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Alex Grosskurth

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Seduction is Nothing But a Game Played by Filthy Liars

BY ALEX GROSSKURTH

Two weekends ago on a Saturday night, I was overcome with an acute, debilitating loneliness. Because I dreaded being confined within the hospital-white walls of my Campus Square apartment, I ventured out into the world of Lehigh nightlife. With the assumption that my afflictions in the game of love are somewhat atypical, my interest focused on the healthy *seduction* which was presumably taking place all around me; so I journeyed up the hill to where the fraternities reside and the social scene here is centered. My goal was to examine the activities of Lehigh students on a typical Saturday night, and to study the methods of seduction used by my peers.

I quietly slinked through the token wooded areas and unavoidable parking lots to avoid being seen from the twisting roads overflowing with party people, who were the subjects of my study. I eventually stopped below the Sayre Park apartments, near the top of campus, and peered down the steep incline towards a particularly raucous party from which loud music was emanating. I could tell by the abundance of masculinity-affirming yelling and high-fiveing that I was observing the escapades of some drunken frat boys. Although it was still relatively early in the night, the party had by now migrated to the front lawn of the fraternity. The front door lay broken on the walkway, with shattered shards of glass everywhere. None of this upset the party though; instead, the high-fives were *congratulations* for the young man who had managed to cause that level of mindless destruction.

Just then, three beautiful female students appeared, wearing their most revealing and thereby *finest* Saturday Night garb. They pranced up the driveway in their highest high heels, with tiny purses dangling at their sides, and entered this chaotic scene without the slightest reservation or worry. The prettiest girl let out a high-pitched greeting to the frat boy who was responsible for the destruction of the door, ran up to him, laid her arms around his neck and kissed him. I was watching another nearby male student quietly try to sweep up the pieces of glass from the lawn, when I heard something coming out of the trees to my left. It was a full grown doe, who had journeyed out of the forest for a midnight snack. She looked directly at me, seemingly unafraid, while I just stared back, motionless. The deer pranced closer and closer and then innocently stopped to eat some grass... before suddenly turning around and jaunting back into

her forest home. I watched, feeling embarrassed for my species.

Walking back down the hill, I tried to comprehend what I had just witnessed.

The male which had just a minute ago broken down his house's front door in a drunken show of force, then stood in the lawn yelling and carrying on, was the one by which that beautiful female had been seduced. Her seducer was not one of the onlookers, or the boy dutifully sweeping up the mess, or myself, or anyone else, it was that particular male who takes pride in displays of aggressive stupidity. I had to wonder, what is it about that frat boy that is seductive? And if he is a successful seducer, should I be like him to cure my incessant loneliness? An exploration of seduction was now necessary, because it had become all the more enigmatic.

In *Either/Or Part I*, Kierkegaard illustrates that there are two types of seducers. There is the *immediate* seducer, epitomized by Don Juan, and the *reflective* seducer, characterized by Johannes, whose exploits are described in extreme detail in "The Seducer's Diary". Their methods are diametrically opposed, because the immediate seeks sensuous love and the reflective seeks psychical love, but regardless, seduction is the name of the game for both. I should note that seduction is a game played by both men and women, young and old, rich and poor, and so I will not distinguish along those lines. The only distinction I will make, for now, is that of type. Namely, is the seducer reflective or immediate?

Immediate seduction is defined as exactly that, immediate. There is no time-span for this type of seduction; it is each and every moment. Of Don Juan, "for him everything is merely an affair of the moment" (94). Don Juan, through sheer attractiveness and the art of persuasion, is legendary for having seduced 1,003 Spanish women. He did this immediately, in that he didn't strategize or plot it ahead of time; the act coincided with the thought. Kierkegaard describes Don Juan thusly: "Shrewd levelheadedness is lacking in him... He needs no preparation, no plan, no time, for he is always ready" (101).

This is precisely the opposite nature of Johannes, who plans everything ahead of time, down to the slightest detail. He is shy and so cannot simply act seductively as Don Juan does; he relies on a pre-calculated, highly-structured strategy. "One should always make preparatory studies; everything must be properly arranged" (342). Johannes employs reflective seduction because he favors the interesting to the beautiful, the psychical to the sensuous. Johannes complains that an *immediate* seducer "does not enjoy the situation since he himself is wrapped up in it, hidden in it" (335). Therefore, the goal for a reflective seducer is not *being in love*, but the *knowledge of being in love*.

The final difference between the reflective and immediate seducer is that the reflective seducer has only one particular prey. Whereas Don Juan seduced 1,003 women in Spain and loved the universal essence of femininity, Johannes loved *only* Cordelia for the months and months in which he obsessed over her. His entire diary is about *Cordelia* in her particular individuality. As such, Kierkegaard points out that we can characterize the immediate seducer as "extensive" and the reflective seducer as "intensive" in their methods (108).

Both methods of seduction are *intentional deception*. The seducer presents him-or-herself in a way in which he or she is not; pretends; puts on a show or act. Indeed, the Oxford English Dictionary defines *seduce* as "to lead (a person) astray in conduct or belief." The conduct of seduction therefore relies on taking a person away from their previous path, by giving them a new path to follow; one of infatuation and love for you. To make the new path attractive, you must convince them that their previous path was incorrect and thereby lead them *astray*, or to *mislead*. As such, seduction cannot be wholly honest. Indeed, who has ever known a seducer to be honest and straightforward in his or her conquests? Would that be *seductive* at all? Who is erotically excited by factual truth, when a lie/act/show is so much more titillating? All seducers, regardless of reflective or immediate type, are simultaneously *deceivers*.

This principle is demonstrated in Kierkegaard's two examples. Don Juan is a deceiver through and through, and his deception is that he is *faithful*. He seduces 1,003 women but says to *each* that she is the *only* one he truly cares about. "Don Juan is a downright seducer. His love is sensuous, not psychical, and, according to its concept, sensuous love is not faithful but totally faithless; it loves not one but all – that is, it seduces all" (94). In the moment of seduction, he promises his eternal love to the prey, and when they believe the lie, he has won. Then, demonstrating his immediate nature, after each victory the immediate seducer moves on to the next victim in his faithless and perpetual seduction of the entire female gender. In pretending to be faithful, Don Juan's *deception* is that he is not immediate but *reflective*, because a faithful man *reflects* on his one particular prey, and focuses solely on her as the solitary love he desires, a reflective exercise. No faithfulness can come from sensual experience alone; the psychical faculties of humanity are necessary to idealize an individual and posit them as "mine." By portraying himself as a reflective male, *opposite* in temperament to his true nature solely for the purpose of seduction, Don Juan thus deceives in the ultimate sense. Kierkegaard concurs that Don Juan's seduction requires deception, "He enjoys the satisfaction of desire; as soon as he has enjoyed it, he seeks a new object, and so it goes on indefinitely. Thus he does indeed deceive" (99). Deception is the essence of Don Juan, the archetypal immediate seducer.

Johannes is likewise a deceiver through and through, but his deception is not that he is faithful, but that he is *desirable*. Thus his lie is that he is not reflective but *immediate*, because the desirable man does not contemplate or reflect upon his actions, but simply *acts*, in a fearless and immediate manner. Throughout all of Johannes' conduct in "The Seducer's Diary", he attempts to display to Cordelia that he is a man of *action*, not consigned to timidly ponder, in order to gain her desire. From the moment he meets her, he tries to give the impression that he is *not thinking of her* but in fact is busy with other concerns. "With a quickened pace, I hurried past her as if I did not notice her in the remotest way" (333). Treating her with a "cold, almost supercilious apathy" he continually demonstrates that he is not easily moved, that he cannot be easily won over. This lie of his being desirable drives all of Johannes' actions with Cordelia, so much so that he intentionally stalks her only to pass by without so much as a glance,

just to make her curious of him (338). Later in the seduction process, he pushes poor bashful Edward into being a suitor of Cordelia, who Cordelia flees from, into the arms of the seemingly worldlier Johannes. If there is one word to describe their relationship, it is manipulation. Johannes spins a huge strategic web in which Cordelia follows his whims, from lying to her family (420) to breaking off their engagement so that he can unhinge their love from the convention (438). Throughout his diary, Johannes constantly admits his lying, “It takes a bit more than honesty to love such a girl. That more I do have - it is deceitfulness” (385). Deception in regards to *desirability* is the essence of Johannes’s relationship with Cordelia and of all reflective seduction.

Myself as a seducer would be characterized as reflective like Johannes. Reading his diary was strikingly similar to reading my own, which I keep and post online. For example my concerns and desires always concern *one woman* and not femininity in general, which demonstrates that I am an *intensive* seducer. Just like Johannes, I have spent late nights longing outside the windows of the *one* which I adore (352), forcing myself to fall completely for one particular girl. “She does not even have an inkling of my existence, even less of what is going on within me” (335). These words I have exhausted in my mind countless times. Like Johannes, I often worry that the girl whom I desire may somehow find out that I spend so much time thinking of her, for it would shatter my deception of being an *immediate* male. Since my deception is always to make the girl believe I am desirable, I am a real-life example of a *reflective seducer*.

This brings me back to the door-smashing frat boy who began this inquiry. Into which category would that drunken young man belong? If his behavior that night was indicative of his pursuit of women, then clearly I cannot call him someone who *thinks* too extensively over his conduct before acting. As such, I would say he is an immediate seducer in the form of Don Juan. This makes sense because he broke down the door before the girls even came by, so it seems that his aggressive personality is not a *show* as part of a careful, manipulative plan, but that it is actually inherent. As such his desirability (aggressiveness) is not a deception; which means *only his faithfulness is in question*.

To answer this, I recall that when the deer entered the scene, I was overcome by how these frat boys simply did not *appreciate* how good they have it. They may live their whole lives without realizing how privileged they are to attend a great school such as this and have every advantage in life. It’s easy to see that this young man did not appreciate that a beautiful girl was in love with him. And without appreciation of a person, one cannot be faithful to them. How can you love an individual if you take no time to appreciate them? No, he loves *femininity in general*, or the symbols of femininity, such as vagina, breasts, high heels and tiny purses. Therefore, if that frat boy exemplifies the Lehigh standard type of seduction, it is certainly of the *immediate* category.

To recap, we have seen that all seducers are deceivers, and seduction is founded in deception. Both sorts of seducer attempt to deceive that one is of the *opposite* temperament; immediates pretend to be reflective (faithful), and reflectives pretend to be

immediate (desirable). However, up until now I have given a free pass to those who *are seduced*. The reality is that they are deceivers as well. In order to demonstrate this, I must first clarify that I will define “the seduced” as individuals *actively participating* in the process of seduction. Therefore, they know they are being seduced, by definition. This is because I must be careful not to include in this category those who are truly unaware of the seducer’s game, which is directed at them. If one is genuinely oblivious to the fact that someone is attempting to seduce him or her, then I cannot characterize that person as “seduced,” simply because I believe seduction is a game played by two, not one.

For the truly seduced, they know they are being seduced, and so they consciously or at least subconsciously understand the deception at the heart of their interactions with the seducer. However, in order to play this game, the seduced must *act* as if their seducer is being genuine, and so must deceive *themselves* into believing in that sincerity. As such, the seduced are deceivers, but *self-deceivers*. The seduced mind is in bad faith, lying to oneself in order to believe the innately-detected *lies* of the seducer. For an example, look no further than Sartre’s woman on a first date in *Being and Nothingness*. Her date holds her hand, yet she denies that his actions have meaning (96). She knows that there is seductive intent to his actions, but must lie to herself and pretend that there is no seduction (deception) occurring. She must first believe the truth in order to deny it. Thus she self-deceives; *as do we all when being seduced*.

This just goes to show that seduction is nothing but a game played by *liars*. The whole charade is a *game* in which everyone participates in deception of oneself or of another. Surely the girl in skimpy clothes at the frat that night on the hill was *aware* of the faithlessness of her oaf seducer, yet she participated. She wears the uniform of a female college student; she acts the part and tries to believe the lie. But this is how *all seduction* works. In any flirtation, both parties can sense the deception that fills the air; it’s obvious enough that everyone in the room knows it. At any party, you inevitably hear remarks such as, “A girl as pretty/special as you...” (*immediate seduction*). Or alternatively “Yeah, I caught that fish. Hauled it into the boat and clubbed it myself...” (*reflective*). The variations of these particular lines are endless, but their deception is what makes them *lines*; flirtations; seductions. Everyone involved in the game of seduction is a deceiver, the seducers and the seduced alike.

It’s at this point in our inquiry that we naturally have to ask, “Can’t we fall in love *truthfully*?” Isn’t there a way to avoid the deception implicit in seduction by honestly presenting your desires to someone? If so, it would amount to little more than an academic dialogue of the existence of mutual attraction: hardly a romantic scenario. It’s really difficult to be attracted to someone speaking frankly and matter-of-factly. It’s boring! The fact of the matter is we simply *don’t want* to speak plainly and honestly about mutual desire and to consummate the mutual attraction without drama. *Humans want drama!* We want seduction, betrayal, heartbreak and tragedy! We search our whole lives for these things. Seduction is exciting *because* one knows one is being deceived; especially when both parties are simultaneously aware of the mutual decep-

tion and double self-deception. Oh, the theater! That's what makes flirtation *erotic*; straightforward honesty isn't nearly as *arousing*. How boring it would be to avoid all such conflict. In Part I, Kierkegaard concurs, "If there is no combat in love then it has ceased" (378) and "To love is beautiful only as long as resistance is present" (445). To want to forego seduction is to want to avoid the whole dynamic of flirtation that makes love so appealing and without which sex is just mutual masturbation.

Seduction is a game, for sure. But *we need to play the game*. Seduction is the underpinning behind the very best comic and tragic moments of life. We cannot enjoy our lives without a little seduction and love. It is essential. Who would want to live in a brutally honest, straight-and-narrow kind of world where people always tell the honest-to-God truth about themselves and their intentions?

We now find ourselves in a quandary. It is clear that deception is essential to seduction, but certain deception is cruel and downright wrong. It's not yet intuitively clear what deception is tolerable and what is immoral. Our current distinction, of reflective vs. immediate seduction, is not applicable to this moral problem. Both reflective and immediate seduction can be cruel, as is the case with both Don Juan and Johannes. Likewise, both types can be harmless fun and lead to true love. As such, a new distinction must be drawn in order to set a basic moral guideline for seductive conduct.

I submit that the distinction is one of Work versus Play. In Work, we do not live as we wish; obligation rules us, not freedom. Work makes us miserable and stressed, and it causes us to do harm to others rather than good. Whereas in play we release, in work we take on. Work, or the "spirit of seriousness" as Sartre calls it (740), creates *alienation* between the subject and the object, between the seducer and his prey. This is the philosophical basis for suggesting that seduction is beneficial when it is *playful*, and harmful when it is *work*.

Looking back at the examples laid out in this paper, the reason that Don Juan and likewise Johannes are harsh, disgusting seducers is not *that* they deceive; it's *how* they deceive. For both, seduction is *work*. For them the process of seduction is not an enjoyable playtime, but a necessary chore. They participate in the game *only as a means to an end*; a sensuous goal for Don Juan and a psychical goal for Johannes. Towards the game itself they have nothing but disdain; they participate not to play but to *win*. This is the reason Don Juan is willing to discard each woman he seduces just as quickly as he can utter the words. This is why Johannes treats Cordelia as a helpless, stupid child. Each is disrespectful to those that they seduce because they *disrespect seduction itself*. Seduction is meant to be a *game*; a playful, fun, enjoyable game; not work.

Only when one *enjoys seduction*, when one plays at it and treats it not as means to an end but *as an end in itself*, is seduction moral and beneficial. It is theater; playfulness and pretend. Both seducer and seduced are actors in the performance, and enjoy their respective roles, without malevolence towards (alienation from) their counterpart. The deception present therein is still deception, for sure, but it is benevolent, caring, loving even. It is cooperative rather than competitive, mutual rather than selfish, involved amusement rather than estranged labor. As such, playful seduction is play *for both* the

seducer and the seduced. Neither has to work to deceive in that kind of game. The deception comes easily and freely for both. Therefore, faithful reader, whether you find yourself more often the seducer or the seduced, this may be an important lesson. If seduction to you is a matter of work, if it causes you stress or discomfort, you are going about it all wrong. Make it *fun*, make it recreation, and make it play.

In conclusion, we have seen that seduction is indeed nothing but a game, and a game played solely by deceivers. There are two types of seducers, immediate and reflective. Immediate seducers seek sensuous love and their deception is to be in the category of reflective, i.e. they pretend to be faithful. Reflective seducers seek psychical love (the knowledge of being in love), and their deception is to be in the category of immediate or desirable. As for motive, perhaps we can think of this ultimate deception as an attempt to achieve the illusion of being a perfect mate, synthesizing both reflectivity and immediacy. It works like the following (substituting immediate for reflective or vice versa): While one's *true* reflective nature will be apparent to some degree, a deception of the existence of immediacy can complete the synthesis and provide the illusion of being a perfect mate: *simultaneously desirable and faithful*. Perhaps this is the goal of all deceit inherent in seduction.

We have also seen that not only are seducers deceivers but the seduced deceive as well, through self-deception. Upon making this realization of complete and shameless deception, it would be easy to formally reject seduction in general: to declare the rules cruel and the game itself tantamount to vicious trickery. This belief would lead one into the closet of loneliness and despair, turning him or her against humanity and swearing off *love* forever. Clearly that is no solution, for love is what makes life worth living. Affection, trust, respect and emotion keep us alive, keep us hopeful, and keep us motivated. Luckily then, there is a way out of this despair, and it is to *play!* To *enjoy* seduction, to *reclaim* it, to make it *fun*, to transform it from manipulative fraud into silly, flirtatious *pretending*. Seduction may be a game played by liars, but do you enjoy it?

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The Competing Narratives of 9/11

BY ASHLEY JOHNSON
AND VINCENT TAS



If you think about the way in which people get their news, it is so often in fragments of disconnected images and headlines. The story is too easily summed up by the front page of the newspaper. The cover of the newspaper is the beginning of a narrative that is infiltrated in culture. The way in which the story is framed generates history. For this analysis, we were particularly interested in the way that September 11th was framed across the world. The objective is to analyze the way in which the events of 9/11 were covered by the U.S. and overseas press. What is the reaction of American, European, and Middle East newspapers to the events that took place on September 11, 2001? Is there a pattern in the articles, a common language they use? Is the story of September 11th the same in America as it is in the rest of the world? What generalizations can be made about all media coverage across the world? Are international papers more or less “objective” when analyzing September 11th than American national papers? If the international papers have a different story about what happened on September 11th, does this mean the media are giving state propaganda? If we could find some differences