

Marcus Coelen\*

## Prolegomena to the Writing of Affect

A peculiar, both unobtrusive and disturbing heritage or rather *resource* or even better *archive*—with all the “*mal*” that would have befallen it already before the time of its conception—is given to thought by the fact that the first systematic exposition of *affects* is to be found not in a forerunner of so called “psychology,” but in what is first of all a treatise on the order of speech, public oration, and efficiency in political altercation, i.e. Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*.<sup>1</sup>

Ever since this philosophical *envoi*, it is as if the thinking of affect had imprinted into itself a historical scheme in which it appears to be bound to swing back and forth like a pendulum between two poles; one might even say that this thinking has auto-affected itself by its own historicity in the form of an irreducible oscillation between two extremes. One thus finds, on the one hand, affect being thought as an independent, autonomous, and privileged entity, to be seen as something more original, more authentic, or essentially unaltered by language as opposed to, on the other hand, a conception where affects are nothing but effects, derivative and subordinate to language or to a *logos* that can entirely calculate them, accounting for their secondariness and subordinacy. Whereas the latter might be epitomized in one of the most illustrious lines in Spinoza’s *Ethics*, the former is certainly a pervading assumption of common sense. For what could be further removed from the way affects impose themselves on us, with their physiological persuasiveness and immediate claim to amorphous veracity than to contend, as the *Ethics* at the beginning of its third part famously does, that it is possible and even necessary to treat them as if they were “lines, planes, or bodies,” i.e. in the rigorous language of geometry? The logic of this distinction in the (thinking of) affect is certainly not reducible to a naïve belief in immediate experience with a *doxa* attached, as opposed to the rigor and profundity of

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<sup>1</sup> See, for a thorough treatment of this archive and a critique of modern simplified theories of affect based thereon, Daniel Gross, *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle’s “Rhetoric” to Modern Brain Science*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2006.

\* Ludwig Maximilians Universität München

a philosophical investigation cold-heartedly debunking the former. Things are more complex, as it is shown by the history and institution of psychoanalysis in which the status of the affects—causes or effects, primary or secondary, clinically indicative or misleading—is often seen as a dividing line, without it being possible to call the one side entirely naïve and the other totally blinded by philosophical zeal (although either phenomena are known to occur).<sup>2</sup> However, some naivety—or bad faith—may be discerned in the thriving field of *Affect Theory* when, feeding on the historical schematism just mentioned, prominent authors<sup>3</sup> in it claim to liberate affects from the subjugation of what they frame as a structuralist or post-structuralist logo-centrism, represented to them not exclusively but especially by a Lacanian psychoanalysis that in some cases is rather sloppily construed.<sup>4</sup> In any case, it is the complexity of affect “itself” that seems to keep triggering a perennial *polemos* in which, strangely enough, the excitement over a fresh clash meets a repetition happily oblivious to the tedium it might present otherwise—and you do not have to be a psychoanalyst to suspect in this trait a vicissitude of the sexual drive. Neutralizing this scheme might allow for a reflection on what exactly it is driven by and how.

It is no coincidence that a historical schematics similar to that of affect theory can be seen in literary criticism to the extent that it recurrently refers back to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, albeit mostly alongside his *Poetics*. Across disciplines and

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<sup>2</sup> Literature on this is extensive; see, for a recent contribution from a Lacanian perspective, Colette Soler, *Les affects lacaniens*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2011. The book comprehends a short and necessarily biased presentation of some of the polemics surrounding Lacan’s use of the terms and concepts of affect (see pp. VI – X, “Le procès”). A systematic study with aspirations to be a standard reference is certainly André Green, *Le discours vivant. La conception psychanalytique de l’affect*, Paris, PUF, 1973; re-edition 2003, in the collection “*Quadrige*”.

<sup>3</sup> See, to index the most important ones, Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 2002; William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 2002; Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008; Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 2003. For a more didactic presentation, see Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 2010; the editors’s introduction to this volume is rich and provides a detailed bibliography and extensive presentation of the material (pp. 1-27).

<sup>4</sup> For a brilliant interrogation of the affect theory’s reference to scientific material, see Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* 37 (Spring 2011), pp. 434-472.

throughout the course of history, the pendulum continues to swing between formalist, immanent methods and their theoretical defence, and ideological appeals for the acceptance of neutralized narratives of context, history, and politics calling on literary texts to wittingly or perversely illustrate them. The interest in invoking this goes beyond providing a reference to analogous lives in the history of thought. The two parabolas—the one written by “affect” and the other drawn by “literature” into the skies onto which we project that very history—frequently intersect, but when they do most of the minimalist elegance their shape holds as a promise is gone—even if it is only to produce more complex, dysmorphic, and volatile figures, figures somehow reminiscent of life in its unabated strangeness. Marcel Proust’s *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, for instance, which was written most of all *contre* a type of literary appreciation that goes by means of the study and description of the life and history—the “context”—of their authors while disregarding poetic form to a large extent, veered off into a monstrous fictional being that keeps living and dying by transforming jealousy and love into syntax, the intermittences of the heart into punctuation, and affect back into the rhetoric of a somewhat foreign language—the claim for which is not unrelated to Proust’s stance and reflections in relation to the politics of his time, especially the Dreyfus affair.

Eve Sedgwick, both a brilliant literary critic and a queer activist, had become at the moment of her untimely death in 2009 a predominant voice in *Affect Theory*, turning to scientific models and yet still maintaining an almost desperate affection for the textual.<sup>5</sup> One of the most powerful contributors to literary studies in the last century, Paul de Man, if not starting from immanent criticism then certainly in critical proximity to it, proceeded in his last writings to a fervent interrogation of all “aesthetic” categories, including sense and pathos, exposing them as “ideological” in the most problematic sense. De Man can be read surreptitiously as the author of a sustained reflection on linguistic affect and its “materialistic” politics.<sup>6</sup> This widening and diversification of *discourse* allowed Michel Foucault to move into a critical and inventive philosophy of the politics of pleasure—a rhetorical category if there ever has been one—in combination with the analysis of its minute mechanisms as explicitly set forth in *L'ordre du dis-*

<sup>5</sup> See Sedgwick, *Touching feeling*, passim.

<sup>6</sup> See Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, edited with an introduction by Andrzej Warminski, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

*cours*, preceded by the “énoncé” in *L'archéologie du savoir*, and extending a long infatuation with a type of literature highly concerned with its linguistic form.

These examples, and there would be many others, invite us to abandon the historical and conceptual schemes that seduce us into believing that affect or the study of language “affected” by itself as other, i.e. literature or discourse, could be situated by them. They combine the most detailed analyses with a certain speculative spin, displacing both “affect” and “language”, as well as “(literary) language” and “context”. They cast them first of all onto a certain *scene*, writing them into a *script*, playing and producing the herewith altered senses. Some of this can already be found in Aristotle’s definition of *anger*: “a desire, accompanied by ... distress, for conspicuous retaliation because of a conspicuous slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those near to one.” (*Rhetoric*, 1378a31–33) This description tells us little about affect “itself” and equally little about rhetoric as “language” as we believe we know them. It speaks more of desire and its disposition as well as the scene of its mechanism. This is a stage where no one and no affect would ever be alone: a micro-sketch of politics. Affect, as presented in the form of anger in this definition, is speculative in both senses of the word: projected into the visual through a logic of relation or exchange and determined by the attempt to control its own excessive momentum by inscribing it into the field of the other.

Freud epitomized this combination of attention to intricate details with an honest attitude towards speculation in his sprawling theorization of affect. The complex of affect stretches out over all of his writings, and most importantly, draws a figure whose lines would necessarily have to touch both the minute forms of the *Witz*—the “most social product of the unconscious”—and the grand historical projections of the primal horde and the man Moses. The lines of this figure, contorted and multiply knotted into the whole texture of the drives and the unconscious, coil up into a singular and enigmatic term that is itself essentially splintered as it marks its very singularity, reduction, and minimalism as much as it demarcates the boundaries of its realm as virtually infinite. The term is *identification* and it can itself be identified only in a multiplicity of figures ranging from Freud’s early apodictic claims to his later gnomic statements.

In 1938, the year before his death, Freud returned to some of his lifelong preoccupations, inscribing them as aphorisms which have survived as posthumous

fragments. Among them, we find this frequently quoted gnomic statement on identification, where the breast forms the basis for an ontology of the child: “‘Having’ and ‘being’ in children. Children like expressing an object-relation by an identification: ‘I am the object.’ ‘Having’ is the later of the two; after loss of the object it relapses into ‘being’. Example: the breast. ‘The breast is part of me, I am the breast.’ Only later: ‘I have it’—that is, ‘I am not it’...”<sup>7</sup> Through this riddle of the being and having of the child, Freud seals a notion of primordial Being as being what one is not, without having it. However the scope of this formula of identification is not limited to the child. And how could it be, when “child” means the unconscious knowing of no end? The ontological predicament of the child betrays the mechanism of affect tout court. The traces of Freud’s aphoristic pronouncements can be found almost two decades earlier in his reflections on the role of affect in the social in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, where affect is presented in its empirical simplicity as one of those mechanisms psychoanalysis just knows about.

The trajectory of Freud’s *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (*Massenpsychologie und Ichanalyse*) begins with a hypothesis on the libido: “We will try our fortune, then, with the supposition that love relationships (or to us a more neutral expressions, emotional ties) also constitute the essence of the group mind.” (S.E. XVIII, 91)<sup>8</sup> And libido—“an expression taken from the theory of emotions” (S.E. XVIII, 90; GW XIII, 98)—is here joined to that mechanism, or has itself become the mechanism, which has to be called fundamental and seen as the first, maybe the only step beyond narcissism: “Identification is known to psycho-analysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person.”<sup>9</sup> (S.E. XVIII, p. 105) What Freud will repeat in his later works is here being introduced as an empirical psychoanalytic self-evidence: “As a matter of fact, we learn from psycho-analysis that there do exist other mechanisms for

<sup>7</sup> “Findings, Ideas, Problems”, in S.E. XXIII, p. 299; “Haben und Sein beim Kind. Das Kind drückt die Objektbeziehung gern durch Identifizierung aus: ich bin das Objekt. Das Haben ist das Spätere, fällt nach Objektverlust ins Sein zurück. Muster: Brust. Die Brust ist ein Stück von mir, ich bin die Brust. Später nur: ich habe sie, d.h. ich bin sie nicht.” (*Ergebnisse, Ideen, Probleme*, in GW XVII, 149-152.)

<sup>8</sup> “Wir werden es also mit der Voraussetzung versuchen, dass Liebesbeziehungen (indifferent ausgedrückt: Gefühlsbindungen) auch das Wesen der Massenseele ausmachen.” (GW XIII, 100)

<sup>9</sup> “... die Identifizierung (ist) die ursprünglichste Form der Gefühlsbindung an ein Objekt.” (GW XIII, 118)

emotional ties, the so-called *identifications*, insufficiently-known processes and hard to describe ...”<sup>10</sup> (S.E. XVIII, 104) The difficulties of representing, describing and thinking these processes will give rise, in the *New Series of Introductory Lectures*, to a double definition of identification as imitation and incorporation. But these explanations will equally testify to what seems for Freud the most important thing about identification and what the late aphorisms lays bare in all their lucid obscurity: affect as mechanism of a subject that is not there to carry it, to be its substance, or hold its underlying disposition. Identification identifies and affects the subject as other than subject.

Throughout *Massenpsychologie*, which nevertheless is devoted to representing what is difficult to represent, identification will remain an enigma—a *Rätsel*. Freud repeatedly insists on the mechanical-grammatical deployment of affect—“*Umwendung*”—as an operation of the social, thereby formulating the affective sharing of the masses as the basis for identification. Freud writes: “We already begin to divine that the mutual tie between members of a group is in the nature of an identification of this kind, based upon an important emotional common quality; and we may suspect that this common quality lies in the nature of the tie with the leader. Another suspicion may tell us that we are far from having exhausted the problem of identification, and that we are faced by the process which psychology calls ‘empathy [*Einfühlung*]’ and which plays the largest part in our understanding of what is inherently foreign to our ego in other people.” (S.E. XVIII, 107) And yet this empathic foundation is a “social feeling” based on “the reversal of what was first a hostile feeling into positively-toned tie in the nature of identification.”<sup>11</sup> (S.E. XVIII, 120) The forging of a common ground (*Gemeinsamkeit*) from a hostility toward the other (*Ichfremde*) is what makes the masses. It isn’t until 1938 that Freud will formulate the aphorism that exteriorizes the enigmatic character of identification as the writing of the paradigmatic matrix of being and having the breast.

However it is not, for the masses, the mother or the breast that holds the conceptually insistent yet fragile identification, and thus the fundamental binding of af-

<sup>10</sup> “Wir erfahren tatsächlich aus der Psychoanalyse, dass es ... Mechanismen der Gefühlsbindung gibt, die sogenannten *Identifizierungen*, ungenügend bekannte, schwer darzustellende Vorgänge ... “ (GW XIII, 113f.)

<sup>11</sup> “Das soziale Gefühl ruht also auf der Umwendung eines erst feindseligen Gefühls in eine positive betonte Bindung von der Natur einer Identifizierung.” (GW XIII, 134)

fect, in its place: here, it is the father and the speculation that reaches out to him. Freud, in one of those turns in his writing where, almost imperceptibly, what seemed to have been the object becomes the subject of the exposition, reverses the scientific endeavour attributing to the masses the status of an “object” and attributing to itself the status of the “subject” presenting and analysing it, thereby exposing this psychology of the masses to a phylogenetic heritage, a heritage produced as a side effect only at the point when the primal father all but forces the horde of brothers to create themselves through the act of murder: “He [i.e. the father] forced them, so to speak, into group psychology. His sexual jealousy and intolerance became in the last resort the causes of group psychology.”<sup>12</sup> (S.E. XVI-II, 124) By the same token, psychoanalysis is transformed into the writing limit, the bloc-and-pen border, at which and by which there is a notetaking of the sheer affect and constitutive identification of the brothers *about to become* subjects (of “individual” psychoanalysis) by murdering the one called “father,” however speculatively, to constitute him as a one to identify *with*, incorporate, be affected *by*, imitate, speak and write *about*. In *this* psychology of the masses *and* psychoanalysis, the latter is itself affected by and identified with, is incorporating into itself, the scene of the mythic father before and after his being slaughtered.

Psychoanalysis is like a child “being” the breast that it “does not have” while not being there, or only in paradigm. But also, to invoke another of psychoanalysis’ historical and speculative *sisters-figures*, psychoanalysis is the paradox of thinking *Life*, as it is in Canguilhem not so much the object of science as that which produces science as one of its norms to obey to or to stray from. Here the affect at stake is audacity, the courage to let not knowing insist in a form. For we cannot know what affect is. Yet, that is no reason for not giving it names and constructing it into syntax, articulating its plasticity of rigour, as “identification” does. We do not know what the unconscious is either, which does not prevent psychoanalysis from existing albeit in a fragile fashion. Neither do we know what Nature is, yet natural science does not really suffer from fragility so much as hegemonic existence. Only to thinking we say that we neither know what it is nor whether it exists. Thinking is, perhaps, this uncertainty. What counts, in any case, is the specific way in which these discourses, institutions or

<sup>12</sup> “Er [i.e. the father] zwang sie sozusagen in die Massenpsychologie. Seine sexuelle Eifersucht und Intoleranz sind in letzter Linie die Ursache der Massenpsychologie geworden.” (GW II, 138f.)

writings relate to the *non-savoir* that certainly does not only befall them accidentally. Whether in formalistic, algebraic, and statistical production of the object clothed in empirical observation; in unlimited yet always specific transfer; or in becoming textual historicity—the unknown or rather the specific unknowing is writing its names and sentences into a world. According to Freud’s matrix of the political, affect is identified as a result of the speculative murder of the other at a time both before and beyond the impossible time of a subject that is neither killed nor killing. Identification “itself” is affected by its groundlessness.<sup>13</sup> This is a murder that never stops not happening. The *political* is a name for thinking exposed to the uncertainty of its existence. Through identification psychoanalysis is affected by its other, thinking, introjecting it into itself precisely as affect while projecting an outside called the political. This writing of the name of the political is a syntax that rearticulates *non-savoir*.

The Freudian encounter with the political is based on the aporia of *identification*, on the enigma it produces in and through itself, and on the fable of the slain father as a speculative supplement. All of these affective phenomena— aporia, enigma, and fable—are offspring of the insoluble problem of narcissism, a radical solipsism and ipseism, an infinitely expanded enclosure, from which no passage is possible to the other. There is *no relation* and therefore the only possible formulas for a psychoanalytic writing on the political would be “no relation to relation” or “relation without relation.” To psychoanalysis, thus, the political must appear as that to which it cannot relate. Given this meta-psychological—clinical and theoretical—necessity, not many options remain for psychoanalysis facing the political: without being exhaustive, one can name the following: 1) the empiricist, 2) the theoretically weak, 3) the theoretically strong option.

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The first consists in empirically accepting the existence of the social and the political, and admitting that, from a psychoanalytical point of view, one cannot contribute anything to elucidate or analyse it. This option is fatalistic, at least *in theory*, yet it does not prevent anyone from being a clinician receiving homosexual subjects in the morning and a reactionary writing diatribes against

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13 This has brilliantly been shown by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy in their *La panique politique*, Paris, Christian Bourgois, 2012. The reflections sketched out here are heavily indebted to their analysis which was already presented in the late 1970s but waits to be taken into consideration to the fullest extent by current psychoanalytic thinking.



gay marriage for a local newspaper in the evening. This option is thus not only theoretically fatalistic, but also ethically cynical, whatever its “political” colouring might be. It only cowardly acknowledges the *Ichspaltung im Abwehrvorgang* (Ego-Splitting in the Defensive Process) on the surface by illustrating it by means of conduct: a repression by conscious existence of sorts. By warding off the forces of otherness that threaten the integrity of the ego—the ego here being both the one of the analyst and the one of psychoanalysis as an entity—this ego opts for splitting itself in isolation. Psychoanalysis, acting as an ego treating itself as analyst, tries to save itself by reducing itself to what it is not, i.e. an entity *not* being constituted by what it is not and by what it cannot relate to.

The second option, theoretically weak, recklessly abandons the violent thrust of narcissism while emphasizing the inherently “social” nature of the psyche in its stead. Freud takes this path in *Massenpsychologie und Ichanalyse* when he contends that ego psychology is social psychology, or when he defines the superego as the ego’s social instance, or when he pronounces in *Moses and Monotheism*: “The contents of the unconscious is collective through and through” (GW 241). A lot of lacanian theory is precisely a theory of the Other based on the aphorism that desire is the desire of the other. Lacan’s formula—the signifier represents the subject for another signifier—is as proto-social as it is non-representational insofar it defines the subject as the effects of an alienating texture-towards-the-other. In the extreme case of psychosis the name-of-the-father is foreclosed resulting in the the tragic failure of the subject to enter the symbolic order. Lacan’s four discourses diagram the social bond by showing the various possible permutations of agent, other, truth, and product. This option is “theoretically weak” for lack of acknowledging the “weakness” it is grounded in, the *Hilflosigkeit* that is not as much its object as it is that against which it erects itself. “Strong” is the option that is practically affected by *helplessness* in theory.

The thinking of affects and passions in the western philosophical tradition often relies on a schematics that combines a set of multiple passions organized in opposing couples (joy/sadness, pleasure/pain etc.) with a singular fundamental passion devoid of opposition. In Descartes, where this scheme appears, not surprisingly, in its “clear and distinct” manner, it is *astonishment* or even *admiration* that forms “the first of all the passions. And it doesn’t have an opposite ...” In the lineage starting with Kierkegaard and continuing via Heidegger to Lacan,

*anxiety* is the fundamental affect, the affect of affectedness itself. In the thought of the senses and sensuality, a thought adjacent to the one on passions, it is often *touch* that figures as the sense of senses, a position shared by Condillac and Nancy, and shown by Derrida in *Le toucher*. One may pay homage to this philosophical tradition of passion and affect in radicalizing it by not only doing away with any organized set of passions that would inevitably moralize and normalize them, but also by presenting helplessness as fundamental affectedness. This move lies in decision to juxtapose *errancy*, *contingency*, and *indeterminacy* with the fundamental affectedness of *Hilflosigkeit*, thereby disconnecting the “value” of the philosophical disposition of affect from itself. Not reversing this value but *abandoning* it by making “weak” categorical modalities into names of affect, inventing syntax for thought, and creating *Hilflosigkeit* as an adventure of thinking. The *orders* of affect are disrupted and abandoned to the chances of discourse. To speak of *radicalization* here, to evoke the notion of a *fundamental* affectedness and to praise the *grounding* in the philosophical tradition of the thought that develops this notion, would be to deploy an antithetical rhetoric and more importantly—the importance of rhetoric in any theory of affect notwithstanding—to mark the trait of an antinomy that traverses the thought-of-affect. Nothing is grounded, nothing is resting on a foundation, and no root is to be extracted from *Hilflosigkeit*. The question that arises from this solitude has its stakes in the Earth—ground, resource, home, all put into question under this name—and leads to a philosophy of *Nature* as that which affects us in only in detachment and withdrawal. In the poetic-speculative discourse of a writer like Georges Bataille, the awakening to such a question of the Earth as withdrawal might reach out to the most traditional terms of death and nothingness. Bataille writes, “La question qu’est la terre, qu’est la mort, la mort qui est peut-être l’aube – enfin de rien. (The question is what is the earth, what is death, the death who is perhaps the dawn - finally nothing.)” Abandoned to abandonment such stable terms will still have to be read.

From such a reading, *The Disorder of Affect* would have to be written, as the phrase that it names indicates, as an alteration, a partial substitution, a frivolous and serious displacement, a certain reversal and diffraction of *The Order of Discourse*. It would never satisfy itself to have reached the classicist, admirably contained and elegant form of Foucault’s inaugural lecture at the *Collège de France*, which despite the liberties it took, remained bound to what it was enunciating, i.e. discourse. And it didn’t *want* to be otherwise. *Mise en abyme, pars*

*pro toto*, metonymy, allegory, a part split-off, a contingent spark of language, a spasm of discourse itself—whatever rhetorical or literary order one might apply to Foucault’s words—they remain affected by what they distance themselves from, through an undecidable chasm of discourse and order, through language and murmur. *The Disorder of Affect*—which is also its *dis*-course—is not in the same way affected by itself, not even remotely. It *disrupts* auto-affectation and the transcendental synthesis of time. This is its chance and its danger: It might reinforce tradition by repeating philosophy’s perennial gesture, or veer into the naive forms of immanentism and scientism many proponents of *Affect Theory* betray, or spark a new unheard of way of thinking.

In taking this risk, *The Disorder of Affect* produces neither affect nor effect nor cause, leaving these categories not behind but in place, unaffected, in in-determination, erring in their very stability. What will err between, around, through them is something else: not to be determined, yet to be written. To say that *The Disorder of Affect* is something yet to be written is incorrect, or too correct, for the not yet of this dis-order is itself what is constantly already being written, said, murmured and screamed, by everyone, recognized as such or unrecognized. Identification with an ideal of a writing yet to come. One may allude here, to the lurid, pathos-ridden figures in the writings of Bataille with his erotological project to affirm a specific affect “beyond” helplessness, i.e. anxiety. The speculative trajectory of Bataille’s poetics draws its syntax from the projection out of the night of *Hilflosigkeit* by encircling the figure of death. For Bataille, the sovereignty of death is as empty as it is absolute. “In the night emptier than the night is the night that opens death. (*Dans la nuit plus vide que la nuit qu’est la nuit qui ouvre la mort.*)” As Bataille writes in *Madame Edwarda*, “My anxiety is finally the sovereign absolute. (*Mon angoisse est enfin l’absolue souveraine.*)”

However, erotology with its heart of anxiety and horror speculatively reaching out to poetic non-existence on the one hand, and politico-psychoanalytic affect philosophy preoccupied by *Hilflosigkeit* and its political incarnation on the other hand, might be distinct from each other in style rather than in essence. Or, to put it in more adequate terms paying Aristotle his due, they *speak* differently to render differently the “conspicuousness” of their “anger”, accompanying it with different tones of “distress” as they address the “conspicuousness” of injustice given within the political.