[Given, If, Then]

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AN AFTERWORD—or, IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS ...
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Plato teaches us that learning occurs through mimesis. Thus, all knowledge is a form of repetition. However, its highest point, zenith—wisdom—only comes to one; at the point where one opens oneself to the possibility of the whispers of the daemon. This is not to say that wisdom is antithetical to knowledge, learning, mimesis—but that it is at its very limits, and perhaps is even exterior to it. So, even as all earnest learners strive to be wise, wisdom is the point where the one who remembers, learns, no longer remembers that (s)he is remembering; the point in which one is moved by wisdom itself. Where mimesis is no longer just mimetic; where repetition is never quite the same.

This is perhaps why plagiarism has long been the boogey-man of academia. Not because of any moral grounding (if all knowledge is based on a form of repetition, all writing is always already an echo, plagiarised) but, more pertinently, that there is no way to differentiate between what is written—momentarily leaving aside differences between writing and authorship—and what been taken, stolen, remixed. And here, one should not forget Friedrich Nietzsche’s teaching that writing (schreiben) is haunted by a scream (schreien), a cry. And here, as we hear the cry, we might attend to the possibility that it is a scream of frustration due to the inability to separate the one who creates and the one who records: a dual note that can quite possibly be heard in the figure of the scribe. [And here, we might even open the dossier, the possibility, that, perhaps the inscriber and the one who transcribes are always in a duel—keeping in mind, or at least trying not to forget, that duels are only possible, are premised on, there being duality, at least a duo.]

However, it would be too quick, too fatalistic, to stop here. For, as both Nietzsche and Gilles Deleuze constantly remind us, repetition is not necessarily the same. This is best captured in the colloquial saying one often hears in Thailand: same same but different. One can be cynical and claim that it is a mere sales pitch, an attempt to charge more for the same thing—where it is nothing but a performative claim of difference. After all, one hears this phrase mostly from shopkeepers who have been accused of charging more than another vender for the same item. However, if one does so, one would be missing the possibility of attending to another reading: that one can only make a claim about something in a specific situation; that the same thing in another context is also different—that all claims are singular. Which opens the dossier that an object is never just an object: if one is attempting to attend to it, one has to respond to it in its throwness into the world. Even more pertinently, same same but different opens the possibility that difference(s) can lie beyond our cognition, outside of, exterior to, our knowledge; that what we know is bound by our phenomenological finitude. That—as Plato has taught us—to truly know we
have to be inspired, struck from elsewhere. But since the divine is transcendent, always already beyond us, there is no way of knowing if we are inspired or not, if we are hearing the whispers of the daemon or merely voices in our head; if our repetition is really any different, or just same same.

And whenever we hear the phrase, we should also not forget that same appears twice, as a pair, in tandem, as a duo. Perhaps, we might consider the possibility that the duality, the doubling of the same draws our attention to the fact that something can only be different when there is someone else to be different from. Which is not to say that difference itself, difference only, relies on another; however, without an other (even if this other is itself at another moment, situation, context) there cannot be any difference. Thus, even as every statement relies on relationality, this very relationality also foregrounds difference; this relationality also reminds us that same is like same but is not necessarily the same; a duality that continues dueling whilst never ceasing, cutting, enacting a caesura on being a duo.

Thus, same-ness and difference are not necessarily antonyms, but always already rely on each other, are potentially part of each other.

Which brings us back to mimesis and repetition. Not forgetting that each time we write, even if it is a direct quotation, it is always in a different context. So, even the same words, in the same syntax, are already in difference. And if we take into account the notion that all reading is based on a priori learning, reading is only possible due to a repetition—a correspondence born of mimesis. The trouble is, writing only comes into being when it is read. Thus, each moment of reading is inseparable from the possibility of a re-writing. A re-writing that might occur as same same might well be different.

Thus, each attempt to read—to attend to the text—to begin reading, is haunted by the spectre of beginnings that cannot begin: for, if all knowing requires a return of the same—or at least a similarity—then one can never quite have a beginning.

Elliptical hauntings.

Where an ellipsis is, ellipses are, the spectre that resides with, in, within, all sentences, all writing; a haunting that never allows the residence to be completely familiar; that haunts my, our, your haunt.

That opens the possibility of the sameness in difference, the difference in the same.

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