

L<sup>1</sup> opens *Just Gaming* by positioning *Libidinal Economy* as a book that “aims to produce effects” rather than state truths, which T sees as irresponsible (3). L counters that all modern writing is “irresponsible” (8). For in modernity, the author “no longer knows for whom he writes” (9), refuses the notions of a “subject of history” or transhistorical “universal subject” (10). Moderns are also “untimel[y],” sans historically derived *sensus communis*, and must thus “judge without criteria” (14). This lack of criteria constitutes modernity and what L terms “paganism” (15-16). For L, “pagan” also denotes “a prescription” (16), and pagan “prescriptives ... are never grounded”: Modern pagans are addressees for whom “the just comes ... from elsewhere” or not at all (17). L cites K, who leaves “the ability to judge ... hanging” on the “unfathomable principle” of the will. For K, and L and his pagans, judges *invent* criteria “regulated [only] by an Idea” (17-18). T notes that L often says “‘Let us be pagan,’ and ‘Let us be just’” (19). L links the two to interrupt “pious” Platonic notions of justice that assume “a lost [descriptive] origin” for the prescriptive (20). For L, the prescription only comes from within the prescriptive game, for at the pragmatic level one can’t simply move from “the true to the just” (24). Modernity responds to this predicament with “an answer through autonomy”: “the set of prescriptions produced by the whole of a social body to which the prescriptions apply, will be just” (25). With no ideal of justice, “each situation is singular” and judgments only justified after the fact (27). One no longer “gives oneself one’s own laws”—instead there’s the “idea that no ... utterer ... is ever autonomous” but rather “heteronomous” (31-32), “the recipient of a narrative in which one is narrated” and in which invention occurs via “experimentation” (33-34). Heteronomy interrupts the fixed subject, who “change bodies” as narrated narrator (40), re-privileging “the pole of the addressee” “actively forgotten” in “Western thought” (37). But in paganism—unlike the Jewish tradition in which the deity is posited in a metalinguistic position—“The gods are implicated in the narratives” and thus unable to serve as prescribers (43). Seeking a new approach to just prescriptions, L substitutes K’s term “Idea”—“the maximization of a concept” (46)—for “prescriptive.” The Idea of “freedom”—“reason in its practical use”—leads to a definition of justice as “act[ing] in such a way that ... the maxim of the will may serve as a principle of universal legislation” (46-47). That “that,” though, is a “negative clause” offering no positive “condition that defines justice” (47). With no descriptive “real” from which to derive “the just,” we are called to “multiplying and refining language games” (49), each with “a specific pragmatics” (52). “[P]aganism” in fact involves “the Idea ... of a set of diverse pragmatics” that “cannot be synthesized into a unifying metadiscourse” (58). In Kantian terms, the Idea of “one must be pagan” is “one must maximize as much as possible the multiplication of small narratives” not founded on descriptives (59), including “the game of justice,” which occurs “in the [non-descriptive] field of prescriptives” (62). Justice is thus an empty “transcendence” with no descriptive ground (69)—as K puts it, “that which obligates is something absolutely beyond our intelligence” (71). L asserts K is modern, seeing “no reason of history” on which to ground ethical knowledge (73). L notes that this view *can* lead to tyrannies of “convention,” but sees K offering a potential way out. Like Corax, K sees “the reasonable idea” as “produc[ing] ... the unlikely,” imagining a “*field of finality*” in which “prevails ... the Idea of something that is not yet” nor ever will be here (78). This Idea makes possible a break with convention, creating a space for a “justice of multiplicity” paradoxically assured by “a prescriptive of universal value” (100). But who is this L? “[T]he great prescriber himself”? Ha ha.

But seriously, L admits his interpretation of K is a little funny. K’s moral system is founded on totality and autonomy, while L is after multiplicities and heteronomy. K explicitly rejects heteronomy as a ground for freedom and morality, for within it “every effect is possible only according to” external, natural causes (64). Thus the title of the following section in *Foundations*: “Freedom Must be Presupposed as the Property of the Will of All Rational Beings” (64). But, with L in mind, one *must* question the origin from which K’s “freedom” is derived. “We cannot,” K claims, “conceive of a reason which ... consciously responds to a bidding from the outside,” which would make the subject’s judgment due “not to reason but to an impulse” (65). But reason responding to a bidding seems remarkably close to L’s gloss of the Jewish tradition, which suggests it is K, not a universal “we,” who cannot conceive of such a thing. And at this point, K does seem to waver on the edge of conventional consensus, proposing the following as a “sufficient” argument: “Freedom as an Idea is posited by all rational beings as the basis for their actions” (65). K attempts to break the circular reasoning that links freedom and morality by dividing the sensible and intelligible worlds—a division that seems key in L’s alignment of K and Corax. K places reason in the intelligible realm as it “shows such a pure spontaneity in the case of Ideas that it far transcends ... sensibility” (69). So if we think of ourselves as free rational beings, “we transport ourselves into the intelligible world”—which is of course precisely that world which we cannot know as such, to which no sensible train line runs (70). Could reason’s spontaneity be the capacity to *invent* criteria L attributes to moderns—the ability to produce the unlikely in the face of conventional reason? And yet we can *also*—perhaps compossibly—think of ourselves as “obligated,” which does not separate us from the intelligible world but leaves us with one foot in the sensible and another in the intelligible. So it seems, even for K, such invention only comes with an obligation—a freedom of the narratee inventing unlikely possibilities in the face of the mediated sensible world in which the narratee is narrated; perhaps a way of inventing the intelligible game as a supplement to the recognized limits imposed by convention, the game master of the sensible. But why? Because the intelligible game is “useful” for the “purpose of a rational faith” (81)—but of course Kant is no utilitarian or pragmatist, so what grants “useful” its eulogistic charge here? The implication seems to be that “rational faith” is categorically good. For rational faith as (empty?) transcendence from the objective, sensible world stems the tide of heteronomy, which is borne of “laws ... directed to an object” (76-77). For L, however, an “object” is necessarily an unfixed part of a descriptive game and so is already beyond the ken of prescription. Thus what K fears in heteronomy—prescriptions directed toward mean describable ends—is precisely the sort of violation of the boundaries between language games of which L despairs. So perhaps we are dealing with heteronomous definitions of heteronomy, and perhaps their differences let L’s multiplicity of justices still answer the call of K’s autonomy-centered moral system. Their justice-games, one might say, came in different boxes but contain the same potential multiplicity of pieces.

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this page, Lyotard is “L,” Thébaud “T,” and Kant “K.”