

Sophia

A Moment in Awe

In the spirit that every great argument worth attention begins with a question, we might ask- why would one hesitate prior to the cathartic experience? First, one may see that this question is fundamentally flawed or limited by an ontological framework of cause and effect. Yet in order to speak to this phenomenon, this question could potentially lead us to the beginning of the more significant question: what is the relationship between this particular hesitation, catharsis and living?

Catharsis has been the subject of conversations including that of psychoanalysis, theatrical intent, art, etc. Even here, a new conception is not employed; this is not a thought that is unfamiliar to us. The cathartic experience in a certain sense is the release of pent-up or repressed emotion. That is to simplify: catharsis is visceral, emotional, somatic; typically speaking, many thinkers refer to the experiences of mourning and orgasm as cathartic in its extreme forms. It is a full experience much like the unleashing of that which has become waste, no longer used for the cultivation of a being, but rather that which has become a weight—that while within, is responded to psychically as well as somatically whether conscious or not. What is released during catharsis is more akin to a part of consciousness—it would simply be too reductive to say that catharsis is merely an emotional exorcise.

In order to maintain sensitivity to the narrowness of thought in relating hesitation and catharsis through cause and effect, we could hardly search for a reason that a hesitation can precede a cathartic experience, even though in many ways this question resonates deeply in this conversation. How can we get at this experience through inquiry and

speaking to it in order to traverse further in mental cultivation? A hesitation, a break or gap in time separating finitude (the passing of experiences and the ultimate transformation of them) and infinity (the opening of possibility wherein occurrences and I share a reciprocal ability to affect one another), can be filled with the sudden recognition of consequence. Hesitation can be the temporal space filled with the resurgence of a presupposition that ultimately causes tension in a person due to its insufficient relationality with one's intentions.

When talking about the moment of hesitation prior to cathartic experiences one must wonder how it is that such an experience is encouraged to remain in the psychic consciousness of the subject. Though the motivation or affectivity of this moment may eternally remain open—and this is something that is to be appreciated about the cathartic experience—one must wonder what comes about from vulnerability as perhaps only one of a myriad of other motivating factors for this hesitation; though we should keep open other forces as influential, it is more interesting to simply take vulnerability as one of the prime examples in which a subject works through, towards, and from the moment of hesita-

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tion preceding—and at times impeding—the experience of catharsis. At this point we must be willing to accept a conception of vulnerability as an open experience that isn't necessarily condensed to a grouping of descriptors of what we perceive as substantiating towards the notion of vulnerability.

When we become aware of the repercussions of cathartic experiences we realize more than is simply apparent; the aesthetic, though often reduced to conversions of beauty, is a perspective that realizes actions, motivations, events, and phenomena as capable of being experienced outside of the individuating forces of certain ontological presuppositions. As such, the cathartic experience and its aesthetic appreciation suggest a movement that is in the very least holographic. The multiplicity of this experience can easily be described by the interaction that comes about with the engagement of an art-piece.

Despite the virtues that we gain through leading an aesthetic life it seems that one issue remains unanswered; through aesthetics we dissolve many of the dividing forces that individuate us, yet, we remain gendered beings—a fact which paints the rest of our experience. Catharsis would seem to be an experience that is indifferent to the gender of the experiencing subject; yet, let us not forget that the Greek origins of the term often referred to a biological purging of the body—the feminine body. This should seem significant under the current discourse as it seems that the idea of vulnerability has served both in relation to catharsis and as a term which colors the entire definition of masculinity and femininity. As such, our minds are already conditioned to think of a canvas as being painted in feminine and masculine colors: the feminine canvas is told to presuppose vulnerability as an informing

stroke while the masculine is told to avoid this stroke and to even attempt to hide if it so makes its mark.

As both women and men we are called to interpret vulnerability in a certain manner—let us be clear—vulnerability is not weakness, though we are called to think of it as such. Moreover, our familiarity with vulnerability may be more distracted than we are willing to acknowledge in that vulnerability is necessitated as a precondition to the cathartic moment.

Perhaps a lapse or maybe a pause, vulnerability is at very least recognition of a very particular relationship to the other and as in all iterations of recognizing the other, there is much to be said about the self. The self which finds itself vulnerable is one that has become conscious of possibilities that would seem to annihilate itself in the eyes of others. As much as there is a putting forth in the world there is as much, if not more, possibilities in the manner in which that which was put forth will be recognized (and hence interpreted). This consciousness is one that should seem familiar in the sense that an existential action (whether physically visible or not) is one that makes a statement when our experience is perceived from an aesthetic perspective—the presence, or lack thereof, of a brush stroke relates an expression by the artist.

Many before us have made it clear that life is a negotiation, a dance, and perhaps even a game. We seek for terms, measurements, and prescriptions as to how best to cultivate a life that is authentically fulfilling. Though we use this as a forum of discussion, it is clear that life does not simply freeze in order for us to contemplate the many trials and negotiations that come about. Yet, our lives become more beautiful creations when we can lead with an acknowledgement of our relations and more so how we relate to

these relations. Yes, we may pause before catharsis—this should not lead us to believe that there is nothing going on in the meanwhile. As frustrating as this might be, we should remember that we shall always stand before a blank canvas with a paint-soaked brush looming overhead. Whether we choose to stroke the canvas or freeze in hesitation, paint will go onto the canvas: we must simply decide whether our canvases shall be a paint blot or a beautiful recognition of the effusive forces.

—ABBEY SWANSON & CHRISTOPHER A. AFLAGUE

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From the Editor: Philosophical Jargon

Recently, I was reading about Pramana Theory and Dharmakirti's conceptual theories for a class. In the introduction the author wrote, "If we are to engage with Dharmakirti's philosophy in a manner that enables us to think through his style of reasoning, then we must learn to speak Dharmakirti's language: that is, we must become skilled in the discourse that makes Dharmakirti's philosophical choices possible." After reading this paragraph, I realized that the same statement could be made about all of philosophy. Whether we are referencing Plato's Forms, or Heidegger's *Dasein*, the field of philosophy has a significant amount of terminology that needs to be learned before the ideas of various philosophers can be understood. This terminology can be very intimidating to people who have little or no exposure to philosophy. Even worse is when a person without a philosophical background encounters a group where the members are fully initiated into the terminology of the field. This encounter

can be overwhelming and can perhaps even scare people away from participating in the group.

I know that when I first started attending Philosophy Student Association meetings I was completely overwhelmed by the discussion taking place around me. I remember how totally lost I was when a former PSA president was having a discussion about the true meaning of ren and li within Confucian and Taoist contexts. I knew next to nothing about these two Chinese words, let alone their contexts and could not participate in the discussion; so, I just sat and listened. Afterwards, I had the opportunity to ask him what ren and li meant. Instead of looking at me as if I were a complete moron, he sat down and in a very straightforward manner explained what the terms meant. It was my first foray into the philosophical terminology often found in the PSA discussions, but instead of intimidating me, I found that I learned from the experience.

Now that I have been with the organization for a couple of years, I am aware of much of the terminology. I now know for example what ontological, epistemo-

logical, and phenomenological mean. I gained this knowledge by reading books, attending lectures, and most importantly, by talking to other members of the Philosophy Student Association. I encourage anyone with any interest in philosophy, or just contemplative thinking in general, to come check out one of the lectures listed in this edition of Sophia. They are from both professional philosophers, educators from related disciplines, and our own students.

Also, please come to some of the PSA's meetings or social engagements. Yes, there will be parts of a conversation that you may not understand, but this is an opportunity to talk to others rather than feeling intimidated. Everyone in the organization is very friendly and most helpful. Again, don't be intimidated by the philosophical terminology. Philosophy is about determining how to live the good life, and this starts by making friends and having fun. While the PSA takes philosophy seriously, we also know how to have a good time. Give us a chance. You may learn a little and have some fun in the process!

—JOHN L. CROW

Make No Citations: An Introduction to Baudrillard

[The following was a lecture given by Ryland Johnson as part of the Osoinach Student Lecture Series. Because it was a lecture, the writing style and format reflects its original presentation. We hope you enjoy the lecture even if you were not able to attend.—Ed.]

Good Afternoon. I want to begin by offering thanks to everyone who is here today, especially to Abbey Swanson and Lauren Maddox, for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I also want to introduce myself to those of you who don't know me: my name is Ryland. I received my BA from Kennesaw just last

year, and it's a great pleasure for me to still be able to speak here. My teachers will each tell you that I'm a difficult man to work with and that it's a wonder that I've not been totally blacklisted. But in spite of all that, I want to thank each of my teachers that are with us today for their patience with me over the years.

I recently gave a paper at the first ever international conference specifically devoted to Baudrillard's thinking and its applications, held a few months ago in Swansea, Wales, on the intersections between Baudrillard's theories concerning the hyperreal, or the virtual, and Confucianism. I was the only undergraduate student—or more appropriately—the only student with *just a BA* giving a talk at that conference—a great honor—

and my talk today, though it does not reflect explicitly what I presented in Wales, is intended to share with my contemporaries here at Kennesaw the knowledge I gained at that conference and in the tenure of my own scholarship following Baudrillard's philosophy. Abbey had the idea a few months back that as we develop as scholars and eventually graduate from Kennesaw, we should make it our business to share the work we do and the knowledge we gain in our time here in the spirit of enriching our academic community.

In that spirit, today, I intend to satisfy two objectives.

Firstly, I want to give a broad overview of the most significant aspects of Baudrillard's work and thought, so that

someone who has never heard the name Jean Baudrillard or the term “hyperreal” might walk out of this room with a understanding of why Baudrillard is an important thinker to know, and what the relevance of hyperreality is, along with a few other things. What is the significance of the concept of excess, or of the remainder, for example? How do Baudrillard’s concepts address the historical, the practice of writing, and so forth? This is to comply with the thrust of Abbey’s idea: give an overview of the thinker that you followed most closely in your undergraduate career—a mini-course, as it were—in my case, the thinker I follow most closely is Baudrillard.

Secondly, I want to address something that I’ve always puzzled about peripherally as I read Baudrillard, but have never addressed directly until now—I want to ask: why it is that there are so few citations in Baudrillard’s writing? There are very, very few references, in fact, at times, none at all. Trust me, I’ve looked—there are less and less as a reader moves through Baudrillard’s work from the beginning to now. For example, in one of his most recent books, *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*, Baudrillard’s text is attached to forty-seven notes across the span of roughly two-hundred pages, all of which are notes on the translation of the text or on the significance of this or that passage written not by Baudrillard himself, but by the text’s translator, Chris Turner. Baudrillard makes no citations at all, but somehow, they end up in the work anyway. It’s an interesting little drama that unfolds in the margins of this dubious little book—which is falling apart—and, today, I want to take a moment to think through what it means for a writer in the humanities to abandon the citation, because, as we find in *The Intelligence of Evil...*, the issue of the absence of there being citations arising in the work on the part of the author of a text, yet still there being citations which come to be as the

imperative of the normative program of the academic press effaces itself upon any text, offers a unique insight into what it is Baudrillard wants us to understand about his most recent work: what it is to have and execute an intelligence of evil, beyond good and evil, amid the hyperreal—what it is to offer the system a gift to which it cannot respond, or—perhaps most significantly—how to hold the system in tension with itself by way of a theoretical subterfuge.

So, in order for us to begin talking about what Baudrillard doesn’t do—citations—I think it makes a lot of sense to begin by talking about one of the things that he does the most in his writing, which is write about an event, or a film, or a book, or some other such object—we’re going to find today that Baudrillard is really hip on the object, moreso by far than he is hip on people, subjects—anyway, Baudrillard will write about some object that comes forth into being within what we might broadly call the ‘cultural theater,’ or, with a lot of skepticism, the ‘real world’ in ‘real-time’ so that he can mark for his reader something that is manifestly virtual, quintessentially hyperreal, and which represents a sort of historical catalogue of the real as it dies and collapses into hyperreality. More fundamentally, Baudrillard’s writing is concerned the ‘situation’ of the hyperreal as it crescendos in this or that instance draws into sharp relief what is characteristic of the larger condition of hyperreality that a person alive today encounters in his or her daily life, that the grand context or narrative of a being in the world in 2007 is a context where the real is annihilated or *preceded* by the continuous white noise of irreconcilable excess in the field of sign value.

If we are to understand Baudrillard’s thinking here and address the theoretical ground for hyperreality, in simple, we can look into two themes, two trajectories of thought which are the pillars that hold hyperreality aloft. The first is Baudrillard’s response to Karl Marx’s

thinking concerning the commodity and value, and, obliquely, Marx’s thinking of the masses, while the second is Baudrillard’s own “Precession of the Simulacra.” Neither of these rather meaty theoretical rubrics are very much fun when you compare them in their dry, Spartan language to the juicy, so called ‘real world’ applications, where these principles are manifest and Baudrillard snaps at them, like when he writes about Disneyland and the ire and sarcasm seem to drip, venomously from the page, but this stuff is really important to understand at least in some part before you get to the fun stuff, otherwise you miss the point that, largely, Baudrillard is playing documentarian for us, he’s pointing out and graphing the cultural climate of the world so we can process it in terms of what he thinks is “really” happening to us—the big criticism of Baudrillard is that he’s always making these depressing, nihilistic claims which deny reality, in short, taking the piss from everything. This isn’t really the case, but it’s easy to see why people see it this way: because they don’t eat their meatloaf. This stuff, the revolt against Marx’s notion of ‘use-value’ and “the precession of simulacra,” is meatloaf. But, like your Mama said, you have to eat your meatloaf if you want dessert.

So bear with me while I go over this stuff. There’s really no way that I can give a complete account of these theories in such a short time—there’s just too much, and honestly, I’m too young in my own scholarship to say that I even get 80% of this stuff. I’m at about 60% when it comes to the theory. But our dessert is going to be a good dessert, and hopefully, every example I give after our little foray into the theory will return in a concrete way to the theory, and this repetition will solidify things for everybody. Mostly, I think that we can get this, because as children of the virtual, this is the life we lead.

We’ll start by talking about Marx, and value. Of course, we can talk about

Baudrillard as being post-Marxist, meaning not “after Marx,” though chronologically, this is of course the case, or that he’s totally done with our buddy Karl and moved on to something else, but that he is still wrestling with Marx about a great many things—even in the space beyond the “end of history,” brought about by the collapse of communism and the subsequent triumph of global capitalism. This “being beyond the end,” “being part of history’s excess, or history’s remainder,” is very important for Baudrillard, an issue that clearly is an echo of the impact of Marxism, but one which we’ll not go into too deeply today. We should simply stress that the influence of Karl Marx’s writing, Marxist thought, and the critique of capitalism in general on Baudrillard cannot be understated. Most of Baudrillard’s early work is directly linked to Marx in one way or another, and represents in one sense Baudrillard’s attempt to correct Marx, to speak the failures of Marx’s theory, particularly in regard to the commodity, to value, to exchange, and particularly in respect to the unfolding of global capitalism and the birth of the consumer, so that in *his* writing one might find a Marxism that addresses the world that exists as it is: bound inexorably to the tenets of the consumerist capitalist paradigm—to, most centrally, the object, or the commodity itself—to the fetish itself—rather than to the subject in economic slavery, in his or her struggle for liberation, and so on. Eventually, Baudrillard ‘quit’ Marxism, but even as he rejects Marx as forcefully as he does in his later work, he remains, like any good post-Marxist according to our pal Jacques Derrida, “haunted” by the recurring specters of Marx, *and*, I think it’s perfectly reasonable to say, with some reservations perhaps, that in thinking the hyper-real today we summon up one of these specters.

So, here we have a little rubric that Baudrillard employs quite a bit in his work, which I’ve modified a little so that

it resonates a little more with our talk today:

1) USE VALUE OR FUNCTIONAL VALUE: the value of an object that arises from that which it does, from what functions it performs. *For example, a car is valuable because it provides transportation; a person is valuable because he/she provides labor power for the capitalist.* (NOTE: ‘Use-value’ is of primary importance for Marx.)

2) EXCHANGE VALUE OR ECONOMIC VALUE: the value of an object that arises as it is exchanged in and against the field of material things. *For example, a gallon of milk is worth 2 loaves of bread, or 3 dozen eggs, or money.*

3) SYMBOLIC VALUE OR PROSTHETIC VALUE: the value of an object as it arises in the symbolic order, as it declares on the part of the subject (or object) to which the object is attached a particular “social” statement—Symbolic Value is the seat of Symbolic Exchange. *For example, a wedding ring is valuable because it symbolizes the exchange of bodies among families.*

4) SIGN VALUE OR HYPER-PROSTHETIC VALUE: the value of an object as it arises in the system of objects, wholly in the field of the sign—Sign Value is the seat of the hyperreal. *For Example, a particular object is valuable because of its brand.*

Now, what is going on here? Use value, exchange value, symbolic value, sign value. All of these categories deal with objects, or with the product, the commodity. At first glance, you might say, “OK. This is a representation of the *essential qualities* the object has in its being,” which answer questions like, “What does this object do, or mean?” In this way, we see a representation of the object that is not unlike the representation a chemist would make concerning the qualities of an element: “it’s radioactive; it’s an alkaline; at room tempera-

ture, it’s a solid or a liquid or a gas;” whatever. You could say that every object has these four attributes which determine its ‘real’ value for people, for subjects. But, unfortunately, it’s not quite as simple as that, because each category, each way by which value is derived, changes the value that is derived from the object’s being from the perspective of the other categories. For Marx, to put things grossly, this is what really needs to be puzzled out—where value comes from—because Marx is interested in production and the product, and how it comes to be worth so much of our money, ultimately a question which comes down to the subject, to his or her labor power, the time he or she spends working for the capitalist, exploited as part of the working proletariat. For Marx, ‘use-value’ becomes the most important factor concerning the product, because use value for Marx is the connection we have to the real of the product, to the product’s own material reality, which is lost as exchange value arises, as money, capital, becomes the floating standard by which all material life is measured—I should clarify: these are Baudrillard’s categories, not Karl Marx’s, but they come to Baudrillard in the way of lineage from Marx’s analysis of use value and exchange value, by way of Marx’s analysis of the commodity against capital, which most importantly, established a discourse concerned with the fact that there is indeed a problem with commodities, with products, and with material reality against the “universal equivalent,” or the money standard: at bottom, that there is a problem with the total power of capital, in the face of which every means to value something in its materiality collapses, and that this problem alters the subject’s connection with reality. Along similar lines, for Marx, the “fetishism of the commodity,” one of Marx’s most important concepts, which describes the magical means by which a product appears in the marketplace, so that its origin (in Cambodia or wherever, for Marx, probably, in the fac-

tory assembly line down the way)... completely disappear, and, secondly, the magical properties which are bestowed upon the person who buys the product, sexiness from leather pants or red pumps, from a sweet spot coat and cool rims like I got, and so forth... For Marx, “the fetishism of the commodity” is an essential quality of the product—Marx doesn’t completely understand out how this effect comes to be or where it comes from—yet, fundamentally, Marx understands that it reflects at first the subject, who desires the product, who wants those magic qualities.

Of course, this all well and good. Like I said, these are very important and fundamental concepts, central to the progression of thinking concerning value, capital and the commodity, but for Baudrillard, who, as we said, prefers to situate himself theoretically alongside the object, rather than alongside the subject, this analysis leaves much to be desired in that it fails to realize the “seductive” relationship between the object and the subject after the advent of the consumer, where it is not the consumer that desires the object—the consumer must consume, consumption is its own functional value, its own use value and thereby, the consumer desires no object, it only radiates its use value—it is the object that desires the consumer, that “seduces” the consumer. We all know that the commodity is always in search of a market. Whenever a new object arises, the “masses” are probed and tested so that, on behalf of the object, there might be found a place in the socio-economic strata or environment where the object will thrive, like any animal in a wildlife preserve, or in the lab. On behalf of the object, an advertising campaign is fashioned so the object, all dolled up for its demographic, might appear *irresistible*, and so on and on. This is all, of course, simulation of the third order—but here it is of the utmost importance to stress that it is simulation on the part of objects, not subjects; for objects, not for

subjects. Baudrillard, just as he has abandoned the citation, seemingly has abandoned the subject. As a brief side note, Baudrillard spends a lot of time talking about animal rights and experimentation on animals. I suspect that this is, in part, the reasoning behind that—how we treat animals is equivocal to our own situation against the hyperreal.

For Baudrillard, these four categories reflect in large part a temporal progression: what has happened to the object as the marketplace has globalized, as the subject has ceased to be a citizen, or a proletarian, and has instead become a consumer. Largely then, how these four categories correspond to the object becomes a question of *emphasis*. Of course, an object has a use-value, an exchange value, a symbolic value. However, increasingly, these categories are eroded from the real as meaningful positions as always it is sign value that advances and multiplies. Sign value, the play of the interactions between objects in terms of only sign values, has become the preeminent mode of exchange, and further, arises as a means by which any reality of meaning is replaced by the signs of meaning—hyperreality. In the hyperreal, nothing remains except sign value. Put another way, there is no meaning anymore, only the excess of meaning, only the remainder of meaning, meaning beyond its own end, and as Baudrillard rightly points out, there is no reversible logic in the remainder, no trace, no other—light / dark, good / evil, happy / sad, remainder/... There is no “other side” to this term, and meaning, following so many thinkers, functions always with regard to what is absent, to what is “other,” to what is “out.” Put still another way, there is only meaning that is stabilized by the integral logic of simulation. A quick example: a car isn’t just a car anymore; any salesman will tell you this, and I should know because my dad sells cars: “this isn’t *just a car*.” It’s an ideal; and freedom; and the American dream; and life in the fast lane, and an advertising

campaign; and your position on global warming; and what you do for a living; and how many future-consumers you’re growing; and how you vote; and hot, combustible sex flowing from the tailpipe; and the winding road which is a state of mind—excess, seduction. Everything except four seats and a steering wheel, everything but a *symbol*, because any symbolic value is engulfed in a flood of signs which only indicate symbols. Baudrillard writes that there is no longer any information being circulated that has not gone over wholly to the operational logic of advertising. Think CNN.com, FOX News, MSNBC: they’re all *networks*, part of the same corporations that own McDonald’s and BurgerKing. Think Wikipedia: knowledge solely by consensus. Think “truthiness,” Steven Colbert’s contribution to contemporary philosophical jargon. Think “New Mega, Ultra Sugar-Berry Cola by Pepsi, with Flavor Crystals:” a flavor that references a “berry” that never existed in the real world—but, this is the important part, for which the existence or non-existence of such a berry as the Mega, Ultra Sugar-Berry doesn’t matter at all, since the “flavor,” of the soft-drink if we can even say it’s a flavor, is sustained solely by the signs of its existence—It’s new, and therefore it’s delicious, it’s “seductive.” Any value that can be rendered can only be value simulated in the play of pure signs, all of which no longer reference any real term—this, in the ad for the car you drive, is not the road you drive on—signs only reference other pure signs, each of which only indicate an idyllic reality that was never here to begin with: hyperreality, everywhere around.

The Precession of the Simulacra. More Meatloaf! I want to stress that this is hard to grasp intellectually, because there is a fundamental uncertainty that goes hand in hand with simulation because it represents the scrambling of the reality principle—you can never really know when you’re simulating, or when

you encounter the simulacra. It's something that you feel, or half-feel, and therefore is philosophically infuriating, because philosophy wants to *know*. Mike Gane, one of the preeminent Baudrillard scholars in the world today, remarked to me that he still doesn't totally get the precession of the simulacra. It's blurry, but I'm going to do my very best here to tell a good story.

The simulacrum in its pure form, defined, corresponds to the copy of the copy which comes to precede the original, which no longer harbors a requirement for the original to be. It is not, I repeat, not an illusion, nor is it a denial of reality, because the simulacra in pure form no longer requires any reality whatsoever, and therefore doesn't care whether or not there are something is an illusion or not. The Precession of the Simulacra. Just as it is with the problem of value, here lies a theoretical means to address our changing relationship with the reality principle as we are no longer subjects, but consumers in the field of the objective, in and against the viral multiplication of sign value.

1. The Age of the Original, The Golden Age of the Sign.
2. The Era of the Counterfeit. Simulacra of the second order.
3. The Emergence of the Copy, the Mechanical Reproduction of the Real—the *Orgy*, liberation in every direction based on the standard of equivalence. Third order simulacra.
4. The Time after the End, after the *Orgy*, wherein the Real is preceded by the copy of the copy. Pure simulacra.

There is a little bit of a play of words in "the Precession," in the closeness of the word "precession" to "procession." Of course, we can't say if this is intentional, but it helps me to think through this, a little mnemonic device. Like the table we looked at a few minutes ago, in part, the precession attempts to represent the simulacra as it progresses toward its pure form. Also, it's important to remember

that there are degrees between each of these stages, like the liberation in every direction we experience with "the *Orgy*" is the extreme end of third order simulacra before pure simulacra, stage four. To confuse the issue further, each of these stages can be simultaneous.

Let's work through the stages. The Age of the Original, is immediately ironic, because we cannot with any real certainty say whether or not there was ever such an age. We can suppose that it would correspond to an idyllic time when everything was handcrafted, perfect, original, classical, boring. The reality principle was never thrown into question no matter which of the four categories of value you used, and if you spoke of reality, there was no doubt of what reality you were talking about. There was probably no such thing as capital, we have no way of knowing.

Second-stage: The Era of the Counterfeit. Here is where Baudrillard famously makes use of the quote, "welcome to the desert of the real," and alludes to Borges' fable of the map and the territory, where cartographers create a map of the world which covers the real landscape of the earth. The reality principle is alive and working, and functions as the real and the counterfeit clearly reference each other. The map is clearly not the real, and vice-versa, even though the map extends itself over the whole of the real. All, however, is not well in Denmark, the real has contracted the virtual sickness—there is the hint of a specter to come, trepidation concerning the fate reality principle, where, in Borges' fable, in the desert, *on the borders of the real*, the map frays and the shifting sands flow over the map, and there is a subtle blurring of distinctions, a innocent confusion concerning what constitutes the counterfeit and what constitutes the real, of what, in actual fact divides the two from being each other.

Third-stage: The Emergence of the Copy, proper. America. The first gun on the assembly line. High Capitalism.

Imperialism. Colonial Rule. A little England is transplanted in India, in China, elsewhere. The real is under assault; it is dying, passing away into obscurity beneath the artifice of the now already pervasive sign in its pure form. If we think of Marx, he is somewhere in this stage, maybe between this stage and the last—he recognizes that there's something wrong, but his discourse fails because he still thinks he's living in the golden age of the sign, which is, of course, long gone. In order to stabilize itself, to resuscitate itself, the real invests itself wholeheartedly in the sequestering of its objects and the mass-production of the same, in its own salvation. This, unfortunately—or with *an intelligence of evil*, fortunately—only accelerates the viral multiplication of sign. Communism emerges to save the subject. Industry and capitalists up the ante to save capital and capitalism. More mass-production, more capitalism, more order, more control. The real is under attack; it needs to be stabilized. Fascism. Atrocity. Holocaust. We harness the power of the atom and make the greatest mind on the planet responsible for the hydrogen bomb. The baby boom. Deterrence. Disneyland sprouts in LA like a weed, preserves the great, American frontier by making a copy of the great, American frontier, preserves the future in tomorrowland. Everybody is in on the joke: Disneyland isn't a copy of America, it is America. Vietnam. The end of Vietnam. The Vietnam memorial. Communism collapses, because there is no longer any hope of revolution, because the masses never existed in the first place. Capitalism wins. The end of history. Walt Disney puts himself on ice. We are becoming consumers, we are made into consumers, we are giving birth to future consumers. Everywhere there is a sense that we are at last coming to be liberated from the real, from subjectivity, from desire, as it is evidenced by the pervasiveness of the copy everywhere—it's the *Orgy*, wear a 'power tie'—soon we will

be totally, wholly virtual. Our kids are virtual. The door is open for...

The fourth-stage. Pure Simulacra. "What are you doing after the Orgy?" I

don't want to be free anymore. Let's make a porno. Let's make up a war. Let's do anything but deal with what is become of us since the first gun on the

assembly line.

—RYLAND JOHNSON

Announcing the upcoming 5th Annual North Georgia Student Philosophy Conference, April 6-7, 2007

As Conference Chair, it is my pleasure to announce the upcoming 5th Annual North Georgia Student Philosophy Conference (NGSPC) presented by the Philosophy Student Association. In recent years, the NGSPC has become one of the most well established student-run conferences in the region.

This year, our theme is *QUINTA ESSENTIA*. Aristotle believed that the universe beyond the moon (in a geocentric model) was perfect and therefore must be made of a perfect substance. The Latin term for this substance is *Quinta Essentia*. Since Aristotle's time, scholars have attributed several different meanings to *Quinta Essentia*, or the fifth element. In Ancient Alchemy, the fifth element referred to the most perfect part of a chemical substance that might be extracted using chemical methods. At times this element was even synonymous with the Stone of the Wise. It is in this spirit of extracting perfection and wisdom that we invite you to the 5th NGSPC.

The purpose of the NGSPC is to offer an important academic experience to university students—the chance to present at an academic conference. Participants have the opportunity to do research in a philosophical area of his or her choice and present their thoughts and ideas with their peers. Even more importantly for current and potential graduate students, the NGSPC provides

the possibility to be published in the selected proceedings. The NGSPC provides a vehicle for philosophical dialogue among both students and professors.

We are looking forward to this positive and thought-provoking environment again this year. Submission is open to all students enrolled for undergraduate or graduate study at an accredited institution of higher education during the 2006-2007 academic year. *Our current deadline for abstracts is March 5, 2007.*

Over the years, the NGSPC has invited such distinguished scholars as Henry Rosemont Jr., Roger T. Ames, Graham Parkes, and David Krell to be our keynote speakers. This year, we are delighted to have Thomas Kasulis as our keynote speaker. Dr. Kasulis is a professor of Comparative Studies at Ohio State University. His interests and research lie in Comparative Religion, Japanese Religious Thought, and Western Philosophy. He is author of many books, including the acclaimed *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (University of Hawai'i Press), and *Shinto: The Way Home* (University of Hawai'i Press).

To find out more about this year's conference, please visit:

www.kennesaw.edu/clubs/psa/ngspc

or email me at:

ngspc.psa@gmail.com

It is my hope that many KSU students will attend, if not participate, in this year's conference. This is the type of experience that no serious student should be without.

—JASON BICE

Spring 2007 Mike Ryan Lecture Series

February 7, 2007 at 12:30 in Social Science 1021

Our Inner Ape: Human Nature as Seen by a Primatologist

Frans de Waal, Yerkes National Primate Research Center at Emory University

March 15, 2007 in at 12:30 in Social Science 1021

Modernity, Identity, Politics, and Justice in the History of Ethiopia

Saheed A. Adejumobi, Seattle University

March 28, 2007 at 12:30 in Social Science 1021

The Eloquent Stillness of Stone

Graham Parkes, University of Hawai'i at Manoa

April 5, 2007 at 12:30 in University Rooms CDE (Student Center)

TBA

Thomas Kasulis, Ohio State University

April 9, 2007 at 12:30 in the Leadership Room (Student Center)

Sense of the Earth: Place in Nietzsche's Zarathustra and Indigenous Visions of the World

John A. Sweeney, University of Hawai'i at Manoa

April 19, 2007 at 12:30 in Social Science 1021

Topic: *The Political Legacies of Antigone*

Tina Chanter, DePaul University

Spring 2007 Osoinach Student Lecture Series

February 1, 2007 at 12:30 in Room BB271 — Ryland Johnson

February 13, 2007 at 6:30 in Room BB271 — Justin Downey

February 28, 2007 at 12:30 in Room BB271 — John Crow

March 21, 2007 at 12:30 in Room BB271 — Abbey Swanson