A point of contention for Renaissance theologians and artists centered around debates on whether Adam had a navel. The debates were numerous and they mostly had to do with the question of creationism and Adam's origins. If we take *Genesis* at its word, both Adam and Eve were supernaturally created. They were not naturally born from women. We can assume that in that case an umbilical cord would not be anatomically necessary. This was a problem for artists because depicting Adam with a belly button, like Michelangelo did, could get them in trouble with charges of heresy. Nonetheless, many painters ingeniously started enlarging the fig leaves that normally covered up genitalia. They made them big enough to hide the place where the navel would be. This strategic evasion describes an interesting relation between singular artistic practice and the sociopolitical demands formulated for artists by culture in general. We might say that, in place of providing an answer, these painters delineated the anxious enjoyment of the question, thereby revealing its desirous dimension.

The navel, as we've said, has to do with the problem of the origins of a lineage. It's an evident claim that nonetheless adds some confusion for theologians when we consider that God first made Adam in his own image. It implies that God himself has a navel, and was born, and as you might guess, that introduces a set of problems that have to do with the question of who created the creator. This problem is as old as the Aristotelian considerations of the unmoved mover, which find their first properly theological articulation in Thomas Aquinas' idea of the uncaused first cause. In modernity, on the other hand, it seems as though Bertrand Russell came across a similar contradiction in mathematics when he formulated his set theoretical paradox along the lines of how *there is no such set that contains all other non-self-containing sets*. In other words, even logic runs into problems when it attempts to think about the origin of logic. I won't spend time explaining the mathematical stakes of Russell's Paradox because they go beyond the scope of this text, but we could come up with an illustrative proposition by saying that *a torpedo ship destroyer is first and foremost a torpedo ship*. So, you see, we get a sense that the signifier wrecks itself before arriving at the place that it promises. It doesn't signify univocally.

Nonetheless, it's evident that signifiers possess a constitutive power by virtue of their capacity to tie up and sponsor social facts. All social ontology depends on crucial constative utterances. For example, when a judge pronounces a couple "man and wife," the speech act engenders a social reality by bringing about its own propositional content. In such performative utterances, the signifier acts in the world in a sort of tautological way, as if by enunciating "become what you are." The caveat, however, is that these performative utterances must be enchained in a lineage of preceding "lower level" utterances. Before a judge can officiate a marriage, his symbolic authority must first be established as a social agent. He must be pronounced "judge" by a relevant institution which, in turn, also takes its own credibility from yet another symbolic mandate. If we follow these chains of constative utterances which effectively make up social reality, we won't be too surprised to find out that the law goes back into the mist. This is not to say that language is all smoke and mirrors. On the contrary, these transferences that effectively constitute social reality bottom out and run up against something quite real, even if it's the real bedrock of contradiction. In any case, if we search for a foundational utterance, we begin to stammer up until we hit a limit. Jacques Derrida speaks to this contradiction quite nicely in *Force of Law*. He says that "a foundation is a promise." It's an elegant phrase that reverses temporal terms. Instead of placing the foundation at the site of origin, the phrase emphasises its anticipatory dimension, as if by saying that in the future anterior tense of a promise, "I *will have found* the answer to the conflict from which I originate." And the future anterior signifies a propulsion toward the future with a paradoxical attitude caught up between anticipation and retroversion. As a consequence, it is replete with desire for what is unrealized.

Perhaps, we might consider the idea that the painters of Adam also sustained a paradoxical time in their ingenuity. In concealing the site of conflict, they resolved the dialectic of presence and absence, or being and nothing, by delineating a third mediating term that was not evident from the outset: becoming. They sustained a time torn between "always already" and "not yet." This paradoxical time, caught up between a deferred birth and an extinction that is still glowing, speaks to the idea that what is real or foundational is neither originary nor culminative. In this third term that is stranded between the two, which also sexualizes the two, we might instead find an opening in which what is most novel to thought, the unconscious, comes into emergence.

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