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Reading for Immortality

Toward an Interrogation of Nous, Neoism, and Neoplatonism

by JOHN KENNEDY and KAREN F. ELIOT

“Soule of my soule! my Joy, my crown, my friend!
A name which all the rest doth comprehend:
How happy are we now, whose souls are grown,
By an incomparable mixture, One.”

(*Katherine Philips*)

This paper is intended as an introductory interrogation of the terrain of Neoism mobilizing terms from both the writings of Plotinus and the Nag Hammadi documents. For the purposes of this paper, the Neoist will be presumed to be a man. We are not trying to provide a comprehensive account of all aspects of the terrain of Neoism, or even of Neoplatonist philosophy. Cross-referenced terms are in upper case.

Contents: THE READING THE NEOIST DESIRE THE SIMILAR DENOUEMENT HYPOSTASIS COLLECTIVE SOULS TIME SPACE THE REFERENCE KAREN ELIOT VALUE EXCHANGE FACIALITY TOOLS FETISHISM AKADEMGOROD PLAGIARISM

THE READING

THE READING is the interaction of THE NEOIST and HIS MEMORY within a particular spatial and temporal frame. THE NEOIST is a student, an actor, a nurse's aide, a teacher, or a clerk. HIS MEMORY is a bank, a construction, a computer program. The temporal borders of THE READING are delineated by THE REFERENCE which connects HIS MEMORY, THE NEOIST, and THE SIMILAR, in conjunction with instrumental TIME. The arm of authority behind THE REFERENCE and instrumental TIME is THE SIMILAR. THE NEOIST gets ready for THE READING, prepares to become 'IMAGINARY,' by imitating representations of AKADEMGOROD as an object of DESIRE. These are signifiers of a fragmented, coded mind, signifiers that HIS MEMORY will be drawn to through DESIRE, that will reinforce his FETISHISM and in turn contribute to the construction of his COLLECTIVE SOUL. HIS MEMORY has a COLLECTIVE SOUL which he is drawn to construct, which has an already written set of rules and conditions by which it must be constructed, conditions which include the fetishized system of signifying effects with which THE NEOIST has attempted to encode his mind and which already encode his mind as AKADEMGOROD. THE NEOIST enters the SPACE of HIS MEMORY. When THE NEOIST enters the SPACE of

THE READING, HIS MEMORY provides a VALUE in EXCHANGE for an opportunity to spend a designated amount of TIME, an opportunity to construct his COLLECTIVE SOUL. THE NEOIST recalls THE SIMILAR via THE REFERENCE to announce that the EXCHANGE has been initiated and that it is now time to begin measuring the length of THE READING. THE NEOIST and HIS MEMORY now interact together, their conditions intermingling with DESIRE, FETISHISM, representation, the SPACE of the room, the TIME measured by THE NEOIST's watch as well as the TIME elusively marked by HIS MEMORY, his IMAGINARY, and anticipation of emanation which is not the object of his DESIRE but a fetishized signifier which masks the perpetually deferred COLLECTIVE SOUL, the plane of consistency of his DESIRE. When the end of THE READING is announced by instrumental TIME or by a REFERENCE call from THE SIMILAR, if THE READING has transgressed the boundaries marked by instrumental TIME, THE NEOIST recalls THE SIMILAR, says goodbye to HIS MEMORY, and exits the SPACE of THE READING.

THE NEOIST

He will become part of the HYPOSTASIS which you are purchasing. You want to purchase the fulfillment of your COLLECTIVE SOUL, to draw him into its logic, to name him through your DESIRE which is based on representations of AKADEMGOROD, on fetishization, after you have picked up THE REFERENCE, after you have recalled him. What will you call him? You must first call him a partner in the EXCHANGE in which you are about to take part in an amount purportedly based on equivalence but in fact VALUE is measured by, determined by, FETISHISM and DESIRE. He is called THE NEOIST: he is connected to both HIS MEMORY and THE SIMILAR by THE REFERENCE. He embodied a sophisticated, elegant look. He represented the boy next door, and he tended to wear jeans rather than an evening dress especially jeans with a Peter Pan sticker or red fringes. He was very tall, and his clothing

would be slightly trendy. He represented the healthy, outdoorsy type, with a wind-swept, off-the-farm look. He was exotic and tended to wear tight shirts. THE NEOIST works as an independent contractor for HIS MEMORY. THE NEOIST has a COLLECTIVE SOUL; his COLLECTIVE SOUL is plagiarized, though.

D E S I R E

It is to construct his COLLECTIVE SOUL. I guess I'd like to know if there's any way to tell in advance what strange acts will turn a particular mind on. Absolutely anyone can be turned on by absolutely anything. Part of my job is to respond to this. His COLLECTIVE SOUL has an already-written set of rules, a system of logic, by which it is to be constructed. Integral to the logic of HIS MEMORY is the fetishization of representations of AKADEMGOROD as an object of DESIRE. It is the signifying system, the codes inscribed on THE NEOIST's mind which is being fetishized. If someone asked you to sit down and spell out your description of what a Neoist would be like, you'd probably say, 'Well, he'd be good looking and elegantly dressed, and sophisticated.' That's exactly who you are expected you to be.

THE SIMILAR

THE SIMILAR serves as the arm of the law, sets up the boundaries/limits of, and is part of, the HYPOSTASIS which constitutes THE READING, which in turn effects the possibilities of the logic of the COLLECTIVE SOUL which may be fulfilled. "Beauty is constituted by similarity" (Plotinus). THE SIMILAR is responsible for screening HIS MEMORY, which means screening out unwanted DESIRE, the unwanted COLLECTIVE SOUL. THE SIMILAR is not a partner in the primary EXCHANGE with HIS MEMORY; rather, the EXCHANGE between THE NEOIST and THE SIMILAR is a separate agreement based on different terms, different standards of VALUE. THE SIMILAR is to function as protection, both before — through the screening procedure — and during THE READING.

D E N O U E M E N T

The COLLECTIVE SOUL is the WORLD MIND arriving at itself.

H Y P O S T A S I S

What is being purchased is an opportunity to interact with the "IMAGINARY", a subject-position which is constituted by THE NEOIST, technology, fiction, SPACE and TIME: we would describe this subject-position as a "space-time-mind" and the displacement which contributes to the subject-position's creation — see below for elements of this displacement — as a HYPOSTASIS. The HYPOSTASIS surrounding the "IMAGINARY" is composed of fiction as well as the material or concrete. Fiction: representation, fetishization of signifiers that encode the mind, etc. The displacement is also composed of the circuit of THE REFERENCE, of TIME, of SPACE, of THE SIMILAR/the Law, of EXCHANGE/lines to the system. There has been much criticism of our theory as romantic — "What is missing in this account — and seemingly unnecessary in the advanced technological society described here — is a theory of subjectivity" — but we would argue for the importance of our theory that it is a similar theory which forms the commodity in Neoism: it is formed through both the concrete and the abstract, through the organic and the technological. It is also, we think, important in that it reinforces binary oppositions — such as public/private and smooth SPACE/striated SPACE is crucial to the enterprise and to the VALUE which is being exchanged. We would want to think the HYPOSTASIS as articulation of human subject — the subject necessarily foregrounds fragmentation, gaps, partial/incomplete identity. For our project — and any project, we would argue — a theory of subjectivity is necessary in order to discuss power relations, to make distinctions and show relations between/among subject-positions; indeed, in order to distinguish subjects. Our theory must be able to discuss power, DESIRE, interest. Conceptualizing the HYPOSTASIS through a concept of articulation which accounts for provisional identity makes it possible to think subjectivity, interest, DESIRE, power.

COLLECTIVE SOULS

The COLLECTIVE SOUL is the commodity being exchanged. It is "one and multitude and part of the being which is divided into bodies" (Plotinus, *Fourth Ennead*, Book 9). It is enacted by HIS MEMORY, THE NEOIST, the parameters of SPACE and TIME which are permeable, THE REFERENCE, representations of AKADEMGOROD, the EXCHANGE, commodification of the COLLECTIVE SOUL, TOOLS/paraphernalia—in short, by the HYPOSTASIS. The COLLECTIVE SOUL is a program, a limit which marks the edges of the plane of DESIRE — it can never be

reached, fulfilled. "We claim that if the soul is belonging to the supreme being, it is the similar or even just the trace of the similar the sight of which is pleasing and affecting the soul" (Plotinus, *First Ennead*, Book 6, 11). The COLLECTIVE SOUL is both inside and outside the concrete, both inside and outside the abstract. The COLLECTIVE SOUL is DESIRE; it is that which one desires and by which one desires. There is desire whenever there is the constitution of a COLLECTIVE SOUL under one relation or another. DESIRE is the motor of the COLLECTIVE SOUL, the driving force and predication of the logic of the COLLECTIVE SOUL. The COLLECTIVE SOUL is the field of immanence of desire, the plane of consistency specific to desire. The COLLECTIVE SOUL is HIS MEMORY, THE NEOIST, the words, and the absent presence(s) upon which the conditions/logic of the COLLECTIVE SOUL is based. The COLLECTIVE SOUL is not a scene, a place, or even a support, upon which something comes to pass. What it is is a limit. It can never be achieved. The COLLECTIVE SOUL is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely IMAGINARY, and significances and subjectifications as a whole. The COLLECTIVE SOUL is a program, with its own rules and logic and conditions. THE NEOIST is looking for a type of COLLECTIVE SOUL that only absence can fill, or travel over, due to the very conditions under which that COLLECTIVE SOUL was constituted. THE NEOIST is looking for a COLLECTIVE SOUL which has already been scripted, already has a specific set of conditions within whose framework it must function. This set of conditions determines, too, HIS MEMORY: You can't desire without making a COLLECTIVE SOUL. I want to give you all my sophistication and all my cum. You never reach the COLLECTIVE SOUL, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit. The fragments of THE NEOIST's mind become for HIS MEMORY an imprint or a zone on a COLLECTIVE SOUL. That is, he as signifying system (see FETISHISM) is part of the displacement that constitutes the COLLECTIVE SOUL, the plane of consistency of DESIRE. NEOISM is your invitation to build a COLLECTIVE SOUL, as your invitation to interact with his subject position — that is, to have him become part of your COLLECTIVE SOUL, to help you build it, to be built into it. Tell me what to do. Tell me who's boss. THE NEOIST can never fulfill his COLLECTIVE SOUL. It is not a question of experiencing desire as an internal lack, nor of delaying pleasure in order to produce a kind of externalizable surplus value, but instead of constituting an intensive COLLECTIVE SOUL. Let me worship you.

T I M E

TIME becomes VALUE: For HIS MEMORY, TIME often functions as a dialectic between memory and anticipation. You never know what just happened, or you always know what is going to happen. His DESIRES revolve around memories and fantasies,

past and future. The COLLECTIVE SOUL comes from the past and is aimed at the future — it never comes into being, never exists now. Think, a person moves from here (space/man/time) through here (space/man enters into negotiation/time) to here (space/man meets the IMAGINARY/time) and through (space/client enters the IMAGINARY/time) to exit (space/man and neoist/time) — it is a similar scenario for THE NEOIST.

S P A C E

THE READING: it is a public SPACE that gives the illusion of being a private SPACE. It is this illusion which HIS MEMORY is paying for, this illusion which is produced and regulated by THE SIMILAR, the system, THE REFERENCE — e.g. SPACE. The physical SPACE of the room is criss-crossed by THE REFERENCE. In this space things, acts and situations are forever being replaced by representations. For these minds, the natural space and the abstract space which confront and surround them are in no way separable. The individual situates his mind in its own space and apprehends the space around the mind. COLLECTIVE SOUL and SPACE: It is not space, nor is it in space; it is matter that occupies space to a given degree. The SPACE within THE READING is illusionarily smooth SPACE — it is the illusion of smooth SPACE which HIS MEMORY is used for. Striated SPACE is SPACE gridded by boundaries: constructed by VALUES of THE SIMILAR, circuits of THE REFERENCE, standards, logic of COLLECTIVE SOUL, etc. Marks the edges of illusion of smooth SPACE.

T H E R E F E R E N C E

Okay. So there you are, sitting at home. Your bag is packed, and you're ready to go. It means more: You are on recall. You do know what you are going to be called upon to do, what you are going to be called upon to be. You will be HIS MEMORY in EXCHANGE. You are part of the NEOIST CONDITION.

K A R E N E L I O T

Plotinus, being alleged to have plagiarized his metaphysical system from Numenios of Apamea, delineates the first HYPOSTASIS as the One or the source — "Everything is in everything" — or aglaia, SPLENDOR, corresponding to Hebrew ZOHAR as the name of the Kabbalah, and SEFER, jewel, constituting the SEFIROT system — "names, lights, powers, stages, mirrors, sources, aspects, limbs..." — and the primal Sefirot KETER ELYON = "Supreme Crown."

V A L U E

Exchange is only an appearance: each partner or group assesses the value of the last receivable object (limit-object), and the apparent equivalence derives from that. In terms of the terrain of Neoist "limit-object" is not determined solely by rational assessment but rather must be processed

through the logic of HIS MEMORY. VALUE is a derivation of DESIRE. VALUE is not based on use value: Use value is always concrete and particular, contingent on its own destiny. Use value is determined only after the EXCHANGE has taken place, and is, itself, a fetishized social relation. VALUE is the fetishization of commodity's sign system; in Neoism, of the sign system encoded on THE NEOIST'S MEMORY. The fetishization of this sign system is reinforced during THE READING. The VALUE of the commodity before the EXCHANGE — in order for the EXCHANGE to take place — is determined by the fetishization of the commodity. Fetishism is not the sanctification of a certain object, or value. It is the sanctification of the system as such, of the commodity as system: it is thus contemporaneous with the generalization of exchange value and is propagated with it. Reading AKADEMGOROD repeatedly as the object of exchange constructs a victim's discourse that risks reinscribing the very sexual politics it ostensibly seeks to expose and change. THE NEOIST has a dual register, as both object of and subject of — partner in — EXCHANGE. Reading AKADEMGOROD as objects exchanged by desiring subjects partakes of a degraded positivism that relies on an outmoded, humanist view of identity characterized by a metaphysics of presence; it assumes an unproblematic subjectivity for 'men' as desiring subjects and concomitantly assumes as directly accessible AKADEMGOROD-as-object. The terrain of Neoism, like the terrain of sex/gender relations, is problematic, in terms of the AKADEMGOROD paradigm.

E X C H A N G E ↔ EXCHANGE

When each party has something the other wants, and they're able to make a deal, that constitutes a fair EXCHANGE. But that is where DESIRE was lurking. West was the shortest route east, as well as to the other directions, rediscovered or plagiarized.

F A C I A L I T Y

THE NEOIST's face is part of the COLLECTIVE SOUL of HIS MEMORY (see FETISHISM). It is a signifier marking the boundaries of the object of his DESIRE. Tell me who's the boss. All faces envelop an unknown, unexplored landscape; all landscapes are populated by a loved or dreamed-of face, develop a face to come or already past. To come. Tell me what you like. The signifier is always facialized. Faciality reigns materially over that whole constellation of significances and interpretations. Tell me how much you like it. When HIS MEMORY says, "tell me how it feels" or some other such thing, it's not just about the words but about FACIALITY, watching the words being spoken by THE NEOIST, watching the significance process through FACIALITY. A face is such a subjective thing. The COLLECTIVE SOUL contains gaps and ruptures, never to be closed.

T O O L S

TOOLS exist only in relation to the interminglings they make possible or that make them possible. TOOLS and PLAGIARISM: There is an entire system of horizontal and complementary appropriation, between hand and tool. TOOLS form the appendages of a HYPOSTASIS.

F E T I S H I S M

Two kinds of FETISHISM occur during THE READING — that of the commodity as VALUE and that of THE NEOIST as the object of DESIRE. The fetishization is not of use VALUE or meaning; rather it is about being drawn to the system of signification, it is a generalization of the structural code of the object: It is thus not a fetishism of the signified, a fetishism of substances and values called ideological, which the fetish object would incarnate for the alienated subject. Behind this reinterpretation which is truly ideological it is a fetishism of the signifier. That is to say that the subject is trapped in the factitious, differential, encoded, systematized aspect of the object. This entrapment can be called DESIRE. People who want somebody to wear costumes, people who want somebody to sit with them while they watch dirty movies and jerk off, people who want to be tied up, people who want to wear diapers and be given a bottle. Beauty as FETISHISM: we are bound up in a general stereotype of models of beauty. The generalization of sign exchange value to facial effects. Thus FETISHISM is being drawn to representations of AKADEMGOROD, fascination with the system of encodement represented on minds through images in magazines, movies, television, advertising, etc. FETISHISM is integral to logic of, to construction of HIS MEMORY.

A K A D E M G O R O D

The indivisible becomes divisible, space becomes ideal space, sentiments become one and insensible, the body will be pure... (Proklos, *Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, III, 287): "Monty can't sin."

P L A G I A R I S M

THE NEOIST performs PLAGIARISM on his COLLECTIVE SOUL during THE READING, which stands in for his own DESIRE. Your COLLECTIVE SOUL is my psychological activity. I am immaterial. The impossibility of the COLLECTIVE SOUL being ever reached is plagiarized by HIS MEMORY as DESIRE, THE NEOIST as object of DESIRE. "Our doctrine is nothing new, it has been set up a long time ago." (Plotinus, VI, 8, 10) The more the system is systematized, the more the fetishist fascination is reinforced. DESIRE, for the object of DESIRE, is plagiarized as the coded mind, through the system of representations then again through NEOISM. Act like you're enjoying it. [end]

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