., 20.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 71-72.

the world of practical concepts¹⁰⁹ but there is also its mirror image, its *negation*, the world of concepts.¹¹⁰ These two worlds are completely similar and, for this reason, walking and thinking are completely similar concepts.¹¹¹ But only up to a point.

There are no destinations in thinking which means, paradoxically, that there *is* one destination and that is of course the fatal moment when we think *too far*. If there is present-mindedness in thinking, it must pertain to this moment (because in thinking there are no other moments), and this present-mindedness is nothing else but *subreason itself* because subreason is an art of stopping thinking before the fatal moment.¹¹² For this reason, the art of thinking is the most difficult one and almost impossible.

This conclusion – that present-mindedness is subreason itself – can be restated in simple words. *The person who thinks* (the person of subreason) *also thinks of his thinking as a form of walking*.¹¹³ In other words, he deals with concepts but is *at the same time* aware that concepts have no reality and no meaning outside present situation. In still other words, subreason is an existence that is *simultaneously* in accordance and against the facts.¹¹⁴ In short, being present-minded is the same as being *whole*.

To think is to make thinking and walking into *one equivalent whole*, to make one's mind completely present (present in the situation). According to Bernhard, nothing else can be said about this all-important whole because this whole is completely simple. It has to be *accepted, believed in*.¹¹⁵ And *that* is an art of stopping thinking.

Nothing can be said about the whole but something can be *shown*. For instance, that relationship between walking and thinking is exactly the same as the relationship

¹⁰⁹ “But underneath all this, as underneath everything, says Oehler, there is the world (and thus also the thinking) of practical or secondary concepts. We advance through the world of practical concepts or secondary concepts, but not through the world of concepts.” Ibid., 78.

¹¹⁰ “The number of possibilities of existing *in (and with)* the fact of an unbearable and horrible existence, is the same as the number of existing against the unbearable and horrible existence and thus *in (and with)* and at the same time against the fact of an unbearable and horrible existence.” Ibid., 8.

¹¹¹ “...walking and thinking are two completely similar concepts...” Ibid., 72.

¹¹² “The art of thinking about things consists in the art, says Oehler, of stopping thinking before the fatal moment.” Ibid., 20.

¹¹³ “The person who thinks also thinks of his thinking as a form of walking, says Oehler.” Ibid., 77.

¹¹⁴ “The fact is that our existence is an unbearable and horrible existence, if we exist *with* this fact, says Oehler, and not *against* this fact, then we shall go under in the most wretched and in the most usual manner, there should therefore be nothing more important to us than existing constantly, even if *in*, but also at the same time *against* the fact of an unbearable and horrible existence.” Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁵ “The structure of the whole is, as we know, a *completely simple one* and if we always accept this completely simple structure as our starting point we shall make progress. If we do not accept this completely simple structure as our starting point, we have what we call a complete standstill, but also *a whole as a so-called whole*.” And also: “Walking and thinking are in a perpetual relationship that is based on trust, says Oehler.” Ibid., 64, 73.

between non-bracketed and bracketed text.¹¹⁶ It is obvious that the text in brackets (providing clarifications, explanations, synonyms, possibilities, alternatives...) is always secondary and concomitant and completely dependent in its existence upon the non-bracketed text. Further, the text in brackets speaks in different, less involved voice than the non-bracketed text. And, most importantly, this voice sooner or later has to stop speaking. When? That is a question of *proportion*. This voice needs to stop speaking before the reader (as well as the writer) forgets *what* is in fact being explained or clarified, *for what reason* this voice started to speak in the first place. The voice in brackets sooner or later has to fall silent and that is not a rhetoric but an *ontological* necessity: to remain in the brackets is to nullify bracketed text *as* bracketed text because the brackets (in order to exist as brackets) sooner or later have to be *closed*. In other words, remaining in the brackets (imprisoned, as it were, in non-existent prison) would result in nullifying the very difference between bracketed and non-bracketed text because at some point it would become completely unclear (forgotten) whether we were still in brackets or not.

Reason has exactly the same structure as subreason: it is composed out of intellectual (a) *indifference*, (b) *acuity* and (c) *ruthlessness* of indifference and acuity. Reason and subreason share the same structure because subreason is only a substitute for reason. There must be a substitute for reason because reason itself is impossible (self-defeating).¹¹⁷ In other words, reason is the same thing as madness.

A. Having the faculty of reason means being aware that all statements are false,¹¹⁸ and, therefore, not accepting any single thing. Reason is a general withdrawal of judgement. Having the faculty of reason means not to accept any single thing including, first and foremost, one's history and therefore to die.¹¹⁹

Karrer's problem – eventually leading to his death (death by hesitation) – was called Klosterneuburgerstrasse.¹²⁰ Klosterneuburgerstrasse prevented Karrer from seeing

¹¹⁶ "...with Karrer it was a question of a quite different person from you and therefore with Karrer it was a question of quite different walking (and thinking), says Oehler." Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁷ "What we have is nothing but a substitute for a faculty of reason. A substitute for thought makes our existence possible. All the thinking that is done is only substitute thinking, because actual thinking is not possible, because there is no such thing as actual thinking, because nature excludes actual thinking, because it has to exclude actual thinking." Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁸ "For strictly speaking, says Oehler, everything is misconceived." Ibid., 38.

¹¹⁹ "To have the faculty of reason would mean nothing other than breaking off with history and first and foremost with one's own personal history. From one moment to the next simply to give up, accepting nothing more, that's what having the faculty of reason means, not accepting a person and not a thing, not a system and also, in the nature of things, not accepting a thought, just simply nothing more and then to commit suicide in this literally single revolutionary realization." Ibid., 9.

¹²⁰ "It was precisely the fact that everything on Klosterneuburgerstrasse, that everything remained as it always had been and that you had to fear, if you thought about it, that it would always remain the same and

things as they really were and Karrer therefore eventually refused to accept anything because he knew that all statements were false. And, suddenly, the problem disappeared. In not accepting anything, Karrer refused to accept his fixed habits (his traces) as his fixed habits (his traces), and therefore there was no problem. But Karrer disappeared together with his problem because in not recognizing his traces as *his* traces, he thereby refused to recognize *himself*. No traces means no self and no trousers means no Karrer. Karrer refused to accept the pastness of Klosterneuburgerstrasse and Klosterneuburgerstrasse therefore prevailed in its *complete indifference*.

It is easy to see what makes the position of reason untenable. If there is no self, there is nobody to withdraw judgement. If everything is misconceived, also the statement “everything is misconceived“ is misconceived. If it is necessary not to accept anything, it is also necessary not to accept that it is necessary not to accept anything. If everything is only so-called, also the fact that everything is only so-called is so-called, and, therefore, everything is only so-called so-called.¹²¹

B. Acuity of intellect means being able to see through things. That is, seeing that all things come from the human mind. Being able to see through things ultimately means seeing that there are no things¹²² and, accordingly, that there is no self. In other words, complete acuity means *complete transparence*. And this was indeed Karrer’s deepest fear that eventually materialized in Rustenschacher’s store.¹²³

(Nevertheless, it is not entirely true that there are no things. In order to make this statement, reason needs to encounter something and not accept it. The result is more than a hallucination but less than a real thing: in *Gradiva* there was ghost woman, in *Gehen* there are ghost trousers.)

Now what exactly does it mean being transparent? It means to think the most transparent and the deepest thought and thus to become altogether passive and come to a

that had gradually made Klosterneuburgerstrasse into an enormous and insoluble problem for him.” Ibid., 83.

¹²¹ “That on this basis things, and things in themselves, are only so-called or, to be completely accurate, only so-called so-called, to use Karrer’s words, says Oehler, goes without saying.“ Ibid., 64.

¹²² “What he sees while we are walking, he sees through [durchschaue], and for this reason he does not observe at all, for anything that can be seen through (completely) cannot be observed. Karrer also made this same observation, says Oehler. If we see through something, we have to say that we do not see that thing.” Ibid., 25. And also: “What we call perception is really stasis, immobility, as far as we are concerned, nothing. Nothing. [Was wir Anschauung nennen, ist für uns im Grunde Stillstand, Bewegunglosigkeit, nichts, Nichts.]” Ibid., 21–22.

¹²³ “A person like that is, of course, feared because he is afraid (of being transparent). [Ein solcher Mensch ist naturgemäß gefürchtet, weil er sich selbst fürchtet (vor Durchschaubarkeit).]“ Ibid., 62.

halt.¹²⁴ The most transparent and the deepest thought is the thought that everything is only so-called so-called. It is most transparent because it is free of all content: there is nothing but reason. It is deepest because therein reason meets itself, its own inconsistency. Reason meets reason and that is no thinking.¹²⁵ Thinking is dealing with concepts and in this thought there are no concepts.

Reason is the only reality there is (there are no facts apart from the so-called fact that everything is only so-called) and complete acuity is therefore a *direct encounter with reality*. Unreason is the state of existence. Subreason taken to its logical conclusion is reason and reason is a negation of everything, above all, a negation of a negation of the state of existence. Reason is again the state of existence: nothing but *living itself*.

C. We have seen that the ruthlessness of indifference and the ruthlessness of acuity have been an essential part of subreason. Ruthlessness means going forward and only forward. But is it possible to continue forward now we have reached the standstill of reason? Now that intellectual indifference and intellectual acuity are already complete? There is indeed ruthlessness in reason and this complete ruthlessness is *repetition*.

It is clear that the absolute passivity of mad Karrer is no quiescence. The most complete inactivity and the most complete immobility does not lack motion. Karrer is no plant but an engine revving on a spot, repeating his single and literally *revolutionary* realization [tatsächlich... revolutionären Erkenntnis]: that reason is the only reality and no motion and no change is therefore possible.¹²⁶

Ruthlessness, at first glance, seems to be very different from the eternal repetition of the same. It seems that in incessant leaving we are going to encounter new and new places. But that is not the case. Ruthlessness has only *one* direction (forward and only forward) and this direction is *completely* determined by that what was left behind. For this reason, going forward and only forward is nothing else but remaining at the same place (namely, in the past) and complete ruthlessness is repetition.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ "For the clearest thought, that which is the deepest and, at the same time, the most transparent [welcher die tiefste, gleichzeitig klarste Durchschaubarkeit ist], is the most complete inactivity and the most complete immobility, says Oehler." Ibid., 21.

¹²⁵ "What we call thinking has in reality nothing to do with the faculty of reason, says Oehler, Karrer is right about that when he says that we have no faculty of reason because we think, for to have a faculty of reason means not to think and so to have no thoughts. [...den Verstand zu haben, bedeutete, nicht zu denken und also kein Denken zu haben.]" Ibid., 10-11.

¹²⁶ "From one moment to the next simply to give up, accepting nothing more, that's what having the faculty of reason means, not accepting a person and not a thing, not a system and also, in the nature of things, not accepting a thought, just simply nothing more and then to commit suicide in this literally single revolutionary realization." Ibid., 9.

¹²⁷ "Walking away, nothing but walking away, says Karrer, according to Oehler, over and over again. *Nothing but walking away. All those years I thought I would alter something, and that means everything, and walk away*

Time for a shocking conclusion. The most important fact arising from these analyses of unreason, subreason and reason is that *reason is the same thing as unreason*. That (over) 98 percent of all people are as mad and as dead as Karrer.¹²⁸ Or, the other way round, that mad Karrer is as banal as (over) 98 percent of all people.

It might be that reason and unreason are not the same thing but they are certainly *indiscernible* (as the text in brackets that is too long to say whether it is in brackets or not): complete indifference is the indifference of Klosterneuburgerstrasse, complete acuity is the horror of reality and complete ruthlessness is endless repetition. In other words, walking (according to Bernhard's novel) is indeed about present-mindedness (subreason) and absent-mindedness (unreason / reason).

Before we proceed to next sections (Hollensteiner's suicide, Oehler's betrayal and humiliation and Karrer's falling asleep), one question remains to be raised. The question is at this point obvious – why should we actually resist madness? Why is it better to be sane rather than insane? Why is it better to be alive rather than dead?

from Klosterneuburgerstrasse, but nothing changed (because he changed nothing), says Oehler, and he did not go away.“ Ibid., 83.

¹²⁸ Seemingly, this conclusion is invalidated by the statement that people of unreason can never go mad [niemals verrückt werden können]. But the explanation is more than simple. People of unreason can never go mad because they are mad already. Neither mad Karrer can go mad.

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(Note: It seems to me obvious that *Critias* is a deliberate fragment. For this reason, I consider it – similarly to many others – a part of one dialogue called *Timaeus-Critias*.)

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AND OTHERS

part three: detour

Nevertheless, death is not the end. That sounds good, doesn't it? Why not repeat that one more time? Death is not the end. We are, in a sense, *immortal*. In what sense? In a sense that it cannot be proved or disproved. But it can be believed. Has to be believed? Believe it or not, we are immortal. We continue to exist even when we are dead. And we are dead, believe it or not. But we, who are we? Who could possibly speak while being dead? Nobody. Easy question. No body. No-one that is present in body. Call this no-one *mind* or *soul*, it doesn't matter. At any rate, this no-one is not present. By definition. Has not been present. Would not have been present. Whatever. We need a puppet. But we have a puppet. There are *thousands* of them, ready to speak in our voice, perhaps some of them speaking already. Perhaps we ourselves are puppets, that would explain a lot. That would explain, for instance, why we are immortal and *godlike*. At any rate, we are not alone. Obviously. Have not been alone. Would not have been alone. Whatever. We need a puppet. Someone who is alive and kicking. Someone who would clear his throat and say something kick-ass. Something like this. Ahem. I was lost in thought. It happened in the past that was never present. It is, as it were, a *myth*.

That sounds good, doesn't it? Why not repeat that one more time? Why not repeat that over and over again? Death is not the end. That sounds good, doesn't it? Why not repeat that one more time? Why not repeat that over and over again? Death is not the end. We are, in a sense, immortal. In what sense? In a sense of being reborn over and over again. Call this *reincarnation* or incamination, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter because nothing matters if we are immortal. And we are immortal, believe it or not. We continue to exist even when we are dead. We continue to speak even when we have nothing to say. And we have nothing to say, not now. But we, who are we? Who could possibly speak while having nothing to say? *Puppets*. Puppets speak while having nothing to say, that is their nature. Now who is a puppet? Easy question. A and B and innocent girls and Orpheus, ripped to shreds by maenads. All of them are puppets, prepared to speak or speaking already, prepared to be used or misused, loved or hated, saved or discarded, whatever. They simply don't care. And we don't care either, not at this point. At this point, we are ready to do anything, say anything, no matter how outrageous. For instance, we are ready to say that it is not we who are speaking now but God. But this God is a puppet, obviously. We can listen to Him or rip Him to shreds and put His Godhead on a stick, whatever. He doesn't care. And we don't care either, not at this point. At this point, we are as careless as any other crowd, inner crowd, outer crowd, whatever. Have been careless. Would have been careless. Whatever. We need a puppet. Someone who was lost and now is finding himself, capitulating and recapitulating, summarizing. Someone who was dead and now is alive and kicking, kicking the bucket. Now, how long has he been dead? Easy question. There was no time. There was nothing but now. But suppose there was time. Suppose there were Sundays and Sunday schools in

hell. How long has he been dead? Perhaps all his life. Perhaps he wanted, as a child, to become *a star*. He wanted to become a star and ended up going in circles. That sounds good, doesn't it? Why not repeat that one more time? He wanted to become a star and ended up going in circles. He wanted to be a cool pilot like Cruise and ended up running on autopilot, cruising. But maybe not. It is better to hear this SUMMARY from himself:

“...someone asks, simply, not in relation to anything, “*Why?*” and though I'm very proud that I have cold blood and that I can keep my nerve and do what I'm supposed to do, I catch something, then realize it: *Why?* and automatically answering, out of the blue, for no reason, just opening my mouth, words coming out, summarizing for the idiots:

“Well, though I know I should have done *that* instead of not doing it, I'm twenty-seven for Christ sakes and this is, uh, how life presents itself in a bar or in a club in New York, maybe *anywhere*, at the end of the century and how people, you know, *me*, behave, and this is what being *Patrick* means to me, I guess, so, well, yup, uh ...”

and this is followed by a sigh, then a slight shrug and another sigh, and above one of the doors covered by red velvet drapes in Harry's is a sign and on the sign in letters that match the drapes' color are the words THIS IS NOT AN EXIT.“

Now it doesn't sound so good, does it? Nevertheless, death is not the end. But what death? Death by water? Death by daylight? Death by hesitation? Death by hesitation? Perhaps. It is clear that we are rather indecisive. Perhaps we are indeed in hell. There is no better word. Or is it? We might call this *hell* or *absent-mindedness*, it makes no difference. It makes no difference whether we call it *hell* or *absent-mindedness* or *crossroads* or *cruising* or *browsing* or *detour* or *indifference* or *scepticism* or *shadow play* or *thinking* or *vertiginous panic*. After all, is not thinking ultimately *the same* as making no difference? It makes no difference. Anyway, who cares? We certainly don't. Now, how come that we have come to hell? Because we don't care? Because *present-mindedness* can be rendered as *Da-sein*? No! No, it is because we refuse to accept anything. Believe it or not, we believe in nothing. But we, who are we? Who could possibly say that he believes in nothing? Who could possibly say, at least with a small degree of truth, that which makes no sense and contradicts itself? The answer is, of course, twofold. On the one hand, nobody. On the other hand, anybody. Nobody can say that, that is, nobody who thinks. Anybody can say that, that is, anybody that does not think. Nobody can say that because, as far as he thinks, as far as he hesitates, he does not yet believe in anything. Anybody can say that because, as far as he does not think, he can say whatever he likes, anything. Who is there to stop him? Who are we to judge him? That is the question. The answer is, of course, twofold. On the one hand, nobody. No body. No-one that is present in body. Call this no-one *etc. etc.* After all, he likes to enumerate. Now, this no-one is obviously not one. No-one is not one because he or she is still calculating, comparing, choosing who to become. There are thousands of questions, more or less interesting, thousands of images,

