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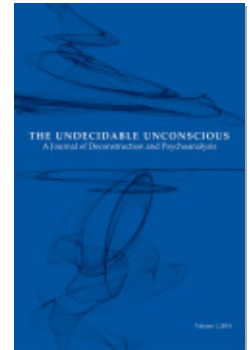
The Signature of the Transcendental Imagination

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The Signature of the Transcendental Imagination

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. . . another reading of the transcendental imagination (from the
Kantbuch and beyond . . .)

—Derrida, “Telepathy”

Fetish, Thing, Signature

My title is a slight deformation of an expression of Kant’s. My purpose is to explain the deformation in order to pursue my preoccupation with Freud’s generalization of fetishism at the end of his life. I have long contended that when Freud makes fetishism, disavowal, and ego splitting the models for all compromise formation, a sea change begins in the basic conception of unconscious processes. There are many angles from which to elaborate this change. In the past, I have concentrated on a revision of the theory of fetishism in relation to the question of what “reality” means for psychoanalysis (Bass 2000). I have tried to show that the contradictions in Freud’s analysis of fetishism as the disavowal of the “reality of castration” can be resolved with a conception of unconscious registration of unconscious aspects of reality—by which I mean differentiating processes. I have also attempted to show how this conception is essential to understanding the clinical problem of resistance to interpretation, and then to rethinking interpretation itself (Bass 2006).

But there is a larger context for these questions: the entire history of European discourse about fetishism. This is a long, com-

plex story, spanning at least five centuries. Paul-Laurent Assoun, speaking of the “strange . . . destiny” of the concept of fetishism, says that it “confront[s] each discourse with *its* object, organizing a chain reflection on the functions of alterity and of the subject” (1994, 121–23; my translation). This is why discourse on fetishism as a specific phenomenon almost inevitably tends to generalize fetishism. Freud does not know that his generalization of fetishism is part of a long history of such generalizations. Is there a way to understand this historical pattern?

Today, I want to approach that question from one particular angle. The history of discourse on fetishism is mostly concerned with trying to understand how an ordinary thing can be idealized, either as an object of religious veneration, as in the original anthropological-religious-philosophical accounts, or as an idealized object of economic exchange, as in Marx, or as an idealized sexual object, as in Freud. The universality of *fetishism*, attested to from the introduction of the term in 1756, could have been an important lever for Freud’s generalization of it, because he always sought to base his theory of mind on universal experience, for example, that we all dream. But then, what is mind if there is a universal trend toward idealization of things? This question is the point of necessary intersection between psychoanalysis and the general question of the thing. I will try to demonstrate that it is also the point of necessary intersection between psychoanalysis and a deconstructive understanding of the thing.

I am taking my cue from a question Derrida asks himself toward the end of *Signeponge*: what if “all this”—that is, his text on Ponge—were a scientific reading of the effect of fetishism so central to Marx and Freud (Derrida 1994, 107)? A strange question: how could the reading of a poet be a *scientific* reading of Marx and Freud? The answer is that the reading of Ponge and his signature is itself a rethinking of the thing. To reconfigure my question: what is a scientific reading of the effect of fetishism in relation to the general questions of signature and thing?

A quick review of Derrida on signature and thing. He distinguishes three “modalities” of the signature. (1) Not only signing

one's name, but authenticating that one is signing, as when a signature has to be notarized. (2) What he calls the "confused and banal metaphor" of the first sense: the idiomatic marks left in a work of art by its creator, that is, the creator's idiomatic style, which has nothing to do with his name itself. (3) The most complicated sense:

[O]ne can call a general signature, or signature of the signature, the fold of the *mise en abyme* when, contrary to the usual sense of signature, writing designates itself, describes and inscribes itself as act (action and archive), signs itself before the end by giving something to be read: I refer to myself, this is writing, I am writing, which excludes *nothing* because, when the *mise en abyme* succeeds, it is the other, the thing as other who signs. (1984, 55)

This is my theme: the signature of the thing as other when the self-designation of self-designation, the *mise en abyme*—the self-reflection of the mirror in the mirror—succeeds. (This implies a possible failure, a question to which I will return.) How does the thing as other emerge from the self-reflexivity of the *mise en abyme*? One might think the opposite: self-reflexivity excludes the other. To explain one must recall that for Derrida, the signature combines the paradoxical qualities of uniqueness and iterability: it has to be singular, it has to be repeatable. And to sign one's name is to signify oneself in the insignificant—beyond sense and concept. What he calls "the law of thing" is "singularity and difference" (1984, 15); each thing is this thing. This is the ancient theme of *haecceitas*: the uniqueness of each thing, which cannot be grasped in any concept. The question about the relation between the thing and the signature (19) can be understood as a re-edition of the ancient question of the non-conceptual singularity of each thing, which Derrida integrates with the question of repetition: the uniqueness and *iterability* of the signature, the singularity and difference of the thing. The signature must repeat itself *and* must be singular, different, other. The thing as other emerges from generalized self-reflexivity.

In *Signeponge* this is the relation between the name of the poet, Ponge, and the sponge (*éponge*): the singularity and difference of a sponge; the uniqueness, iterability, and insignificance of the name Ponge. The *éponge*, a singular thing, each time designates Ponge in his texts. This relation between a thing and a signature is the “contamination of the proper name (*nom propre*) in contact with a common noun (*nom commun*)” (1984, 73): a self-reflexive, *mise en abyme* effect. Derrida says that the sponge itself “overflows with activity,” but an “entirely receptive activity” (81).

Receptive activity is the question of the transcendental imagination in Heidegger’s reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Heidegger holds that the transcendental imagination is what Kant called the “unknown common root” of *passive* sensory reception and *active* concept formation. Derrida knows this; there is a long history in his work of references to this idea. Another version of my basic theme here: how is what Derrida calls a scientific reading of fetishism, the relation of signature and thing, also a question of receptive activity? Strangely enough, there is an analogy between the signature and the transcendental imagination in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Eventually, I will relate all this to the general question of idealization and to Freud on receptive activity.

Transcendental Schematism, Transcendental Imagination, Time, Signature

The analogy to the signature is in the chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR) about which Kant remarked that “even Herr Beck cannot find his way within” (Heidegger 1990, 80), the chapter on the transcendental schematism. I must attempt a brief exposition. Kant is asking how it is possible for categories—call them the general organizing principles of thought—to be applied to appearances. In other words, how is it possible to get beyond *haecceitas*? How do I know that *this* animal is a dog or that *this* shape is a triangle (Kant’s examples)? Something has to mediate between the category and the appearance, so that the category can be applied to the appearance. This mediating something

must share the attributes of both: like the category, it must be pure in Kant's sense, that is, non-empirical; like the appearance it must be sensory, that is, empirical. Kant calls such a mediating representation a transcendental schematism (1998, 272).

Based on everything that precedes this point, Kant says that this mediating representation is time. Why? As that which *connects all* representations, time a priori, that is, purely, non-empirically, contains their multiplicity, their manifold. Time itself—and this is crucial for everything that follows, in Kant, Heidegger, Derrida, and Freud—is what we sense, what we intuit, a priori—purely, non-empirically. One can rattle off Kant's idea that time and space are the a priori organizers of sensory perception, but to understand what this means is more difficult. It means that empirical, sensory perception is made possible by non-empirical forms of sensory perception. This is why the *CPR* begins with a transcendental aesthetic—in the Greek sense of *aisthesis*, sensory perception. Note the paradox: time and space are both sensory, intuitable, *and* non-sensory, transcendental. They are the non-sensuous sensuous—a conception important for both Heidegger and Derrida.

It is just as easy to rattle off that for Kant time is the pure internal sense and space the pure external sense. What this means is that insofar as I think, or in Kant's terms, I judge, that is, insofar as my mind is capable of understanding things it has not created, I have to synthesize external things I sense in space with my internal, temporal sense of my mind. Ultimately, this is the question of the possibility of a priori synthetic judgments, the very possibility of integrating what I sense with what I conceptualize, the central question of the *CPR*. Without the transcendental schematism there could be no a priori synthetic judgments, because the schematism *is* the mediating, synthetic representation between category and appearance. This is why time is the possibility of the transcendental schematism. As pure intuition, the pure internal sense, time connects the multiplicity, the manifold of *all* representations. And as pure intuition, time is "homogeneous" with appearance, since it is contained in every empirical repre-

sentation. Time shares properties with both category and appearance. "By means of the transcendental time determination" (Kant 1998, 272) we can know that *all* of certain animals are dogs, *all* of certain shapes are triangles,

Like Herr Beck, I am not sure I understand exactly what this means. But it is essential for my purposes, because Heidegger will find in it the lever for his reading of the transcendental imagination, and because it produces the analogy with the signature. Pressing on with Kant: to connect category and appearance is to synthesize them. The faculty of mind responsible for synthesis itself is imagination. Thus Kant says that as synthetic, the schematism is a product of the imagination. As the synthetic unity in sensibility (all these are dogs, all these are triangles), the schematism obviously cannot be a particular image. For example, five points are an image of the number five. But number itself is a way to represent "a multitude with a concept." Since it is an overall question of the application of category to appearance, the schematism is the "general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image" (1998, 273).

One must understand imagination itself in the Kantian sense: the mediating faculty between sensory perception and concept formation. When Kant says that imagination provides a concept with its image, the image clearly cannot be an empirical one, as when I picture a dog, a triangle, five points. The image of a concept is, then, an image that is not an image. Recall that time itself is a transcendental form of sensory perception, the non-sensuous sensuous. The non-image image is a form of the non-sensuous sensuous. Hence the schematism is a transcendental function of time and imagination, which no particular image can be.

This leads to the fundamental problem, and a famous sentence: "This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their mere form is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty" (1998, 273). This sentence is akin to others in which Kant refers to pure, a priori imagination as "blind but indispensable," something of which

“we are seldom even conscious” (211). It is an art in the nature of our souls, but an art we can only infer, because its very nature is to be hidden, unavailable to consciousness. (A quick remark: when Kant says that we are not conscious of a priori imagination, although he does not intend anything like a Freudian unconscious, he is talking about something akin to my central problem: non-conscious relation to non-conscious aspects of reality: time as the non-sensuous sensuous.)

Kant is reticent about his own attempt to “divine from nature” and “unveil” the workings of the “hidden art.” He begins the next sentence: “We can say only this much . . .” (“So viel können wir nur sagen . . .”). The rest of the sentence contains the analogy with the signature: “We can say only this much: the image is a product of the empirical faculty of productive imagination, the schema of sensible concepts (such as figures in space) is a product and as it were a *monogram* (*Monogramm* [emphasis added]) of pure a priori imagination” (1998, 273–74).

Paraphrase: Because it is so difficult to divine, to unveil, the hidden art that produces the schematism, we must cautiously indicate whatever we can. An image of a dog or a triangle is empirical. It is not a direct perception of a dog or a triangle, but something in our minds, an abstraction from a perception; thus, it must be produced by empirical imagination. The schemata that produce the rules that tell us these are dogs, these are triangles, which mediate between appearance and category, must also be products of imagination, but are not images in the usual sense. If they are produced by imagination, it must be by pure, a priori, transcendental imagination. Any particular image, say of a triangle, has to be connected to the concept triangle, but it does not coincide with this concept. Rather it *designates* the possibility of mediating between image and concept; it designates the working of the faculty of mediation, pure a priori imagination. Schemata, then, designate, bear the mark, the monogram, the signature of the transcendental imagination. We can say something about the possibility of the hidden art that produces schemata, even if it is not much, because the transcendental imagination designates itself, leaves the stamp of its initials, its monogram, on them.

We already know the name monogrammed on the transcendental schematism: time. Time mediates between category and appearance because it has attributes of both. Kant makes the point again: "The schema of a pure concept of the understanding . . . is something that can never be brought to an image at all, but is rather only the pure synthesis . . . which the category expresses, and is a transcendental product of the imagination, which concerns the determination of the inner sense in general, in accordance with conditions of its form (time) in regard to all representations" (1998, 274). A schematism is a rule which cannot be an image. It is made possible by time. Therefore it has to be congruent with what Kant calls the rules of time.

For Kant the rules of time are derived from the "categories": quantity, quality, modality, relation; how much, in what way, by what means, how connected. Schemata are "nothing but a priori time determinations in accordance with rules, and these concern, according to the order of the categories, the time-series, the content of time, the order of time, and finally the sum total of time in regard to all possible objects" (1998, 274). The monogram, the signature, of the transcendental imagination, is time and its rules. Without its stamp we could not distinguish dog from cat, triangle from square; we would not know what a number is. The transcendental imagination hides in the depths of the soul, but it leaves the mark of its name on our ability to know dogs and triangles in general. What kind of name is time, and how can it leave a signature?

Transcendental Imagination, Auto-Affection, Time

Heidegger's analysis of the transcendental schematism is central to *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (KPM). Heidegger pays no attention to the monogram. Why should he? It is a manner of speech, Kant says "as it were, *gleichsam*," uses "monogram" as an analogy to how the transcendental imagination designates itself. But Heidegger does answer the question I have just asked about the signature of time, without using the word. He would have to

do so, given that his reading of the *Critique* is organized around time and the transcendental imagination. If my exposition of Kant was brief, the exposition of Heidegger on time and the transcendental imagination can only offer main points, without detailed explanation. This will be philosophically impoverished—but we do not have the necessary weeks to go over this material.

KPM is the immediate successor to *Being and Time*. I have to assume the latter's project of "destroying," of deconstructing (*Aufbau*), metaphysics by bringing the forgotten question of being (*Sein*) back from its millennial forgetting via the rethinking of time. This is accomplished by challenging the unquestioned assumption that time itself is presence—past presence, present presence, or future presence. To give only the headline: time is *ek-stasis*, the standing out from itself that opens past, present, and future to each other. As such, time cannot fundamentally reside either inside or outside, in the subject (as for Kant) or in the external, objective world. It cannot simply act or be acted upon, that is, it is not simply active or passive. Rather, time temporalizes itself.

KPM extends this rethinking of time through its controversial reading of the relation of the transcendental imagination to time. I am taking this reading on its own merits, because Heidegger will understand the transcendental imagination as receptive activity, the receptive activity Derrida finds in the "sponge," which itself implies the general signature of the thing as other. And which in turn is a scientific reading of the effect of fetishism.

Heidegger: If Kant's central question is the possibility of a priori synthetic judgments, and if synthesis is "pure relation to . . ." (Heidegger 1990, 10), then Kant's epistemological question—how does man, a finite creature, have knowledge of beings he has not created?—becomes a fundamental ontological question: how is it possible to have a relation to beings at all? Or: what grounds transcendence, taken by Heidegger to mean the transition to beings themselves. Very roughly put: what grounds the relation of mind and thing? (Again: the general question embedded in fetishism, the relation of mind and thing.)

The relation of mind and thing is for Kant the question of fi-

nite human reason, while for Heidegger it is the question of finitude and transcendence (transition to the being). At the outset, in the transcendental aesthetic, Kant says that however knowledge “may relate to objects, *intuition* is that through which it relates immediately to them, and upon which all thought as a means is directed.” Heidegger says that this point “must be hammered in, so to speak: knowing is primarily intuiting” (1990, 10). Why must this point be hammered in? Because it opens the possibility of Heidegger’s ontological reading of the *CPR*. How does it do so? By means of the analysis of time as pure, finite intuition.

Only God’s intuition is infinite; God can create things out of infinite intuition. Man’s finite intuition allows him to have a relation to, to receive, something he has not created. Finite intuition allows the object “to be given,” as Heidegger says, or allows the mind to be affected by it, as Kant says (1998, 18). Usually we take the way mind is affected by things as perception via the sense organs. Inflecting Kant, Heidegger says that as a transcendental question, pure finite intuition is a question of non-empirical sensory perception—hence, the necessity of a transcendental aesthetic. He makes a decisive remark: “With this, Kant for the first time attains a concept of sensibility which is ontological rather than sensualistic. Accordingly, if empirically affective intuition of beings does not need to coincide with ‘sensibility,’ then the possibility of a nonempirical sensibility remains essentially open” (1990, 19). Any possible relatedness of mind and thing requires the non-sensuous sensuous.

KPM is a detective story. The mystery, left to posterity by Kant, is the following. Kant says: “Our knowledge cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind: the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second is the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts)” (1988, 193). Kant specifies that “we have no other sources of cognition besides these two” (i.e., sensibility and understanding [385]). But, Heidegger notes, Kant is also clear that “Only from their unification can cognition arise” (1998, 194). What about this unification? Kant

says, and here is the mystery: “there are two stems of human cognition, which may *perhaps* arise from a common, but to us *unknown* root” (152; my emphases).

For Heidegger time as the pure internal sense opens the subject to any possible relation to a being. It is also internal to the concept—categories are ontological predicates, time has ontological priority. Synthesis itself is the common denominator between perception and concept: “This synthesis is neither a matter of intuition nor of thinking. Mediating between both, so to speak, it is related to both. . . . [The famous formulation again]: ‘Synthesis in general is, as we shall subsequently see, the mere effect of the imagination, a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious even once [Kant 1998, 211].’” (Heidegger 1990, 44). The rest of *KPM* follows the consequences of this passage. Synthesis itself must be “unveiled” as the “ground for ontological knowledge”; synthesis has to do with time as non-empirical intuition; synthesis is a product of the blind, non-conscious, but indispensable faculty of the soul—imagination.

Heidegger importantly inflects time as the opening to any possible relation to a being. He calls it “turning toward”:

Finite creatures *need* [emphasis added] this basic faculty of turning toward. . . . In this original turning-toward, the finite creature first allows a space for play [*Spielraum*] within which something can correspond to it. To hold oneself in advance in such a play-space, to form it originally, is none other than the transcendence which *marks* [emphasis added] all finite comportment to being. (1990, 50)

Spielraum: without a certain play I cannot encounter anything at all. I think Heidegger introduces play here because he is approaching the transcendental schematism governed by the *rules* of time. Rules master, rules control. On the next page Heidegger says that “we are *not in control* [emphasis added] of the Being-at-hand of the being” (51). This, again, is finitude: if we do not create, then we do not control beings. And yet we *need*, we are de-

pendent upon, beings. Our access to what we need that we do not control, then, has to be in a non-rule-bound space, a play space.

What to do with the Kantian rule then? Recall its essence: "it represents a connectedness which in advance rules all possible gathering together." Pure concepts of the understanding, then, have "ruling unities as their unique content. They serve not only as rule, but also, as pure representings, they give first of all and in advance something rulable" (1998, 52).

Is the giving of the rulable, the being that stands against, itself rulable? Transcendental intuition, the pure relation to . . . , the opening of the space of standing against . . . , is not conceptual, is not a rule: it is a play space. The play space that "reveals precisely the most original *neediness* [emphasis added] of the finite creature" (1998, 52), the need for the being which we cannot control. (Another quick remark in lieu of a long exposition: the need for the being we cannot control is a fundamental psychoanalytic question.) In other words, there are indeed rules that allow us to know these are dogs, not cats. But as the opening to anything at all, time makes possible the rule, but is not—contra Kant—a rule: it is a play *space*. Note that Heidegger spatializes time. If the occupation of space is the basic sense of every empirical *thing*, then the non-empirical space of time, the play space, extends the conception of the non-sensuous sensuous. Time is the non-sensuous sensuous thing. If the signature of the transcendental imagination is time, then we can already say, in Derrida's sense, time itself is the other thing which signs, leaving *its* signature on the transcendental imagination. Or rather, one signature, time as the self-designation of the transcendental imagination, is the other signature, the time which in designating itself constitutes the transcendental imagination.

Clearly, I am using Derrida's third sense of signature here: the writing that designates itself, that says, I am writing, the writing in which the thing as other signs. Let us recall what might make this juxtaposition unjustifiable. The question of the signature as the question of the thing is for Derrida the question of the thing as singular and different. For Kant this could only be a

non-conceptual, empirical thing. Heidegger, however, introduces what he calls the “pure look,” the non-empirical seeing of the relation to the thing. He does so in a long passage which would deserve a very close analysis. I will only point to how he designates the “pure look.” He examines the status of a photograph of a death mask. Such a photograph is not only a copy of a copy, it is a copy of a copy that indicates that it is a copy. It can also be read as a statement about the copy as a haunting image: what had been alive is now remarkable as the thing it always was (1990, 66).

What kind of thing is the haunting image of a thing that says something general about the image? It does refer to itself. We already know from *Being and Time* that time temporalizes itself, and from *KPM* that the more internal time is to the subject, the more it opens the subject to the being. Derrida: the *mise en abyme* as general signature of the other thing. The photograph that says I am a copy of a copy, and particularly one that says I am a copy of a haunting likeness of a thing, does imply the *mise en abyme* effect. Does it overflow with receptive activity (like a sponge) as it refers to itself referring to a likeness?

Back to Heidegger on the “pure look.” The transcendental schematism, the mediating synthesis of appearance and category, is itself pure, non-empirical, the look of the look. A pure look is a pure intuition. The pure intuition which opens the subject to the being is time. We have already seen Kant say: “The pure image . . . of all objects of sense in general . . . is time” (Heidegger 1990, 73). What is time for Kant? Heidegger reminds us: it is the pure succession of now points that is always there, permanence. Time is “immutable and lasting.” But since every now always becomes another now, time is also the “image of pure change in what lasts” (76). Pure permanence, pure change as the pure internal sense that opens the subject to the thing.

To understand what comes next one must recall that in *Being and Time* Heidegger had already said that time temporalizes itself. In a similar vein, he now says that time is “pure self-giving” (“rein sich Gebende”). The opening to the relation to the thing is the pure self-giving of time. This, Heidegger says, is the “pure

discernibility" that makes possible any perception of an "object," *Gegenstand*, anything that stands against the subject.

On this basis, Heidegger reinterprets Kant on the possibility of objects of experience. This possibility is pure discernibility, that is, the self-giving of the play space of time, the relation to the thing. Heidegger says: "The going-out-to which [is] . . . at all times necessary in finite knowing is hence a constant standing-out-from . . . (*Ecstasis*)" (1990, 84). Kantian time has become Heideggerian ecstatic time, time beyond the privilege of the present, time beyond the succession of now points.

Next, Heidegger returns to the question of imagination, and takes a detour through the discussion of empirical imagination in Kant's *Anthropology*. There, imagination was defined as a "way of sensible intuiting 'even without the presence of the object'" (1990, 90). Thus, says Heidegger, imagination has a "peculiar non-connectedness to the being." If so,

The power of imagination [*Einbildung*] can hence be called a faculty of forming [*Vermögen des Bildens*] in a peculiar double sense. As a faculty of intuiting, it is formative [*bildend*] in the sense of providing the image [*Bild*] or look. As a faculty which is not dependent upon the presence of the intuitable, it fulfills itself, i.e. it creates and forms the image. This "formative power" is simultaneously a 'forming' which takes things in stride (is receptive) and one which creates (is spontaneous). In this "simultaneously" lies the proper essence of its structure. But if receptivity means the same as sensibility and if spontaneity means the same as understanding, then in a peculiar way the power of imagination falls between both. This gives it a remarkably *iridescent* [emphasis added] character. (1990, 91)

Receptive spontaneity: the sponge. An iridescent sponge, always shifting between active and passive?

The *Anthropology* itself is not a transcendental investigation. Can what it says about the imagination be integrated with the *CPR*? There, the transcendental imagination is the possibility of synthesis

itself. Hence, says Heidegger, a *transcendental* imagination is not simply between perception and understanding, as in the *Anthropology*, but is rather the “making possible of the original unity of both and with it the essential unity of transcendence as a whole” (1990, 95). Kant: “. . . we have a pure power of imagination as a basic ability of the human soul to do something, which is the basis for all knowledge a priori” (95). The three elements of knowledge a priori are pure intuition (time), pure synthesis (imagination), and pure concepts (transcendental apperception, the Kantian *cogito*). And again the statement about transcendental imagination as the “blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever” (95).

Why then, asks Heidegger, does Kant repeatedly say that there “‘are but two basic sources of the mind, sensibility and understanding’; there are only these ‘two stems to our power of knowledge’; ‘aside from these two sources of knowledge, we have no others’” (1990, 95). Heidegger writes about the place of the transcendental imagination in the structure of the *CPR*: “The transcendental imagination is homeless. It is not even treated in the Transcendental Aesthetic where, as the faculty of intuition, it properly belongs. On the other hand, it is a theme of the Transcendental Logic where, strictly speaking, it may not be” (95). There is then, says Heidegger, a “harsh opposition” between the two stems and the three sources of knowledge.

But we know from the transcendental schematism that the transcendental imagination is the possibility of synthesis itself. Whether there are two or three sources of knowledge,

the transcendental power of imagination is not just an external bond which fastens together two ends. It is originally unifying, i.e. as a particular faculty it forms the unity of both of the others, which themselves have an essential structural relation to it. What if this original, formative center was that “unknown common root” of both stems? Is it an accident that with the first introduction of the power of imagination Kant says that ‘we ourselves, however, are seldom conscious [of it] even once?’ (1990, 95)

Heidegger is now careful to specify that as the possible unknown common root of sensibility and understanding, the transcendental imagination does not make them “merely imaginary” in the everyday sense. (I imagine a dog or a triangle.) Rather, as the transcendental possibility of synthesis itself, it does not imagine anything “at hand,” but the “pure relation to . . . ,” the “understanding of Being (*Sein*)” (1990, 97). As soon as Heidegger says this, one knows why he has been so insistent on what Kant says about the central role of time in the transcendental schematism. Time is pure synthesis, the transcendental imagination is pure synthesis. Hence, the transcendental imagination contains within it the possibility of the synthesis of perception and concept. Perception is passive, concept formation active. The transcendental imagination then “is receptive . . . not just apart from spontaneity. Rather it is the original unity of receptivity and spontaneity . . . [P]ure, spontaneous receptivity . . . has its essence in the transcendental power of imagination” (107). This is the transcendental/ontological version of the activity and passivity of the *iridescent* imagination of the *Anthropology*. The “original unity of receptivity and spontaneity,” synthesis itself, is a function of time as *Spielraum*, the non-sensuous sensuous thing.

To return to time as the monogram of the transcendental imagination: For Heidegger the pure intuition of time is the pure intuition of time as ecstatic-synthetic, the temporal relatedness of past, present, and future, which itself is nothing present. It is the play space of the pure look of the pure relation to. . . . As intuition it is the reception, the being affected by, the non-sensuous sensuous. If so, then the transcendental imagination, as the “faculty” of pure synthesis, “itself forms time . . . the transcendental power of imagination is original time” (1990, 131).

Being and Time had already established that time temporalizes itself, and Heidegger had already characterized time in *KPM* as *das rein sich Gebende*, the pure giving of itself. Time, then, gives the pure look of itself “from out of itself . . . time is pure affection of itself”:

As pure self-affection, time is not an acting affection that strikes a self which is at hand. Instead, as pure it forms the essence of something like self-activating. However, if it belongs to the essence of the finite subject to be able to be activated as a self, then time as pure self-affection forms the essential structure of subjectivity. (1990, 132)

Pure self-affection is the possibility of a finite creature's relation to what stands against, the thing. The self-affection of the pure intuition of the non-sensuous sensuous, haunts every empirical perception of a thing, because time as self-affection is the iridescent possibility of self-reflection, *and* the opening, the relation to the thing, because it is the sensuous-non-sensuous *thing* (*Spielraum*). Time as auto-affection, then, *is* the general signature, the self-designation of self-designation. Derrida: when the *mise en abyme* succeeds, the thing as other signs. The thing as the signature of the transcendental imagination in the double sense that time both signs and is the signature of the transcendental imagination.

The Idealized Thing (Fetishism), Time, and Primary, Intermediate Drives

To return to our original question: what explains the universal tendency to idealization of things, the effect of fetishism so central to Marx and Freud? Derrida provides an answer in *Specters of Marx*. Marx himself uses the phrase "non-sensuous sensuous" to describe how a thing becomes a commodity. Recall that for Marx the "secret of fetishism" is time, that is, the labor time of commodity production. Derrida notes that Marx most likely took the expression "non-sensuous sensuous" from Hegel, who uses it in the *Encyclopedia*. Rethinking Kant on time and space, Hegel says that time is first of all abstract or ideal because dialectically it is the negative unity of being-outside-oneself, that is, space. Derrida comments: "This ideality of time is obviously the condition of any idealization and consequently of any . . . fetishization" (1994, 155). If so, then the relation of time and fetishism demands

thinking of what we call mind in relation to auto-affection and the receptive activity of the transcendental imagination.

There is an intimation of exactly this in Freud's sexual theory.

Here, I must briefly summarize previous work of my own. Freud (1915) holds that infantile sexuality is auto-erotic and composed of pairs of component drives. Each pair has an active and a passive version, for example, sadism-masochism and voyeurism-exhibitionism (1915, 127). The theory also holds that although active and passive appear to be opposites, over time the active version can always turn into the passive version and vice versa. If so, says Freud, there must be a "common root" (128)—his words, echoes of Kant and Heidegger—out of which both passive and active versions emerge. He calls these primary, intermediate phases of the drive, which "co-exist" with their empirical manifestations (one is a voyeur, one is an exhibitionist), and which explains why sexuality can be temporalized, historicized. Sexuality is mutable, can change over time, *because* the primary, intermediate phase "co-exists" with empirical drive activity (130).

What does "co-exist" mean? For Freud, periodic repetition is the essence of the drive. This implies that the active-passive common root is inseparable from periodic repetition, is always "there," but ideally, transcendently, is the sexual non-sensuous sensuous. And it is an auto-affective relation to a thing. Freud defines the primary intermediate phase of voyeurism ("scopophilia") as oneself looking at a sexual object equaling a sexual object being looked at by oneself (129). We might call this the sexual version of Heidegger's pure look.

I think it justified to extend this conception to the usual psychoanalytic conception of the original relation to a thing: the situation of the baby at the breast. Hypothetically, the original psychic organization is one of primary narcissism, for which there is no subject and no object. The baby looking at the breast equals the breast being looked at by the baby. Active is passive, passive is active, in this auto-affective relation to a thing, which is not yet an object for a subject. And for Freud, there is always an unconscious memory trace of the breast. The trace registered in the primary,

intermediate phase of looking is then the signature of the other thing. It is the signature of the singular thing that comes back, repeats itself according to the repetitious periodicity of need. Here, the auto-affectivity of the primary, intermediate, non-conscious transcendental imagination meets the unconscious trace of the primary, intermediate thing. Call it the signature of the sexual-temporal transcendental imagination.

Fetishism—the relation of mind and thing. Heidegger: auto-affectation as the opening of the play space of pure discernibility, the pure relation to the thing. Derrida: a scientific reading of the fetish effect—in Marx and Freud—concerns the signature and the thing. Here, we must turn to two other recurring motifs in the history of discourse on fetishism: the fetish appears to be non-conceptual, to have no relation to an abstraction, to refer only to itself; the fetish combines opposite properties, is beneficent or persecutory, an expression of castration or non-castration. I will quickly—too quickly—translate these motifs into the ideas just developed. The fetish is a thing that is mine—my rock god, my erotized shoe—which designates me, is my signature (signature as non-conceptual, signifying in the insignificant; the law of the thing as singularity and difference). The fetish is “iridescent” in that it always oscillates between apparent opposites. The hypothesis, then, is that the synthesis of self-reference and iridescence is made possible by the trace of the primary, intermediate, auto-affective “look of the thing”: primary scopophilia.

Derrida had said that when the *mise en abyme* succeeds the thing as other signs. What would it mean for the *mise en abyme* to fail? In *Glas* (1986), looking at Hegel and Freud on fetishism, Derrida had distinguished between restricted and general fetishism. Restricted fetishism is fetishism as conceived throughout the history of metaphysics, the assumption that the fetish, as substitute, is secondary to what it substitutes for. The fetish effect, then, maintains the opposition of the fetish to the thing itself—the real thing. But, the fetish effect, as consistently noted throughout its history, and particularly as analyzed by Freud, is always oscillation between apparent opposites, such that one can become the

other. In other words, there is an effect of irreducible substitutability in the effect of fetishism (Derrida 1986, 208–9). This is the substitutability made possible by what Freud calls the primary, intermediate phase of the drive, and by what Derrida calls general fetishism. Perhaps the *failure* of the *mise en abyme* would be the failure to understand this passive-active, iridescent substitutability as the opening to being affected by the thing. In that case the fetish's oscillation between opposite properties becomes the closed self-reference of mind projecting its irrational ideas or fantasies onto things.

Very early on, Derrida had characterized Freud's conception of non-conscious memory traces, the unconscious itself, as the "opening to the effraction of the trace" (1978, 201). The unconscious is differentiable. Derrida had also said about the sponge overflowing with receptive activity that it is "open, welcoming . . . ready to receive all *impressions*" (1984, 81; emphasis added), making it sound like both the unconscious and the transcendental imagination. As both the Freudian unconscious and the Heideggerian rethinking of the transcendental imagination, this generalized fetish effect is what Derrida always calls "auto-hetero-affectation." Auto-affectation, time, as the opening to the trace of the differential quality of the thing as other—the success of the *mise en abyme*. In psychoanalytic-deconstructive terms, it is what I would call the necessary co-implication of a differentiable unconscious, for which there is a passive-active, temporalized, auto-affective trace of a singular and iterable non-sensuous sensuous *thing*.

Is this the transcendental imagination as the play space of auto-hetero-affective time? The differentiable unconscious open to the trace, the signature of the thing, the active-passive relation to the thing as the very possibility of fetishism? The unconscious reconceived as the signature of the transcendental imagination?

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